

ST. CLEMENT'S INN OF COURT

“Law & Religion Forum”

Volume 1, Apostolate Paper #70

“A History of the Anglican Church—Part LIII: An Essay on the Role of Christian Lawyers and Judges within the Secular State”©

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

“To speak of the separation of church and state is to speak of the separation of soul and body.”
-- Rev. Algernon Sidney Crapsey (Anglican Priest)

Part LIII. Anglican Church: A Biography of Thomas Paine and Notes on *The Age of Reason; Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (1794)-- A Prelude to the American Revolution

Preface
Introduction
Summary

CONTENTS

- A. Life and Times of Thomas Paine (1737 - 1809)
 - 1. Years in England (1736 – 1774)
 - 2. Emigration to British North America (1774 – 1787)
 - 3. Antislavery Activism (1774-1775)
 - 4. Publication of *Common Sense* (1776)
 - 5. Publication of *The American Crisis* (1776)

6. Congressional Committee on Foreign Affairs
 7. Public Policy, Economics, and the Public Good
 8. Return to London, England (1787 – 1792) and Visit to Paris, France (1792 – 1794)
 9. Publication of *Rights of Man* (1791)
- B. Criticism of President George Washington and the Federalists
- C. Notes on *The Age of Reason* (1794)
1. Criticism of Christianity and Latitudinarian Anglicanism
 2. Criticism of the *Holy Bible*

Conclusion

Bibliography

Appendix A: “*The Age of Reason: Thomas Paine’s Criticism of The Holy Bible*”
by Roderick O. Ford, Litt.D.

Appendix B: “A Christian Lawyer’s Rebuttal to Thomas Paine’s *The Age of Reason*”
by Roderick O. Ford, Litt.D.

The ideas expressed in this Apostolate Paper are wholly those of the author, and subject to modification as a result of on-going research into this subject matter. This paper is currently being revised and edited, but this version is submitted for the purpose of sharing Christian scholarship with clergy, the legal profession, and the general public.

PREFACE

The organized Christian church of the Twenty-First Century is in crisis and at a crossroad. Christianity as a whole is in flux. And I believe that Christian lawyers and judges are on the frontlines of the conflict and changes which are today challenging both the Christian church and the Christian religion. Christian lawyers and judges have the power to influence and shape the social, economic, political, and legal

landscape in a way that will allow Christianity and other faith-based institutions to evangelize the world for the betterment of all human beings. I write this essay, and a series of future essays, in an effort to persuade the American legal profession to rethink and reconsider one of its most critical and important jurisprudential foundations: the Christian religion. To this end, I hereby present the seventieth in this series: “A History of the Anglican Church—Part LIII.”

INTRODUCTION

The life and works of Thomas Paine are an important chapter in the history of the Christian Church. Paine grew up as an Anglican, but he eventually grew to distrust both the Christian faith and organized religion in general. One reason for this, we might say, is that he felt that both priests and the church too often joined forces with the rich and the powerful to suppress the natural rights of the common man. This view of church corruption has long remained a part of the Protestant Reformation: it was present during the times of the Reverend John Ball (1338-1381) and the Peasant’s Revolt of 1381, and of the Reverend John Wycliff (1320 – 1384) and the Lollard Movement¹; it was present during the times of the Reverend Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) and the German Peasant’s War (1524-25); and it was present during the English Civil War (1642 -51) with the movements of the Levelers and the Diggers. In each of these movements, there was a tendency on the part of disenfranchised peasants and commoners to protest against, if not altogether overthrow, what they perceived to be a corrupt partnership between Church and State, the chief supporters of monarchy and aristocracy. During the 18th century, this violent revolt against perceived ecclesiastical corruption occurred during the French Revolution (1789 – 1799), which was much more radical than the American Revolution (1775 – 1783). Thomas Paine was a part of, and played leading roles in, both of these revolutions. When the Washington administration took a decisive position to oppose the French Revolution’s liberalism, secularism, and deism, Thomas Paine, who was then living in France and fighting for the French cause, felt betrayed. But by opposing the French movement, and realigning itself politically with the British conservatives, the new United States sent a very clear message: to wit, its constitutional foundations were deeply rooted in the British political tradition, the Church of England, and the Christian faith.²

¹ See, e.g., the “Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards”
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelve_Conclusions_of_the_Lollards#Third_conclusion:_clerical_celibacy

² See, e.g., Goldwin Smith, *A History of England* (New York, N.Y.; Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1957), p. 485 (“With the French Revolution was to come a second question: is the gospel of democracy inimical to the English system of government? The Tories were to stand for a time united against any democratic extension of the franchise. The Whigs were to divide into two groups; the conservative Whigs, led by Edmund Burke, and the liberal Whigs, headed

Therefore, Paine's conceptualization of deism and political liberalism were emphatically rejected—at least by the Washington administration and its primary backers, such as John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay.³

Thomas Paine's activism set the tone for America's political mood during the mid-1770s. His *Common Sense* (1776) and *American Crisis* (1776) were works of genius, but these dealt only with American political affairs, not with religion. Paine's religious views were not published until a crisis in Western political theory erupted during the French Revolution (1789 – 99), during which period the French beheaded their king and queen and decimated the Roman Catholic Church in France. The French had also set up a new secular and godless religion called the "Cult of Reason," and a second religion, called the "Cult of the Supreme Being"⁴—these two religions had replaced the Roman Catholic Church in

by Charles James Fox.") The conservative Whig Edmund Burke vehemently opposed Thomas Paine, and the American political establishment joined Edmund Burke in that same opposition.

³ Thomas Jefferson and James Madison appears to have been more favorable towards the French, but the settled public policy of the new United States was directed by President George Washington and his conservative administration.

⁴ Many Britons and Americans associated Thomas Paine's deism with the radical French religious sects known as the "Cult of Reason" and the "Cult of the Supreme Being," which they vehemently rejected as destructive of Anglo-American traditions. See, e.g., https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cult_of_Reason.

The **Cult of Reason** (French: *Culte de la Raison*) was France's first established state-sponsored atheistic religion, intended as a replacement for Catholicism during the French Revolution. After holding sway for barely a year, in 1794 it was officially replaced by the rival **Cult of the Supreme Being**, promoted by Robespierre. Both cults were officially banned in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte with his Law on Cults of 18 Germinal, Year X."

Opposition to the Roman Catholic Church was integral among the causes of the French Revolution, and this anti-clericalism solidified into official government policy in 1792 after the First French Republic was declared. Most of the dechristianisation of France was motivated by political and economic concerns, and philosophical alternatives to the Church developed more slowly. Among the growing heterodoxy, the so-called *Culte de la Raison* became defined by some of the most radical revolutionaries like Jacques Hébert, Antoine-François Momoro, Pierre-Gaspard Chaumette, and Joseph Fouché.

Considerable debate has always persisted about the religiosity of the Cult of Reason. It was a hodgepodge of ideas and activities, a "multifarious phenomenon, marked by disorderliness". The Cult encompassed various elements of anticlericalism, including subordination of priests to secular authority, wealth confiscation from the Church, and doctrinal heresies both petty and profound. It was atheistic, but celebrated different core principles according to locale and leadership: most famous was **Reason**, but others were **Liberty**, **Nature**, and the **victory of the Revolution**....

As a military commander dispatched by the Jacobins to enforce their new laws, [Joseph] Fouché led a particularly zealous campaign of dechristianisation. His methods were brutal but efficient, and helped spread the developing creed through many parts of France. In his jurisdictions, Fouché ordered all crosses and statues removed from graveyards, and he gave the cult one of its elemental tenets when he decreed that all cemetery gates must bear only one inscription—"Death is an eternal sleep." Fouché went so far as to declare a new civic religion of his own, virtually interchangeable with what would become known as the Cult of Reason, at a ceremony he dubbed the "Feast of Brutus" on 22 September 1793....

France. At the same time, for a brief period, the Christian faith was outlawed in revolutionary France. French bishops, priests, and monastic orders were violently suppressed. In 1794-95, Thomas Paine wrote *The Age of Reason*, in order to bring clarity to his own position and to discourage any further violent oppression of French Christians and Catholics. However, the dye had been cast: the public sentiment in both Great Britain and the United States was decisively against Thomas Paine's religious ideas and deism, because Paine's religious ideas appeared to mirror the radical French left.⁵

The official nationwide Fête de la Raison, supervised by Hébert and Momoro on 20 Brumaire, Year II (10 November 1793) came to epitomize the new republican way of religion. In ceremonies devised and organised by Chaumette, churches across France were transformed into modern Temples of Reason. The largest ceremony of all was at the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. The Christian altar was dismantled and an altar to Liberty was installed and the inscription 'To Philosophy' was carved in stone over the cathedral's doors. Festive girls in white Roman dress and tricolor sashes milled around a costumed Goddess of Reason who 'impersonated Liberty.' A flame burned on the altar which was symbolic of truth. To avoid statuary and idolatry, the Goddess figures were portrayed by living women, and in Paris the role was played by Momoro's wife, Sophie, who is said to have dressed "provocatively" and, according to Thomas Carlyle, 'made one of the best Goddesses of Reason; though her teeth were a little defective.'

Before his retirement, Georges Danton had warned against dechristianizers and their "rhetorical excesses", but support for the Cult only increased in the zealous early years of the First Republic. By late 1793, it was conceivable that the Convention might accept the invitation to attend the Paris festival *en masse*, but the unshakeable opposition of Maximilien Robespierre and others like him prevented it from becoming an official affair. Undeterred, Chaumette and Hébert proudly led a sizable delegation of deputies to Notre Dame.

It should be noted that these French objectives went far beyond the stated latitudinarian Anglican objectives of the "Elizabethan Settlement," which exemplified both the English Protestant Reformation and the American Revolution (1775 – 1783). Thus, **to understand precisely what the American founding fathers intended** in the *Declaration of Independence* (1776) and the *U.S. Constitution* (1787), **it is important to understand precisely what they rejected--** the deism of Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* (1794-95) and of the radical leftist French revolution (1789 – 1799).

⁵ Ibid. (In fact, when Thomas Paine died, he was not celebrated as an American Founding Father or as an American hero. See, e.g., "Thomas Paine" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Paine#Death, stating:

On the morning of June 8, 1809, Paine died, aged 72, at 59 Grove Street in Greenwich Village, New York City. Although the original building no longer exists, the present building has a plaque noting that Paine died at this location.

After his death, Paine's body was brought to New Rochelle, but the Quakers would not allow it to be buried in their graveyard as per his last will, so his remains were buried under a walnut tree on his farm. In 1819, English agrarian radical journalist William Cobbett, who in 1793 had published a hostile continuation of Francis Oldys (George Chalmer)'s *The Life of Thomas Paine*, dug up his bones and transported them back to England with the intention to give Paine a heroic reburial on his native soil, but this never came to pass. The bones were still among Cobbett's effects when he died over fifteen years later, but were later lost. There is no confirmed story about what happened to them after that, although various people have claimed throughout the years to own parts of Paine's remains, such as his skull and right hand.

At the time of his death, most American newspapers reprinted the obituary notice from the New York

For this reason, it is a great misconception to associate Paine's deism as representative of the prevailing views of the American Founding Fathers. As we have seen in previous papers in this series, Founding Fathers Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and scores of others had been influenced by latitudinarian Anglicans and the Calvinist Presbyterians whose taught that "Christianity is a republication of natural religion." Jefferson's deism was essentially the "Christian deism" of latitudinarian Anglicanism. The influence of the Reverend Doctor John Witherspoon's Calvinist moral philosophy (i.e., Scottish Common Sense Realism) at the College of New Jersey ("Princeton") was also predominant. And so, when we construe the language of the American *Declaration of Independence* (1776), we see that it reflects Christian natural-law philosophy—both Anglican-Catholic and Calvinistic:

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.-- ... In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is

Evening Post that was in turn quoting from *The American Citizen*, which read in part: "He had lived long, did some good, and much harm". Only six mourners came to his funeral, two of whom were black, most likely freedmen. Many years later the writer and orator Robert G. Ingersoll wrote:

Thomas Paine had passed the legendary limit of life. One by one most of his old friends and acquaintances had deserted him. Maligned on every side, execrated, shunned and abhorred – his virtues denounced as vices – his services forgotten – his character blackened, he preserved the poise and balance of his soul. He was a victim of the people, but his convictions remained unshaken. He was still a soldier in the army of freedom, and still tried to enlighten and civilize those who were impatiently waiting for his death. Even those who loved their enemies hated him, their friend – the friend of the whole world – with all their hearts. On the 8th of June 1809, death came – Death, almost his only friend. At his funeral no pomp, no pageantry, no civic procession, no military display. In a carriage, a woman and her son who had lived on the bounty of the dead – on horseback, a Quaker, the humanity of whose heart dominated the creed of his head – and, following on foot, two negroes filled with gratitude – constituted the funeral cortege of Thomas Paine.)

unfit to be the ruler of a free people.... And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

– *Declaration of Independence* (1776)

Thomas Paine’s earlier contributions during the late 1770s to the American Revolution was indeed subservient to this Protestant Christian movement. His later theological position in *The Age of Reason* (1794-95) did nothing to change the original Christian character of the American Revolution. During the late 1700s and early 1800s, America never became the unchristian and deistic nation that Thomas Paine might have preferred. However, Paine’s definition of freedom of conscience, expression, and religion did become part and parcel of mainstream American political and constitutional discourse. This is sometimes confusing and hard to understand, but even though the new United States was in letter and practice committed to religious liberty, it defined itself as a “Christian nation” that was founded upon principles of natural law. One might correctly say that the American Revolution was the culminating principle of the English Protestant Reformation known as the “Elizabethan Settlement.”

Importantly, Paine’s great legacy is still with us, particularly as the United States becomes more diverse and less Christian. Paine’s eloquent criticisms of certain aspects of church corruption are still irrefutable. Paine’s position on the abolition of slavery was prophetic and wholly accurate, and his involvement with the “Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage,” was laudable and deserving of the utmost respect. But even thus, even in the twenty-first century, it is still necessary for Christian lawyers, theologians, and constitutional scholars to critique the life and works of Thomas Paine. This is still true because of the perennial challenges to the Christian foundations of Anglo-American culture as well as to the institution of the Christian Church.

Thomas Paine did not restrict his criticisms to corrupt priests and corrupt churches. Rather, Paine went so far as to say that *The Holy Bible* was not reliable or authoritative. He argued that it could not be authenticated or proven to be true. Paine also argued that *The Holy Bible* is not an adequate fundamental law sufficient to command the obedience of men’s actions in civil or secular society. Paine believed in a God, but Paine’s God was not the God of *The Holy Bible*. Rather, Paine’s God was the God of nature and reason. For Paine, the “true religion” was expressed not only by Jesus of Nazareth in the form of the Golden Rule, but also by the dictates of the consciences existing in common men and

women everywhere. He saw organized religions are “redundancies.” Although Paine’s views on natural religion were quite similar to those of several renowned Christian theologians, such as St. Augustine of Hippo and St. Thomas Aquinas, and particularly of those latitudinarian Anglicans such as Bishop Joseph Butler who held that “Christian is a republication of natural religion,” Paine emphatically rejected the idea that “Christianity was a republication of natural religion.” In fact, Paine felt that the Christian religion was a “fraud.” Instead, what Paine wanted was religious freedom and the right of all Americans (and the men and women of France as well) to the integrity of their own consciences and to the free exercise of their own religions. Paine’s *The Age of Reason* (1794-95) persuasively set forth his own personal religious beliefs and forcefully defended the right to conscience and religious belief.

Significantly, Thomas Paine made no provision for where and how the general population would learn morals, virtue and piety. In *The Age of Reason*, Paine claimed that God publishes all of his laws through his creations, but beyond that, he does not demonstrate why an organized institution—such as the Christian Church—is unnecessary for the education of the general population in principles of morals and ethics. In truth, Thomas Paine is not the only American founding father who commits this glaring omission—it is present in the writings of the other founding fathers as well, including *The Federalist Papers*. And so, we might conclude that Thomas Paine did not believe that secular civil government must teach or promote morals, virtue, and piety. (St. Augustine’s *The City of God* and Bishop William Warburton’s *Alliance of Church and State* (1736) reflect the classic Catholic and Anglican view that the church must partner with the civil magistrate to promote morals, piety, and virtue among the general population. Paine rejected this view).

Instead, rather than promote or emphasize any type of government-sponsored religious and moral instruction for the general population, Paine believed in personal liberty and personal freedom, whereby the civil government functions only in a limited capacity of punishing “vice.” (James Madison takes a similar position in *The Federalist Papers*, but President George Washington’s *Farewell Address* (1796) adopts the traditional Catholic-Anglican view that “morality and religion” must support and supplement the civil government). In other words, Paine seemingly did not connect the prosperity of the United States (or any other nation for that matter) to the “virtue and piety” of the people who are governed. And if Paine did reach that conclusion, he certainly did not believe that the Christian Church should be entrusted with the responsibility to teach “virtue and morals” to the general population. Although we have no evidence that the

American founding fathers who ratified the *Declaration of Independence* (1776) and the *U.S. Constitution* (1787) held Paine's views of deism, as expressed in *The Age Reason* (1794-95), most of the American founders adopted Paine's views on religious liberty and permitting a wall of separation between organized religion and government. The general consensus which Paine helped to create was that no government should be permitted to impose any particular religious belief upon the individual conscience. But the American view of "religious liberty" had been set in motion by a Puritan minister, the Reverend Roger Williams (1603-1683), who quoted Christ's "Parable of the Wheat and the Tares," as the governing principle of Christian polity and founded the colony of Rhode Island and Providence in 1636 upon that same principle. Hence, for Rev. Williams, his Puritan descendants, and the vast majority of Americans, "religious liberty" was fundamentally Christian.

But Paine was never able to explain the most fundamental problem of "sin" that saturates human nature or to provide an alternative remedy for "sin" that could replace organized religion. While Paine criticizes the organized Christian church, he provides no other substitute agency to teach morals, virtue, and piety. (The Reverend Algernon Sidney Crapsey's *Religion and Politics* (1905) has suggested that America's public schools had filled this role. W.E.B. Du Bois made a similar observation when commenting on the state-sponsored schools of the Soviet Union during the 1930s and 60s.) But neither do Jay's, Madison's, or Hamilton's papers in *The Federalist Papers* acknowledge the vital nature of "virtue and piety" and they also make no provisions for either the church or any other institution to instill "virtue and piety" into the body politic. Both Paine and the American founding fathers seemed to agree that government must be limited, and human freedom must be maximized. Thus, Paine's view of civil polity—where religion is substituted by "reason"—is not lost upon the American founding fathers' conceptualization of civil polity. Both schemes hold the "law of reason" in high regards. Although Paine does not equate Christianity with "the law of reason," most other American lawyers and theologians, following the English common law tradition, certainly did. (Indeed after the founding of the United States, the American bar and bench was deeply influenced by Lord William Blackstone's Anglican jurisprudence, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1753) and the English natural-law tradition.⁶ This is expressly reflected in the early jurisprudence of the United States Supreme Court. See, e.g., *Calder v. Ball*, 3 Dall 386 (1798); *Fletcher v. Peck*,

⁶ See, e.g., William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1753) ("This law of nature, being coeval with mankind, and dictated by God himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe in all countries, and at all times: no human laws are of any validity, if contrary to this; and such of them as are valid derive all their force and all their authority, mediately or immediately, from this original.")

6 Cranch 87, 10 U.S. 87 (1810); *Terrett v. Taylor*, 13 U.S. 43 (1815)⁷; *Darcy v. Ketchum*, 52 U.S. 65 (1850); and *Butchers' Union, etc. Co. v Crescent, etc. Co.*, 111 U.S. 746, 756 (1883); *Holy Trinity v. United States*, 143 U.S. 457 (1892)⁸; *United States v. Macintosh*, 283 U.S. 605 (1931)⁹; *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306 (1952.)

Ironically, Paine does make one material concession: his admiration for the person of Jesus of Nazareth as a moral philosopher. Paine did not reject the actual teachings of Christ himself, stating, for instance, "I have too much respect for the moral character of Christ to believe that he told this whale of a miracle himself...."¹⁰ Indeed, "Paine's charge that the Christian system is immoral does not extend, however, to the person of Jesus. Jesus, in Paine's estimation, advocated a morality of a 'most benevolent kind.' He found no system but 'called men to the practice of moral virtues, and the belief of one God.' He was, in short, a good deist."¹¹ The rest of what has become known as the New Testament is

⁷ E.g., *Terrett v. Taylor*, 13 U.S. 43, 52, 9 Cranch 43 (1815):

But that the legislature can repeal statutes creating private corporations, or confirming to them property already acquired under the faith of previous laws, and by such repeal can vest the property of such corporations exclusively in the state or dispose of the same to such purposes as they may please, without the consent or default of the corporators, we are not prepared to admit, and we think ourselves standing upon **the principles of natural justice, upon the fundamental laws of every free government**, upon the spirit and the letter of the Constitution of the United States, and upon the decisions of most respectable judicial tribunals in resisting such a doctrine. The statutes of 1798 ch. 9, and of 1801, ch. 5, are not, therefore, in our judgment, operative so far as to divest the Episcopal Church of the property acquired previous to the Revolution by purchase or by donation. In respect to the latter statute, there is this further objection that it passed after the District of Columbia was taken under the exclusive jurisdiction of Congress, and as to the corporations and property within that district, the right of Virginia to legislate no longer existed....

⁸ *Holy Trinity v. United States*, 143 U.S. 457 (1892)(providing an extensive history of the influence of Christianity upon state and federal constitutional documents and traditions, and concluding that the United States is "**a Christian nation.**"

⁹ *United States v. Macintosh*, 283 U.S. 605, 625 (1931):

We are a Christian people (*Holy Trinity Church v. United States*, 143 U. S. 457, 143 U. S. 470-471), according to one another the equal right of religious freedom and acknowledging with reverence the duty of obedience to the will of God. But, also, we are a nation with the duty to survive; a nation whose Constitution contemplates war as well as peace; whose government must go forward upon the assumption, and safely can proceed upon no other, that unqualified allegiance to the nation and submission and obedience to the laws of the land, as well those made for war as those made for peace, are not inconsistent with the will of God.

¹⁰ Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings* (New York, N.Y.: The Library of America, 1995), p. 716.

¹¹ Kerry S. Walters, "Thomas Paine: My Own Mind is My Own Church," *The American Deists: Voices of Reason and Dissent in the Early Republic* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1992), p. 211.

Christian mythology, according to Paine.¹² In short, Paine did not believe that prayer, personal worship, and regular church attendance were essential for either individuals or an entire nation or body politic. Paine promoted civil liberty and natural rights, including the freedom of religion, press, and conscience. He also promoted governmental transparency and the abolition of slavery. But Paine rejected the text of *The Holy Bible* as being the “word of God.” In part one of *The Age of Reason*, Paine wrote:

Did the book, called the Bible, excel in purity of ideas and expression, all the books that are now extant in the world, I would not take it for my rule of faith, as being the word of God; because the possibility would nevertheless exist of my being imposed upon. But when I see throughout the greatest part of this book, scarcely any thing but a history of the grossest vices, and a collection of the most paltry and contemptible tales, I cannot dishonor my Creator by calling it by this name.¹³

For Paine, the only “word of God” was “the choicest gift of God to man, the GIFT OF REASON”¹⁴; and “THE WORD OF GOD IS THE CREATION WE BEHOLD: And it is in this word, which no human invention can counterfeit or alter, that God speaketh universally to man.”¹⁵ According to Paine, “natural philosophy... is the true theology.”¹⁶ In part one of *The Age of Reason*, Paine writes that the Book of Job and the 19th Psalm may be considered as representations of this “true religion,”¹⁷ but most of *The Holy Bible*, says Paine, is the fraudulent work of priest-craft. Meanwhile, “Adam, if ever there were such a man, was created a Deist; but in the meantime let every man follow, as he has a right to do, the religion and the worship he prefers.”¹⁸ Here, we see, that Paine’s Deism was not wholly ungodly; but unlike the Christian deism of Matthew Tindal (i.e., *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (1730) or Bishop Joseph Butler (i.e., *The Analogy of Religion*), Paine was not interested in proving that the orthodox Christian faith was wholly compatible with natural philosophy. Paine was satisfied with demonstrating that the orthodox Christian faith was a fraud and a hoax.

¹² Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings*, pp. 665-730.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 680.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 685.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 686.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 691.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 691-692.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 719.

The American Revolutionary leaders, however, never went so far as to outright reject the orthodox Christian faith. While there may have been deists, Unitarians, and agnostics among the ranks of the American patriots, it would be a grave error to conclude that they incorporated Paine's deism into the American *Declaration of Independence* (1776) or the *U.S. Constitution* (1787). Significantly, Paine did not promulgate his religious views until 1794-95, in *The Age of Reason*, several years after the founding constitutional documents of the United States were ratified. Moreover, the settled view among the American leaders was that the Christian religion was a restatement and republication of natural religion. Paine's deism was not embraced by the American founding fathers who ratified the *Declaration of Independence* (1776) and the *U.S. Constitution* (1787).

As long as [Thomas Paine] contended himself with polemical defenses of American independence and the right to political self-determination, he was the darling of the young Republic. But the moment he stepped over the line of orthodox respectability in religious matters, the same people who earlier had applauded him as a noble patriot excoriated him as a 'lilly-livered sinical rogue,' 'a drunken atheist,' a 'detested reptile.' The Book that prompted these and other attacks was, of course, *The Age of Reason* (1794-95)... Paine, like his fellow deists on both sides of the Atlantic, was no atheist. But in the eyes of his Christian contemporaries, apostasy from scriptural faith was tantamount to ungodliness.¹⁹

Nevertheless, Thomas Paine's deism has been misrepresented as the representative political ideology that was embraced by James Madison, Thomas Jefferson and most of the other American Founding Fathers. Paine's deism has also been misrepresented as having been incorporated into the text of the American *Declaration of Independence* (1776) and the *United States Constitution* (1787). But the American patriots never endorsed Paine's deistic philosophy, which had come to be associated with the radical French Revolution of the early 1790s. Neither the Hamiltonian Federalist Party or Jeffersonian Anti-Federalist/Democratic-Republican Party went so far as to deny the validity and truths of the orthodox Christian faith. It was the settled opinion that the American constitution has been extracted from the British constitution, and both were deeply-rooted in the orthodox Christian faith.

¹⁹ Kerry S. Walters, "Thomas Paine: My Own Mind is My Own Church," *The American Deists: Voices of Reason and Dissent in the Early Republic* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1992), p. 209.

SUMMARY

The life and legacy of Thomas Paine (1737 – 1809) is important for American constitutional scholars and theologians who question whether deism was the foundation of the constitutional documents of the new United States. There were many men and women who shared Paine’s unorthodox views of religion and rejection of the Christian religion. However, the numerical population of American deists was simply not large enough to shape the public or religious sentiment of colonial British North America, or to influence the Continental Congresses. During the late 18th century, “apostasy from scriptural faith was tantamount to ungodliness,” and Paine’s contemporaries considered his rejection of orthodox Christianity to be ungodly. For these reasons, Paine’s deism should not be considered to be a reflection of mainstream 18th-century American political thought.

Part LIII. Anglican Church: A Biography of Thomas Paine and Notes on *The Age of Reason; Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (1795)-- A Prelude to the American Revolution

A. Life and Times of Thomas Paine (1737 – 1809)

Self-taught and self-made, Thomas Paine was a genius whose eloquence and power of the pen wielded tremendous influence upon his contemporaries. His skills and talents were put to use by the American patriots almost as soon as he emigrated to North America in 1774. In Philadelphia, Paine became a world-renowned revolutionary. His polemical writings against the British crown were quite popular. In 1794-95, Paine’s *The Age of Reason* waged a vicious attack against the legal authority of *The Holy Bible* and paved the way for freedom of conscience, thought, and expression.²⁰ In the end, however, after having reached the conclusion that many of his fellow American patriots had betrayed the noble principles of the American Revolution of ’76, Paine died a very disgruntled, under-

²⁰ Hitherto, the Christian doctrine of love—as interpreted by Rev. Roger Williams and others, had promoted religious tolerance, but Paine’s contributions decimated the legal authority of religion altogether. In many ways, Thomas Paine was no different than Matthew Tindal whose *Christianity as Old as the Gospel* established “reason” the primary hermeneutical tool for interpreting the Bible, thus making “reason” superior to the texts of the Bible.

appreciated American patriot. But Paine's contributions to civil liberty and human rights is nevertheless thought-provoking and enduring.

1. Years in England (1736 – 1774)

The following segment has been copied verbatim from the article "Thomas Paine" published on Wikipedia online encyclopedia:

Thomas Paine was born on January 29, 1736 (NS February 9, 1737), the son of Joseph Pain, a tenant farmer and stay-maker, and Frances (née Cocke) Pain, in Thetford, Norfolk, England. Joseph was a Quaker and Frances an Anglican. Despite claims that Thomas changed the spelling of his family name upon his emigration to America in 1774, he was using "Paine" in 1769, while still in Lewes, Sussex.

He attended Thetford Grammar School (1744–1749), at a time when there was no compulsory education. At the age of 13, he was apprenticed to his father. Following his apprenticeship, aged 19, Paine enlisted and briefly served as a privateer, before returning to Britain in 1759. There, he became a master staymaker, establishing a shop in Sandwich, Kent.

On September 27, 1759, Paine married Mary Lambert. His business collapsed soon after. Mary became pregnant; and, after they moved to Margate, she went into early labour, in which she and their child died.

In July 1761, Paine returned to Thetford to work as a supernumerary officer. In December 1762, he became an Excise Officer in Grantham, Lincolnshire; in August 1764, he was transferred to Alford, also in Lincolnshire, at a salary of £50 per annum. On August 27, 1765, he was dismissed as an Excise Officer for "claiming to have inspected goods he did not inspect". On July 31, 1766, he requested his reinstatement from the Board of Excise, which they granted the next day, upon vacancy. While awaiting that, he worked as a stay-maker.

In 1767, he was appointed to a position in Grampound, Cornwall. Later he asked to leave this post to await a vacancy, and he became a schoolteacher in London.

On February 19, 1768, he was appointed to Lewes in Sussex, a town with a tradition of opposition to the monarchy and pro-republican sentiments since the revolutionary decades of the 17th century. Here he lived above the 15th-century Bull House, the tobacco shop of Samuel Ollive and Esther Ollive.

Paine first became involved in civic matters when he was based in Lewes. He appears in the Town Book as a member of the Court Leet, the governing body for the town. **He was also a member of the parish vestry, an influential local Anglican church group whose responsibilities for parish business would include collecting taxes and tithes to distribute among the poor.**

On March 26, 1771, at age 34, Paine married Elizabeth Ollive, the daughter of his recently deceased landlord, whose business as a grocer and tobacconist he then entered into.

From 1772 to 1773, Paine joined excise officers asking Parliament for better pay and working conditions, publishing, in summer of 1772, *The Case of the Officers of Excise*, a 12-page article, and his first political work, spending the London winter distributing the 4,000 copies printed to the Parliament and others.

In spring 1774, he was again dismissed from the excise service for being absent from his post without permission; his tobacco shop failed, too.

On April 14, to avoid debtors' prison, he sold his household possessions to pay debts. On June 4, 1774, he formally separated from his wife Elizabeth and moved to London, where, in September, mathematician, Fellow of the Royal Society, and Commissioner of the Excise George Lewis Scott introduced him to Benjamin Franklin, who suggested emigration to British colonial America, and gave him a letter of recommendation. In October, Paine emigrated to the American colonies, arriving in Philadelphia on November 30, 1774.

2. Emigration to British North America (1774 – 1787)

The following segment has been copied verbatim from the article “Thomas Paine” published on Wikipedia online encyclopedia:

Paine arrives in America, age 38....

Paine barely survived the transatlantic voyage. The ship's water supplies were bad and typhoid fever killed five passengers. On arriving at Philadelphia, he was too sick to disembark. Benjamin Franklin's physician, there to welcome Paine to America, had him carried off ship; Paine took six weeks to recover. He became a citizen of Pennsylvania ‘by taking the oath of allegiance at a very early period.’ In March 1775, he became editor of the Pennsylvania Magazine, a position he conducted with considerable ability.

Before Paine's arrival in America, sixteen magazines had been founded in the colonies and ultimately failed, each featuring substantial content and reprints from England. In late 1774, Philadelphia printer Robert Aitken announced his plan to create what he called an ‘American Magazine’ with content derived from the colonies. Paine contributed two pieces to the magazine's inaugural issue dated January 1775, and Aitken hired Paine as the Magazine's editor one month later. Under Paine's leadership, the magazine's readership rapidly expanded, achieving a greater circulation in the colonies than any American magazine up until that point. While Aiken had conceived of the magazine as nonpolitical, Paine brought a strong political perspective to its content, writing in its first issue that ‘every heart and hand seem to be engaged in the interesting struggle for American Liberty.’

Paine wrote in the Pennsylvania Magazine that such a publication should become a "nursery of genius" for a nation that had "now outgrown the state of infancy," exercising and educating American minds, and shaping American morality. On March 8, 1775, the Pennsylvania Magazine published an unsigned abolitionist essay titled African Slavery in America. The essay is often attributed to Paine on the basis of a letter by Benjamin Rush, recalling Paine's claim of

authorship to the essay. The essay attacked slavery as an ‘execrable commerce’ and ‘outrage against Humanity and Justice.’

Consciously appealing to a broader and more working class audience, Paine also used the magazine to discuss worker rights to production. This shift in the conceptualization of politics has been described as a part of "the 'modernization' of political consciousness," and the mobilization of ever greater sections of society into political life.

3. Antislavery Activism (1774-1775)

Thomas Paine sincerely believed that the institution of African slavery, together with the transatlantic slave trade, undermined the credibility of both the Christian religion and the noble political goals which the American colonists sought to achieve during the American Revolutionary period. Paine’s views of natural religion would be marshalled to support the more liberal view that the plain language of the American *Declaration of Independence* (1776) required the abolition of the African slave trade and slavery.

Paine and other Philadelphia liberals formed the “**Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage,**” which became the first abolitionist organization in colonial British North America. In 1775, Paine wrote: “[t]hat some desperate wretches should be willing to steal and enslave men by violence and murder for gain, is [more] lamentable than strange.²¹ But that many civilised, Christianised people should approve and be concerned in the savage practice is surprising....”²² Paine made the case that the African slave trade was a most wicked practice, and that the English colonists were without pretense or excuse.

Our traders in men (an unnatural commodity) must know the wickedness of that slave trade if they attend to reasoning or the dictates of their own hearts. [But they] shun and stifle all these [and] wilfully sacrifice conscience and the character of integrity to that golden idol...

The managers of [the slave trade] testify that many of these African nations inhabit fertile countries, are industrious farmers, enjoy plenty and lived quietly, averse to war, before the Europeans debauched them

²¹THOMAS PAINE CALLS FOR AN END TO SLAVERY (1775)

<https://alphahistory.com/americanrevolution/thomas-paine-calls-end-slavery-1775/>

²² Ibid.

with liquors... By such wicked and inhuman ways, the English are said to enslave towards 100,000 yearly, of which 30,000 are supposed to die by barbarous treatment in the first year...

So monstrous is the making and keeping them slaves at all... and the many evils attending the practice, [such] as selling husbands away from wives, children from parents and from each other, in violation of sacred and natural ties; and opening the way for adulteries, incests and many shocking consequences, for all of which the guilty masters must answer to the final judge...²³

Significantly, Paine goes on to state why slavery and the carrying on of the African slave trade were both immoral and contrary to the very natural law principles for which the Americans were carrying on their war for independence. For Paine, keeping and holding slaves and carrying on the slave trade were incompatible with the colonists insistence for liberty from Great Britain. In his same anti-slavery essay, he wrote:

1. With that consistency... they complain so loudly of attempts to enslave them, while they hold so many hundred thousands in slavery and annually enslave many thousands more, without any pretense of authority or claim upon them.

2. How just, how suitable to our crime is the punishment with which providence threatens us? We have enslaved multitudes and shed much innocent blood in doing it, and are now threatened with the same [by the English]...

3. [Should] all not immediately discontinue and renounce it, with grief and abhorrence? Should not every society bear testimony against it and [consider] obstinate persisters in it bad men, enemies to their country, and exclude them from fellowship, as they often do for much lesser faults?²⁴

Thomas Paine's prophetic words were not isolated; nor was he alone in expressing these anti-slavery sentiments that the principles of natural law, natural rights, and natural religion absolutely prohibited the institution of African slavery and slave

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

trade. For example, in England, the Case of *Somerset v. Stewart* (1772) 98 ER 499, (1772) 20 State Tr 1, (1772) Lofft 1 upheld the same antislavery view. And in colonial British North America, successful court challenges to the institution of African slavery occurred in Vermont (1777), followed by Pennsylvania (1780), Massachusetts (1783) and Connecticut (1784).

4. Publication of *Common Sense* (1776)

There is no direct evidence that Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* was a reference to the Scottish Enlightenment or to Scottish Common Sense Realism, but this publication has served the same essential objectives of those movements.

Sophia Rosenfeld argues that Paine was highly innovative in his use of the commonplace notion of 'common sense.' He synthesized various philosophical and political uses of the term in a way that permanently impacted American political thought. He used two ideas from **Scottish Common Sense Realism**: that ordinary people can indeed make sound judgments on major political issues, and that there exists a body of popular wisdom that is readily apparent to anyone. Paine also used a notion of 'common sense' favored by philosophes in the Continental Enlightenment. They held that common sense could refute the claims of traditional institutions. Thus, Paine used '**common sense**' as a weapon to de-legitimize the monarchy and overturn prevailing conventional wisdom. Rosenfeld concludes that the phenomenal appeal of his pamphlet resulted from his synthesis of popular and elite elements in the independence movement.

According to historian Robert Middlekauff, *Common Sense* became immensely popular mainly because Paine appealed to widespread convictions. Monarchy, he said, was preposterous and it had a heathenish origin. It was an institution of the devil. **Paine pointed to the Old Testament, where almost all kings had seduced the Israelites to worship idols instead of God.** Paine also denounced aristocracy, which together with monarchy were 'two ancient tyrannies.' **They violated the laws of nature, human reason, and the 'universal order of things,' which began with God.** That was, Middlekauff says, exactly what most Americans wanted to hear. He calls the Revolutionary generation 'the children of the twice-bore.' because in their childhood they had experienced **the Great Awakening**, which, for the first time, had tied Americans together,

transcending denominational and ethnic boundaries and giving them a **sense of patriotism.**²⁵

Dated February 14, 1776, Paine's *Common Sense* picks up where Martin Luther (1483 – 1546), the English Calvinistic Puritans (1600 – 1650s), and the Protestant Reformation stopped— *Common Sense* as polemic in favor of natural rights is a continuation of the Protestant Reformation in colonial British North America. Paine's work was a superb polemic against “Divine Rights” of both King and Priest (i.e., the British Monarchy and the Church of England). It provides the backdrop and the context, perhaps, whereby we might better understand the general American mood and the mind-set of the American Founding Fathers who ratified the American *Declaration of Independence* later during that year on July 4, 1776.²⁶

The central theme of *Common Sense* is natural law and natural rights— “[t]he laying a Country desolate with Fire and Sword, declaring War against the *natural rights* of all Mankind, and extirpating the Defenders thereof from the Face of the Earth, is the Concern of every Man to whom Nature hath given the Power of feeling....”²⁷ Paine was moved to act, within the Reformed Protestant tradition, in *Common Sense*, where he writes:

These portions of scripture are direct and positive. They admit of no equivocal construction. That the Almighty hath here entered is protest against monarchial government is true, or the scripture is false. And a man hath good reason to believe that there is as much of king-craft, as priest-craft, in withholding the scripture from the public in Popish countries. For monarchy in every instance is the Popery of government.²⁸

The government, says Paine, is a necessary evil that is designed simply and only to curtail “vice.”²⁹ It is thus not hard to see here the Paine readily adopts the same view of Bishop Joseph Butler's *The Analogy of Religion* (1736). For Paine concurred that the fundamental problem in human society is the tension between

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The Preface to *Common Sense* states: “P.S. The Publication of this new Edition hath been delayed, with a View of taking notice (had it been necessary) of any Attempt to refute the Doctrine of Independence: As no Answer hat yet appeared, it is now presumed that none will, the Time needful for getting such a Performance ready for the Public being considerably past.” Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings*, p. 6.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

“virtue” and “vice,” and he acknowledged that the increase in the power and strength of government was due in proportionate measure to the increase in “vice.”³⁰ “Here then,” writes Paine, “is the origin and rise of government; namely, a mode rendered necessary by the inability of *moral virtue* to govern the world....”³¹

As the American colonists had to deal with the “constitution of England,”³² Paine’s critique was as follows:

Paine has a claim to the title The Father of the American Revolution, which rests on his pamphlets, especially *Common Sense*, which crystallized sentiment for independence in 1776. It was published in Philadelphia on January 10, 1776, and signed anonymously "by an Englishman". It was an immediate success, quickly spreading 100,000 copies in three months to the two million residents of the 13 colonies. During the course of the American Revolution, a total of about 500,000 copies were sold, including unauthorized editions. Paine's original title for the pamphlet was *Plain Truth*, but Paine's friend, pro-independence advocate Benjamin Rush, suggested *Common Sense* instead.

The pamphlet came into circulation in January 1776, after the Revolution had started. It was passed around and often read aloud in taverns, contributing significantly to spreading the idea of republicanism, bolstering enthusiasm for separation from Britain, and encouraging recruitment for the Continental Army. Paine provided a new and convincing argument for independence by advocating a complete break with history. *Common Sense* is oriented to the future in a way that compels the reader to make an immediate choice. It offers a solution for Americans disgusted with and alarmed at the threat of tyranny.

Paine's attack on monarchy in *Common Sense* is essentially an attack on George III. Whereas colonial resentments were originally directed primarily against the king's ministers and Parliament, Paine laid the responsibility firmly at the king's door. *Common Sense* was the most widely read pamphlet of the American Revolution. It was a clarion

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p. 8.

³² Ibid., p. 9.

call for unity against the corrupt British court, so as to realize America's providential role in providing an asylum for liberty. Written in a direct and lively style, it denounced the decaying despotisms of Europe and pilloried hereditary monarchy as an absurdity. At a time when many still hoped for reconciliation with Britain, *Common Sense* demonstrated to many the inevitability of separation.

Paine was not on the whole expressing original ideas in *Common Sense*, but rather employing rhetoric as a means to arouse resentment of the Crown. To achieve these ends, he pioneered a style of political writing suited to the democratic society he envisioned, with *Common Sense* serving as a primary example. Part of Paine's work was to render complex ideas intelligible to average readers of the day, with clear, concise writing unlike the formal, learned style favored by many of Paine's contemporaries. Scholars have put forward various explanations to account for its success, including the historic moment, Paine's easy-to-understand style, his democratic ethos, and his use of psychology and ideology.

Common Sense was immensely popular in disseminating to a very wide audience ideas that were already in common use among the elite who comprised Congress and the leadership cadre of the emerging nation, who rarely cited Paine's arguments in their public calls for independence. The pamphlet probably had little direct influence on the Continental Congress' decision to issue a *Declaration of Independence*, since that body was more concerned with how declaring independence would affect the war effort. One distinctive idea in *Common Sense* is Paine's beliefs regarding the peaceful nature of republics; his views were an early and strong conception of what scholars would come to call the democratic peace theory.³³

Significantly, during the American Revolutionary War (1775 – 1783) period, many American Loyalists both criticized and opposed Paine's *Common Sense*. However, following the war and after independence was attained, many of the American patriots who joined the Federalist Party opposed Paine's brand of activism as being excessive and dangerous:

³³ "Thomas Paine," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Paine#Common_Sense_\(1776\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Paine#Common_Sense_(1776))

Loyalists vigorously attacked *Common Sense*; one attack, titled *Plain Truth* (1776), by Marylander James Chalmers, said Paine was a political quack and warned that without monarchy, the government would ‘degenerate into democracy.’ Even some American revolutionaries objected to *Common Sense*; late in life John Adams called it a ‘crapulous mass.’ Adams disagreed with the type of radical democracy promoted by Paine (that men who did not own property should still be allowed to vote and hold public office) and published *Thoughts on Government* in 1776 to advocate a more conservative approach to republicanism.³⁴

At the end of Paine’s life, he had come to severely excoriate President George Washington and many other American officials as having betrayed the original objectives of the American Revolution. Paine’s brand of agnostic deism was not widely shared by most Americans, and the new United States continued to exist as a deeply Christian and religious nation.

5. Publication of *The American Crisis* (1776)

The following segment has been copied verbatim from the article “Thomas Paine” published on Wikipedia online encyclopedia:

In late 1776, Paine published *The American Crisis* pamphlet series to inspire the Americans in their battles against the British army. He juxtaposed the conflict between the good American devoted to civic virtue and the selfish provincial man. To inspire his soldiers, General George Washington had *The American Crisis*, first Crisis pamphlet, read aloud to them. It begins:

These are the times that try men's souls: The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like Hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper

³⁴ Ibid.

price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as freedom should not be highly rated.³⁵

6. Congressional Committee on Foreign Affairs

The following segment has been copied verbatim from the article “Thomas Paine” published on Wikipedia online encyclopedia:

In 1777, Paine became secretary of the Congressional Committee on Foreign Affairs. The following year, he alluded to secret negotiation underway with France in his pamphlets. His enemies denounced his indiscretions. There was scandal; together with Paine's conflict with Robert Morris and Silas Deane it led to Paine's expulsion from the Committee in 1779.

However, in 1781, he accompanied John Laurens on his mission to France. Eventually, after much pleading from Paine, New York State recognized his political services by presenting him with an estate at New Rochelle, New York and Paine received money from Pennsylvania and from Congress at Washington's suggestion. During the Revolutionary War, Paine served as an aide-de-camp to the important general, Nathanael Greene.

Silas Deane Affair

In what may have been an error, and perhaps even contributed to his resignation as the secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs, Paine was openly critical of Silas Deane, an American diplomat who had been appointed in March 1776 by the Congress to travel to France in secret. Deane's goal was to influence the French government to finance the colonists in their fight for independence. Paine largely saw Deane as a war profiteer who had little respect for principle, having been under the employ of Robert Morris, one of the primary financiers of the American Revolution and working with Pierre Beaumarchais, a French royal agent sent to the colonies by King Louis to investigate the Anglo-American conflict. Paine uncovered the financial connection between Morris, who was Superintendent for Finance of the Continental Congress, and Deane. Paine labeled Deane as

³⁵ Ibid.

unpatriotic, and demanded that there be a public investigation into Morris' financing of the Revolution, as he had contracted with his own company for around \$500,000.

Wealthy men, such as Robert Morris, John Jay and powerful merchant bankers, were leaders of the Continental Congress and defended holding public positions while at the same time profiting off their own personal financial dealings with governments. Amongst Paine's criticisms, he had written in the Pennsylvania Packet that France had "prefaced [their] alliance by an early and generous friendship," referring to aid that had been provided to American colonies prior to the recognition of the Franco-American treaties. This was alleged to be effectively an embarrassment to France, which potentially could have jeopardized the alliance. John Jay, the President of the Congress, who had been a fervent supporter of Deane, immediately spoke out against Paine's comments. The controversy eventually became public, and Paine was then denounced as unpatriotic for criticizing an American revolutionary. He was even physically assaulted twice in the street by Deane supporters. This much-added stress took a large toll on Paine, who was generally of a sensitive character and he resigned as secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs in 1779. Paine left the Committee without even having enough money to buy food for himself.

Much later, when Paine returned from his mission to France, Deane's corruption had become more widely acknowledged. Many, including Robert Morris, apologized to Paine and Paine's reputation in Philadelphia was restored.³⁶

7. Public Policy, Economics, and the Public Good

The following segment has been copied verbatim from the article "Thomas Paine" published on Wikipedia online encyclopedia:

In 1780, Paine published a pamphlet entitled "Public Good," in which he made the case that territories west of the 13 colonies that had been part of the British Empire belonged after the Declaration of Independence to the American government, and did not belong to any

³⁶ Ibid.

of the 13 states or to any individual speculators. A royal charter of 1609 had granted to the Virginia Company land stretching to the Pacific Ocean. **A small group of wealthy Virginia land speculators, including the Washington, Lee, and Randolph families, had taken advantage of this royal charter to survey and to claim title to huge swaths of land,** including much land west of the 13 colonies. **In "Public Good," Paine argued that these lands belonged to the American government as represented by the Continental Congress.** This angered many of Paine's wealthy Virginia friends, including **Richard Henry Lee of the powerful Lee family,** who had been Paine's closest ally in Congress, **George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, all of whom had claimed to huge wild tracts that Paine was advocating should be government owned.** The view that Paine had advocated eventually prevailed when the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 was passed.

The animosity Paine felt as a result of the publication of "Public Good" fueled his decision to embark with Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens on a mission to travel to Paris to obtain funding for the American war effort.³⁷

8. Return to London, England (1787 – 1792) and Visit to Paris, France (1792 – 1794)

The following segment has been copied verbatim from the article "Thomas Paine" published on Wikipedia online encyclopedia:

Paine accompanied Col. John Laurens to France and is credited with initiating the mission. It landed in France in March 1781 and returned to America in August with 2.5 million livres in silver, as part of a "present" of 6 million and a loan of 10 million. The meetings with the French king were most likely conducted in the company and under the influence of Benjamin Franklin. Upon returning to the United States with this highly welcomed cargo, Thomas Paine and probably Col. Laurens, "positively objected" that General Washington should propose that Congress remunerate him for his services, for fear of setting "a bad precedent and an improper mode". **Paine made influential acquaintances in Paris and helped organize the Bank**

³⁷ Ibid.

of North America to raise money to supply the army. In 1785, he was given \$3,000 by the U.S. Congress in recognition of his service to the nation.

Henry Laurens (father of Col. John Laurens) had been the ambassador to the Netherlands, but he was captured by the British on his return trip there. When he was later exchanged for the prisoner Lord Cornwallis in late 1781, Paine proceeded to the Netherlands to continue the loan negotiations. There remains some question as to the relationship of Henry Laurens and Thomas Paine to Robert Morris as the Superintendent of Finance and his business associate Thomas Willing who became the first president of the Bank of North America in January 1782. They had accused Morris of profiteering in 1779 and Willing had voted against the Declaration of Independence. Although Morris did much to restore his reputation in 1780 and 1781, the credit for obtaining these critical loans to "organize" the Bank of North America for approval by Congress in December 1781 should go to Henry or John Laurens and Thomas Paine more than to Robert Morris.

Paine bought his only house in 1783 on the corner of Farnsworth Avenue and Church Streets in Bordentown City, New Jersey and he lived in it periodically until his death in 1809. This is the only place in the world where Paine purchased real estate. In 1785, Paine was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society.

In 1787, a bridge of Paine's design was built across the Schuylkill River at Philadelphia. At this time his work on single-arch iron bridges led him back to Paris, France. Because Paine had few friends when arriving in France aside from Lafayette and Jefferson, he continued to correspond heavily with Benjamin Franklin, a long time friend and mentor. Franklin provided letters of introduction for Paine to use to gain associates and contacts in France.

Later that year, Paine returned to London from Paris. He then released a pamphlet on August 20 called *Prospects on the Rubicon: or, an investigation into the Causes and Consequences of the Politics to be Agitated at the Meeting of Parliament*. Tensions between England and France were increasing, and this pamphlet urged the British Ministry to reconsider the consequences of war with France. Paine sought to

turn the public opinion against the war to create better relations between the countries, avoid the taxes of war upon the citizens, and not engage in a war he believed would ruin both nations.³⁸

8. Publication of *Rights of Man* (1791)

The following segment has been copied verbatim from the article “Thomas Paine” published on Wikipedia online encyclopedia:

Back in London by 1787, Paine would become engrossed in the French Revolution that began two years later, and decided to travel to France in 1790. Meanwhile, **conservative intellectual Edmund Burke launched a counterrevolutionary blast against the French Revolution, entitled *Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790)*, which strongly appealed to the landed class, and sold 30,000 copies. Paine set out to refute it in his *Rights of Man (1791)*.** He wrote it not as a quick pamphlet, but as a long, abstract political tract of 90,000 words which tore apart monarchies and traditional social institutions. On January 31, 1791, he gave the manuscript to publisher Joseph Johnson. A visit by government agents dissuaded Johnson, so Paine gave the book to publisher J. S. Jordan, then went to Paris, per William Blake's advice. He charged three good friends, William Godwin, Thomas Brand Hollis, and Thomas Holcroft, with handling publication details. **The book appeared on March 13, 1791, and sold nearly a million copies. It was "eagerly read by reformers, Protestant dissenters, democrats, London craftsmen, and the skilled factory-hands of the new industrial north".**

Undeterred by the government campaign to discredit him, Paine issued his *Rights of Man*, Part the Second, Combining Principle and Practice in February 1792. **It detailed a representative government with enumerated social programs to remedy the numbing poverty of commoners through progressive tax measures.** Radically reduced in price to ensure unprecedented circulation, it was sensational in its impact and gave birth to reform societies. An indictment for seditious libel followed, for both publisher and author, while government agents followed Paine and instigated mobs, hate meetings, and burnings in effigy. A fierce pamphlet war also resulted,

³⁸ Ibid.

in which Paine was defended and assailed in dozens of works. **The authorities aimed, with ultimate success, to chase Paine out of Great Britain. He was then tried in absentia and found guilty, although never executed.** The French translation of *Rights of Man*, Part II was published in April 1792. The translator, François Lanthenas, eliminated the dedication to Lafayette, as he believed Paine thought too highly of Lafayette, who was seen as a royalist sympathizer at the time.

In summer of 1792, he answered the sedition and libel charges thus: 'If, to expose the fraud and imposition of monarchy ... to promote universal peace, civilization, and commerce, and to break the chains of political superstition, and raise degraded man to his proper rank; if these things be libellous ... let the name of libeller be engraved on my tomb.'

Paine was an enthusiastic supporter of the French Revolution, and was granted honorary French citizenship alongside prominent contemporaries such as Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and others. Paine's honorary citizenship was in recognition of the publishing of his *Rights of Man*, Part II and the sensation it created within France. Despite his inability to speak French, he was elected to the National Convention, representing the district of Pas-de-Calais.

Several weeks after his election to the National Convention, Paine was selected as one of nine deputies to be part of the Convention's Constitutional Committee, who were charged to draft a suitable constitution for the French Republic. He subsequently participated in the Constitutional Committee in drafting the Girondin constitutional project. **He voted for the French Republic, but argued against the execution of Louis XVI, saying the monarch should instead be exiled to the United States: firstly, because of the way royalist France had come to the aid of the American Revolution; and secondly, because of a moral objection to capital punishment in general and to revenge killings in particular.** However, Paine's speech in defense of Louis XVI was interrupted by Jean-Paul Marat, who claimed that as a Quaker, Paine's religious beliefs ran counter to inflicting capital punishment and thus he should be ineligible to vote. Marat interrupted a second time, stating that the

translator was deceiving the convention by distorting the meanings of Paine's words, prompting Paine to provide a copy of the speech as proof that he was being correctly translated.

Regarded as an ally of the Girondins, he was seen with increasing disfavor by the Montagnards, who were now in power; and in particular by **Maximilien Robespierre**. A decree was passed at the end of 1793 excluding foreigners from their places in the Convention (Anacharsis Cloots was also deprived of his place). **Paine was arrested and imprisoned in December 1793.**

Paine wrote the second part of *Rights of Man* on a desk in Thomas 'Clio' Rickman's house, with whom he was staying in 1792 before he fled to France. This desk is currently on display in the People's History Museum in Manchester.³⁹

B. Criticism of President George Washington and the Federalists

The following segment has been copied verbatim from the article “Thomas Paine” published on Wikipedia online encyclopedia:

Upset that U.S. President George Washington, a friend since the Revolutionary War, did nothing during Paine's imprisonment in France, **Paine believed Washington had betrayed him and conspired with Robespierre**. While staying with Monroe, Paine planned to send Washington a letter of grievance on the president's birthday. Monroe stopped the letter from being sent, and after Paine's criticism of the Jay Treaty, which was supported by Washington, Monroe suggested that Paine live elsewhere.

Paine then sent a stinging letter to George Washington, in which he described him as an incompetent commander and a vain and ungrateful person. Having received no response, **Paine contacted his longtime publisher Benjamin Bache, the Jeffersonian democrat, to publish his Letter to George Washington of 1796 in which he derided Washington's reputation by describing him as a treacherous man who was unworthy of his fame as a military and political hero.** Paine wrote that "the world will be puzzled to decide whether you are an apostate or an impostor; whether you have

³⁹ Ibid.

abandoned good principles or whether you ever had any". **He declared that without France's aid Washington could not have succeeded in the American Revolution and had 'but little share in the glory of the final event.'** He also commented on Washington's character, saying that Washington had no sympathetic feelings and was a hypocrite.⁴⁰

Paine's criticism of President Washington and his Federalist supporters certainly does highlight to rift between the American political establishment and those revolutionaries who wanted the results of the American revolution to achieve much more to promote the dignity and rights of the common man. Paine obviously felt that the Americans has done nothing more than to achieve their independence from Great Britain while perpetuating the same forms of social oppression, exclusivity, and corruption. He felt that the Jay Treaty had signified that the Americans had betrayed the authentic principles of the American Revolution, and that President Washington and others had simply gotten into bed with the conservative British elites. Paine's scathing letter to President Washington has been re-printed below:

Table "Thomas Paine's Letter to President George Washington"

Letter to President George Washington (July 30, 1796)⁴¹

This is the ground upon America now stands. All her rights of commerce and navigation are to begin anew, and that the loss of character to begin with. If there is sense enough left in the heart to call a blush into the cheek, the Washington Administration must be ashamed to appear. And as to you, Sir, treacherous in private friendship (for so you have been to me, and that in the day of danger) and a hypocrite in public life, the world will be puzzled to decide whether you are an apostate or an imposter; whether you have abandoned good principles, or whether you ever had any.⁴²

It was with pleasure that every sincere friend to America beheld, as the natural effect of union, her rising prosperity; and it was with grief they saw that prosperity mixed, even in the blossom, with the germ of corruption. Monopolies of every kind marked your administration almost in the moment of its commencement. The lands obtained by the revolution were lavished upon partizans; the interest of the disbanded soldier was sold to the speculator; injustice was acted under the pretence of faith; and the chief of the army became the patron of the fraud. From such a beginning what could be expected, but what has happened? A mean and servile submission to the insults of one nation, treachery and ingratitude to another....

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ "To George Washington from Thomas Paine, 30 July 1796"
<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-20-02-0329>

⁴² Thomas Paine, "Letter to George Washington", Paris, 30 July, 1796, In *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Moncure D. Conway, (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1967), Vol. IV, 252.

Some vices make their approach with such a splendid appearance, that we scarcely know to what class of moral distinctions they belong. They are rather virtues corrupted, than vices originally. But meanness and ingratitude have nothing equivocal in their character. There is not a trait in them that renders them doubtful. They are so originally vice, that they are generated in the dung of other vices, and crawl into existence with the filth upon their back. The fugitives have found protection in you, and the levee-room is their place of rendezvous.

As the Federal Constitution is a copy, not quite so base as the original, of the form of the British government, an imitation of its vices was naturally to be expected. So intimate is the connection between form and practice, that to adopt the one is to invite the other. Imitation is naturally progressive, and is rapidly so in matters that are vicious....

The part I acted in the American revolution is well known; I shall not here repeat it. I know also that had it not been for the aid received from France in men, money and ships, that your cold and unmilitary conduct (as I shall shew in the course of this letter) would, in all probability, have lost America; at least she would not have been the independent nation she now is. You slept away your time in the field till the finances of the country were completely exhausted, and you have but little share in the glory of the final event. It is time, sir, to speak the undisguised language of historical truth....

John Adams is one of those men who never contemplated the origin of government, or comprehended any thing of first principles. If he had, he must have seen that the right to set up and establish hereditary government never did, and never can, exist in any generation, at any time whatever; that it is of the nature of treason; because it is an attempt to take away the rights of all the minors living at that time, and of all succeeding generations. It is of a degree beyond common treason. It is a sin against nature. The equal right of generations is a right fixed in the nature of things. It belongs to the son when of age, as it belonged to the father before him. John Adams would himself deny the right that any former deceased generation could have to decree authoritatively a succession of Governors over him, or over his children; and yet he assumes the pretended right, treasonable as it is, of acting it himself. His ignorance is his best excuse.

John Jay has said (and this John was always the sycophant of every thing in power, from Mr. Girard in America to Grenville in England) John Jay has said, that the Senate should have been appointed for life. He would then have been sure of never wanting a lucrative appointment for himself, or have had any fears about impeachments. These are the disguised traitors that call themselves federalists.

Could I have known to what degree of corruption & perfidy the administrative part of the government in America had descended, I could have been at no loss to have understood the reservedness of Mr. Washington towards me, during my imprisonment in this Luxembourg. There are cases in which silence is a loud language....

I will here explain the cause of my imprisonment, and return to Mr. Washington afterwards.

As my citizenship in America was not altered or diminished, by any thing I had done in Europe (on the contrary it ought to have been considered as strengthened, for it was the American principle of government that I was endeavouring to spread in Europe) and as it is the duty of every government to charge itself with the care of any of its citizens who

may happen to fall under an arbitrary persecution abroad, and is also one of the reasons for which Ambassadors or Ministers are appointed,—it was the duty of the executive department in America to have made (at least) some enquiries about me, as soon as it heard of my imprisonment. But if this had not been the case, that government owed it to me on every ground and principle of honor and gratitude. Mr. Washington owed it to me on every score of private acquaintance, I will not now say, friendship; for it has for some time been known, by those who know him, that he has no friendships; that he is incapable of forming any; he can serve or desert a man or a cause with constitutional indifference; and it is this cold hermaphrodite faculty that imposed itself upon the world, and was credited for a while by enemies as by friends, for prudence, moderation and impartiality.... I had then been imprisoned seven months, and the silence of the executive government of America, Mr. Washington, upon the case and upon every thing respecting me, was explanation enough to Robespierre that he might proceed to extremities....

All that period of my imprisonment, at least, I owe not to Robespierre, but to his colleague in projects, George Washington. Immediately upon my liberation Mr. Monroe invited me to his house, where I remained more than a year and an half; and I speak of his aid and his friendship, as an open hearted man will always do in such a case, with respect and gratitude.

Being now once more abroad in the world I began to find that I was not the only one who had conceived an unfavourable opinion of Mr. Washington. It was evident that his character was on the decline as well among Americans as among foreigners of different nations. From being the chief of a government, he had made himself the chief of a party; and his integrity was questioned, for his politics had a doubtful appearance. The mission of Mr. Jay to London, notwithstanding there was an American minister there already, had then taken place, and was beginning to be talked of. It appeared to others, as it did to me, to be enveloped in mystery, which every day served either to encrease or to explain into matter of suspicion....

In the year 1790, or about that time, Mr. Washington as President had sent Gouverneur Morris to London as his secret agent to have some communication with the British ministry. To cover the agency of Morris it was given out, I know not by whom, that he went as an agent from Robert Morris to borrow money in Europe, and the report was permitted to pass uncontradicted....

A great bustle has been made by Mr. Washington about the conduct of Genet in America; while that of his own minister, [Robert] Morris, in France was infinitely more reproachable. If Genet was imprudent or rash, he was not treacherous; but Morris was all three. He was the enemy of the French revolution in every stage of it....

Morris still loiters in Europe, chiefly in England; and Mr. Washington is still in correspondence with him; Mr. Washington ought therefore to expect, especially since his conduct in the affair of Jay's treaty, that France must consider Morris and Washington as men of the same description. The chief difference, however, between the two is (for in politics there is none) that the one is profligate enough to profess an indifference about moral principles, and the other is prudent enough to conceal the want of them....

I have now done with Mr. Washington on the score of private affairs. It would have been far more agreeable to me, had his conduct been such as not to have merited these reproaches. Errors or caprices of the temper can be pardoned and forgotten; but a cold

deliberate crime of the heart, such as Mr. Washington is capable of acting, is not to be washed away. I now proceed to other matter....

The character, which Mr. Washington has attempted to act in the world, is a sort of non-describable, cameleon-coloured thing, called prudence. It is, in many cases, a substitute for principle, and is so nearly allied to hypocrisy, that it easily slides into it. His genius for prudence furnished him in this instance with an expedient, that served, as is the natural and general character of all expedients, to diminish the embarrassments of the moment and multiply them afterwards; for he authorised it to be made known to the French government, as a confidential matter (Mr. Washington should recollect that I was a member of the Convention, & had the means of knowing what I here state) he authorized it, I say, to be made known, and that for the purpose of preventing any uneasiness to France on the score of Mr. Jay's mission to England, that the object of that mission, and of Mr. Jay's authority, was restricted to that of demanding the surrender of the western posts and indemnification for the cargoes captured in American vessels. Mr. Washington knows that this was untrue; and knowing this, he had good reason to himself for refusing to furnish the House of Representatives with copies of the instructions given to Jay; as he might suspect, among other things, that he should also be called upon for copies of instructions given to other ministers, and that in the contradiction of instructions his want of integrity would be detected. Mr. Washington may now, perhaps, learn, when it is too late, to be of any use to him, that a man will pass better through the world with a thousand open errors upon his back, than in being detected in ONE sly fals[e]hood. When one is detected, a thousand are suspected.

The first account that arrived in Paris of a treaty being negotiated by Mr. Jay (for nobody suspected any) came in an English newspaper, which announced that a treaty offensive and defensive had been concluded between the United States of America and England. This was immediately denied by every American in Paris, as an impossible thing; and though it was disbelieved by the French, it imprinted a suspicion that some underhand business was going forward. At length the treaty itself arrived, and every well-affected American blushed with shame....

The Washington administration having waded through the slough of negotiation, and whilst it amused France with professions of friendship contrived to injure her, immediately throws off the hypocrite, and assumes the swaggering air of a bravado. The party papers of that imbecile administration were on this occasion filled with paragraphs about Sovereignty....

The party papers of that imbecile administration were on this occasion filled with paragraphs about Sovereignty. A paltroon may boast of his sovereign right to let another kick him, and this is the only kind of sovereignty shewn in the treaty with England. But these dashing paragraphs, as Timothy Pickering well knows, were intended for France; without whose assistance in men, money and ships, Mr. Washington would have cut but a poor figure in the American war. But of his military talents I shall speak hereafter....

Yet this is the trick upon which Jay's treaty is founded, so far as it has relation to the treaty pre-existing with France. It is a counter-treaty to that treaty, and perverts all the great articles of that treaty to the injury of France, and makes them operate as a bounty to England with whom France is at war....

The Washington administration shews great desire, that the treaty between France and the

United States be preserved. Nobody can doubt their sincerity upon this matter. There is not a British minister, a British merchant, or a British agent or sailor in America, that does not anxiously wish the same thing. The treaty with France serves now as a passport to supply England with naval stores and other articles of American produce, whilst the same articles, when coming to France, are made contraband or seizable by Jay's treaty with England. The treaty with France says, that neutral ships make neutral property, and thereby gives protection to English property on board American ships; and Jay's treaty delivers up French property on board American ships to be seized by the English. It is too paltry to talk of faith, of national honour, and of the preservation of treaties, whilst such a bare-faced treachery as this stares the world in the face....

It was, at the same time, officially declared to the American minister at Paris, that the French Republic had rather have the American government for an open enemy than a treacherous friend. This, sir, together with the internal distractions caused in America, and the loss of character in the world, is the eventful crisis, alluded to in the beginning of this letter, to which your double politics have brought the affairs of your country. It is time that the eyes of America be opened upon you....

This is the ground upon which America now stands. All her rights of commerce and navigation have to commence anew, and that with loss of character to begin with. If there is sense enough left in the heart to call a blush into the cheek, the Washington administration must be ashamed to appear.———And as to you, sir, treacherous in private friendship (for so you have been to me, and that in the day of danger) and a hypocrite in public life, the world will be puzzled to decide, whether you are an apostate or an impostor; whether you have abandoned good principles, or whether you ever had any? ...

Thomas Paine

C. Notes on *The Age of Reason* (1794)

Thomas Paine shook up the British Empire and, for that reason, the balance of power between the Americans and the French. His attacks on the Christian religion and the Church of England were poignant and sharp. His attacks upon public corruption and economic monopoly were sobering and unsettling. When he traveled to France in 1792, he desired to promote global revolution and liberty and believed that the new United States was the natural ally of the French revolutionaries. However, while in France, Paine was to meet an abrupt disappointment, as he was soon to recognize that the Washington administration did not share his same views. When Paine was arrested in France, the Washington administration abandoned him and, apparently, assumed that Paine would be (or

had been) executed.⁴³ Paine never recovered from what he believed was a personal betrayal of President Washington and his backers. At this point, Paine's bitterness

⁴³ See, e.g., "Thomas Paine," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Paine#Common_Sense_\(1776\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Paine#Common_Sense_(1776)):

"Paine was arrested in France on December 28, 1793. Joel Barlow was unsuccessful in securing Paine's release by circulating a petition among American residents in Paris. Sixteen American citizens were allowed to plead for Paine's release to the Convention, yet President Marc-Guillaume Alexis Vadier of the Committee of General Security refused to acknowledge Paine's American citizenship, stating he was an Englishman and a citizen of a country at war with France.

"Paine himself protested and claimed that he was a citizen of the U.S., which was an ally of Revolutionary France, rather than of Great Britain, which was by that time at war with France. However, Gouverneur Morris, the American minister to France, did not press his claim, and Paine later wrote that Morris had connived at his imprisonment. Paine narrowly escaped execution. A chalk mark was supposed to be left by the gaoler on the door of a cell to denote that the prisoner inside was due to be removed for execution. In Paine's case, the mark had accidentally been made on the inside of his door rather than the outside; this was due to the fact that the door of Paine's cell had been left open whilst the gaoler was making his rounds that day, since Paine had been receiving official visitors. But for this quirk of fate, Paine would have been executed the following morning. He kept his head and survived the few vital days needed to be spared by the fall of Robespierre on 9 Thermidor (July 27, 1794).

"Paine was released in November 1794 largely because of the work of the new American Minister to France, James Monroe, who successfully argued the case for Paine's American citizenship.[80] In July 1795, he was re-admitted into the Convention, as were other surviving Girondins. Paine was one of only three députés to oppose the adoption of the new 1795 constitution because it eliminated universal suffrage, which had been proclaimed by the Montagnard Constitution of 1793.

"In 1796, a bridge he designed was erected over the mouth of the Wear River at Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, England. This bridge, the Sunderland arch, was after the same design as his Schuylkill River Bridge in Philadelphia and it became the prototype for many subsequent voussoir arches made in iron and steel. In addition to receiving a British patent for the single-span iron bridge, Paine developed a smokeless candle and worked with inventor John Fitch in developing steam engines.

"In 1797, Paine lived in Paris with Nicholas Bonneville and his wife. As well as Bonneville's other controversial guests, Paine aroused the suspicions of authorities. Bonneville hid the Royalist Antoine Joseph Barruel-Beauvert at his home. Beauvert had been outlawed following the coup of 18 Fructidor on September 4, 1797. Paine believed that the United States under President John Adams had betrayed revolutionary France. Bonneville was then briefly jailed and his presses were confiscated, which meant financial ruin.[citation needed]

"In 1800, still under police surveillance, Bonneville took refuge with his father in Evreux. Paine stayed on with him, helping Bonneville with the burden of translating the 'Covenant Sea.' The same year, Paine purportedly had a meeting with Napoleon. Napoleon claimed he slept with a copy of Rights of Man under his pillow and went so far as to say to Paine that 'a statue of gold should be erected to you in every city in the universe.' Paine discussed with Napoleon how best to invade England. In December 1797, he wrote two essays, one of which was pointedly named Observations on the Construction and Operation of Navies with a Plan for an Invasion of England and the Final Overthrow of the English Government, in which he promoted the idea to finance 1,000 gunboats to carry a French invading army across the English Channel. In 1804, Paine returned to the subject, writing To the People of England on the Invasion of England advocating the idea. However, upon noting Napoleon's progress towards dictatorship, he condemned him as 'the completest charlatan that ever existed.' Paine remained in France until 1802, returning to the United States only at President Jefferson's invitation."

and absolute honest poured out onto the pages of his *The Age of Reason* (1794), in which he viciously attacked what he must have felt was the source of much of public corruption and widespread decision and ignorance in both Great Britain and the United States: **Christian superstition.**

1. Criticism of *The Holy Bible*

Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* (1794) painstakingly and methodically excoriated the credibility of the Christian religion's most sacred text: *The Holy Bible*. Paine does not believe *The Holy Bible* to be authentic, or to be properly authenticated as being an accurate historical record of events which it purports. Moreover, Paine argues that he nor anyone else should be obliged to accept the second-hand and anonymous accounts of biblical stories and historical assertions contained in the bible. Paine's criticisms were so forceful and persuasive that it did great damage to the image of the orthodox Christian faith. If nothing else, Paine not only elevated "law of reason" above revealed religion, but he altogether obliterated the need for revealed religion. During this period (the 1790s), the radical French left were espousing similar views, but the French went so far as to execute the King and Queen of France, to execute many Roman Catholic priests and bishops, to confiscate church property, and to outlaw the Catholic faith throughout France. Although Thomas Paine did not endorse or support these actions, his very presence in France caused many others to associate Paine's ideas with the French radicals. *The Age of Reason* (1794) was published largely in an effort by Paine to both vindicate his ideals of religious liberty and Deism. It is likely for this reason that Thomas Paine was not celebrated as an important founding father when he died.⁴⁴ Most Americans found his ideas about the

⁴⁴ In fact, when Thomas Paine died, he was not celebrated as an American Founding Father or as an American hero. See, e.g., "Thomas Paine" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Paine#Death, stating:

On the morning of June 8, 1809, Paine died, aged 72, at 59 Grove Street in Greenwich Village, New York City. Although the original building no longer exists, the present building has a plaque noting that Paine died at this location.

After his death, Paine's body was brought to New Rochelle, but the Quakers would not allow it to be buried in their graveyard as per his last will, so his remains were buried under a walnut tree on his farm. In 1819, English agrarian radical journalist William Cobbett, who in 1793 had published a hostile continuation of Francis Oldys (George Chalmer)'s *The Life of Thomas Paine*, dug up his bones and transported them back to England with the intention to give Paine a heroic reburial on his native soil, but this never came to pass. The bones were still among Cobbett's effects when he died over fifteen years later, but were later lost.

Christian religion to be unacceptable or heretical.⁴⁵ For a more detailed account of Paine's criticisms of *The Holy Bible*, see **Appendix A**, "The Age of Reason: Thomas Paine's Criticism of The Holy Bible."

2. Criticism of Christianity and Latitudinarian Anglicanism

In *The Age of Reason* (1794), Thomas Paine embraced both deism and natural religion, but he utterly rejected the idea that "Christianity is the republication of natural religion." In Paine's mind, "Christianity," at least as it had been practiced in Western Europe and England, was incompatible with natural religion. According to Paine, natural religion was much more universal, simple, and primitive than Christianity. The Christian religion was too divisive and its sacred text, *The Holy Bible*, was riddled with incredulous contradictions. According to Paine, Deism represented the closet thing to "true religion." In *The Age of Reason*, he wrote:

It is certain that, in one point, all nations of the earth, and all religions agree. All believe in a God. The things in which they disagree, are the redundancies annexed to that belief; and therefore, if ever an universal religion should prevail, it will not be believing anything new, but in getting rid of redundancies, and believing as man believed at first. Adam, if ever there were such a man, was created a Deist; but in the mean time let every man follow, as he has a right to do, the religion

There is no confirmed story about what happened to them after that, although various people have claimed throughout the years to own parts of Paine's remains, such as his skull and right hand.

At the time of his death, most American newspapers reprinted the obituary notice from the New York Evening Post that was in turn quoting from The American Citizen, which read in part: "He had lived long, did some good, and much harm". Only six mourners came to his funeral, two of whom were black, most likely freedmen. Many years later the writer and orator Robert G. Ingersoll wrote:

Thomas Paine had passed the legendary limit of life. One by one most of his old friends and acquaintances had deserted him. Maligned on every side, execrated, shunned and abhorred – his virtues denounced as vices – his services forgotten – his character blackened, he preserved the poise and balance of his soul. He was a victim of the people, but his convictions remained unshaken. He was still a soldier in the army of freedom, and still tried to enlighten and civilize those who were impatiently waiting for his death. Even those who loved their enemies hated him, their friend – the friend of the whole world – with all their hearts. On the 8th of June 1809, death came – Death, almost his only friend. At his funeral no pomp, no pageantry, no civic procession, no military display. In a carriage, a woman and her son who had lived on the bounty of the dead – on horseback, a Quaker, the humanity of whose heart dominated the creed of his head – and, following on foot, two negroes filled with gratitude – constituted the funeral cortege of Thomas Paine.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

and the worship he prefers.⁴⁶

Paine also rejected some of Christianity's greatest theologians, including St. Paul,⁴⁷ St. Athanasius,⁴⁸ and St. Augustine of Hippo.⁴⁹ But not only did he reject these Christian stalwart theologians, but his *The Age of Reason* also callously disregards most of Christianity's most comprehensive and catholic thought on moral and natural philosophy. *The Age of Reason* rejects latitudinarian Anglicanism as hypocritical and untenable. Paine leaves no opening for Christianity to regain any credibility with science. "[Christianity] has been by wandering from the immutable laws of science, and the light of reason, and setting up an invented thing, called revealed religion, that so many wild and blasphemous conceits have been formed of the Almighty," concluded Paine.⁵⁰

Therefore, unlike the latitudinarian Anglicans who saw in St. Paul's theology the same natural theology and philosophy of the ancient Greeks, Thomas Paine sees no method of reconciling the "revealed" religion of Christianity to natural religion. Thomas Paine's philosophy of deism did not honor or give credit to the writings of Anglican divines such as Bishop William Warburton (i.e., *An Alliance of Church and State*) or Bishop Joseph Butler (i.e., *An Analogy of Religion*) or Dr. Matthew Tindal (i.e., *Christianity as Old as Creation*) or John Witherspoon (e.g., *Lectures on Moral Philosophy*). Paine expressly thus rejects all attempts to label Christianity as the republication of natural religion—whether in the form of Scottish Common Sense Realism or latitudinarian Anglicanism.

The extent to which there are good moral principles in organized or revealed religions such as Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, explained Paine, is by accident only. "As the fragments of morality that are irregularly and thinly scattered in those books, they make not part of this pretended thing, revealed religion. They are the natural dictates of conscience, and the bonds by which society is held together, and without which it cannot exist, and are nearly the same in all religions and in all societies."⁵¹ Thomas Paine expressly rejects all revealed religion that is indirectly revealed to mankind through the uncorroborated writings of ancient personalities. And he was expressly opposed to established churches and forced religion. Such a system, as those established throughout Western Europe, has led to nothing but

⁴⁶ Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings*, p. 719.

⁴⁷ Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings*, supra, p 814 – 819.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 818 – 819.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 810- 811, 816.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 829.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 822.

scores of violent religious wars, Paine explained.⁵²

Hence, even though a more conservative Christian deism prevailed in the early United States, Founding Father Thomas Paine's anti-Christian deism laid the foundation for true religious freedom, liberty of conscience, and respectability for unorthodox, non-Christian views. And it was perhaps Paine's view of deism that eventually became predominant during the latter half of nineteenth century.⁵³

I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life. I believe the equality of man, and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow creatures happy.... I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is church.... I do not mean by this declaration to condemn those who believe otherwise. They have the same right to their belief as I have to mine. But it is necessary to the happiness of man, that he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbelieving: it consists in professing to believe that what he does not believe.⁵⁴

Moreover, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison might have concurred with Thomas Paine on many of his views about religious liberty. Indeed, Jefferson, Madison and Paine shared the same basic liberal views on the foundation of rights and natural law, and became the intellectual leaders of the Jeffersonian Democratic-Republic (Anti-Federalist Party).

However, there was amongst the American elite a very powerful Anglican element that was manifest primarily in the early Federalist Party. The Federalist leaders included George Washington (U.S. President); Alexander Hamilton (Sec. of Treasury); John Jay (Chief Justice of U.S. Supreme Court); and John Witherspoon (President of the College of New Jersey). These men were more or less latitudinarian Anglicans who sided with the conservative British worldview of property rights, Anglican orthodoxy, and the Christian foundations of law. The influential college president John Witherspoon was not an Anglican but his view of

⁵² Ibid., p. 821.

⁵³ Abraham Lincoln is reported to have been a great admirer of Paine's deism. See, e.g., https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Paine#Death

⁵⁴ Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings*, supra., p. 666.

Scottish Presbyterianism was closely akin to latitudinarian Anglicanism. Therefore, we might conclude that Thomas Paine's liberal ideals of deism, although influential, was not ultimately reflective of the general American attitude toward government, law, and the Christian religion. The latitudinarian High-Church Anglican view of law and government, which was embraced by Hamilton and Washington, became the predominant American view.

During the 1790s, following ratification of the controversial Jay Treaty, whereby the United States allied itself with Great Britain, at the expense of its old revolutionary ally, France, the rift between the Federalists and the anti-Federalists grew deep. The British Empire was now at war with the new liberal and revolutionary republic of France. The Jay Treaty signaled America's conservative shift toward a new alliance with King George III and the British Empire. In a scathing letter to President Washington, Paine opined that the new United States of America was becoming just as conservative, manipulative, and imperial as the British empire.⁵⁵ Paine noted that the form of the new United States Constitution (1787) had been extracted from that of the British government; and just as the form of government was the same, so, too, was its aristocratic functions.⁵⁶ In fact, Thomas Paine referred to President George Washington as a traitor and hypocrite;⁵⁷ Thomas Jefferson and James Madison also publicly criticized President Washington, and never spoke to him ever again after he left office. To be sure, the early United States of America conceptualized itself as a "Christian" nation, as Paine's anti-Christian, liberal view of Deism was ultimately rejected.

CONCLUSION

The life and career of Thomas Paine demonstrate that the American founding fathers were deeply religious and rejected Paine's version of deism and rejection of the orthodox Christian faith. Although Paine acknowledged the superior moral teachings of Jesus, believed that natural philosophy reflected the "word of God," and generally promoted the "golden rule," his apostasy from the scriptural faith was considered to be a form of ungodliness amongst his contemporaries. Most Christian deists, latitudinarian Anglicans, and Scottish Presbyterian realists held that "Christianity was a republication of natural religion." But Paine's rejection of this view led to his ostracism and marginalization. For this reason, we may conclude

⁵⁵ Thomas Paine, "Letter to George Washington", Paris, 30 July, 1796, In *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Moncure D. Conway, (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1967), Vol. IV, 252.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

that the American founding fathers did not believe that deism was the foundation of the *Declaration of Independence* (1776) and the *U.S. Constitution* (1787). Indeed, America's founding documents were deeply-rooted in natural religion and divine providence as conceptualized by 18th-century Christian lawyers and theologians.

THE END

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Appendix A

“The Age of Reason: Thomas Paine’s Criticism of *The Holy Bible*”

By

Roderick O. Ford, Litt.D.

Thomas Paine (1737 - 1809), who is credited as being an American Founding Father, did not believe that the text of *The Holy Bible* was either accurate nor properly authenticated. His life and works are critically important and historical, because they demonstrate why “religious liberty” and the “right of conscience” are fundamental constitutional rights. Paine’s rejection of *The Holy Bible* is heartfelt, authentic, and honest. As one reads *The Age of Reason*, there is no reason to think that Paine is not simply being true to himself and to his own conscience. At the same time, it is hard to draw the conclusion that because Paine is not a Christian that he is also not a good human being, or that his testimony in a court of law would be untrustworthy, or that he should be denied civil rights because of his infidelity toward the Christian religion. Stated differently, in a Christian commonwealth, how should Christian magistrates deal with honest and sincere unbelievers such as American founding father Thomas Paine? Should Paine be disenfranchised or stoned to death? If so, what about all of other millions of souls who maintained similar views? These difficult questions were resolved in the American Revolutionary War (1775 – 1783) which settled upon a system of government where free inquiry and the rights of conscience and religion were guaranteed to every American citizen. At the same time, the text of *The Holy Bible* could no longer be relied upon as a primary source of “higher law” for the secular civil polity. As a result of the influence of Thomas Paine and other Enlightenment thinkers, *The Holy Bible* was appropriate for Christ’s church, but it was not appropriate for the secular civil polity—there had to be complete wall of separation between Church and State. Paine’s *The Age of Reason* (1794) explains the general attitude of many men and women who no longer wished to live under the banner a “Christian” polity but instead desired the triumph of the “law of reason,” without any entanglement whatsoever with religion. Paine did not agree with the notion that “*Christianity is a republication of natural religion*,” but instead he felt that the God of Nature was direct and did not need orthodox religion to teach his law and will. For this reason, Paine felt that *The Holy Bible* and the orthodox Christian

faith stood in the way of the moral progress of humanity. As this paper documents, Paine published *The Age of Reason* in order to demonstrate why *The Holy Bible* should be discredited and rejected. Needless to say, Paine's efforts were not successful; however, many of Paine's ideals were influential in shoring up a general consensus that all men should have an absolute right to believe whatever they wished to believe, and to practice whatever religion which they believed was best.

THOMAS PAINE'S LIST OF BIBLICAL INCONSISTENCIES

1. **The Book of Genesis:** In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine analyzes Genesis 36: 31, which states:

“And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, *before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.*”

According to Paine, this passage reveals that the writer of Genesis already knew that there were “kings” who would reign in Israel, long before the Israelites had anointed Saul to become their first king. This shows Genesis was written, or at least edited, well after the time of Moses. Thomas Paine thus says that the Book of Genesis would have been written at least during the reigns of Saul or David.⁵⁸

2. **The Book of I Chronicles:** In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine analyzes I Chronicles 1:43, which says:

“Now these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom *before any king reigned over the children of Israel....*”

Paine points out that the writer of I Chronicles 1:43 and Genesis 36:31 may have been the same person, because both verses are almost verbatim, to wit: “these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom *before any king reigned over the children of Israel....*” This proves that Moses was not the author of Genesis, concludes Paine. “Take away from Genesis the belief that Moses was the author,” says he, “on which only the strange belief that it is the word of God has stood, and

⁵⁸ Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings*, pp. 744-745.

there remains nothing of Genesis but an anonymous book of stories, fables, and traditionary or invented absurdities, or of down-right lies.”⁵⁹

3. **The Book of Genesis**: In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine analyzes Genesis 14:14, which says:

“And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and *pursued them unto Dan.*”

Thomas Paine says that “Dan” did not exist until 331 years after the death of Moses. He points to the *Book of Judges* 18:29, which states that the tribe of Dan smote the people of La’ish, and named the city Dan, after their father. In other words, Dan was not founded until after the death of Moses. Therefore, says Paine, since “Dan” is mentioned in the Book of Genesis, this is also proof that Moses did not write it. Paine also says that the last five chapters in the Book of Judges (17, 18, 19, 20, and 21) are put chronologically before all the preceding chapters.

28 years before the 16th Chapter
266 years before the 15th Chapter
245 years before the 13th Chapter
195 years before the 9th Chapter
90 years before the 4th Chapter
15 years before the 1st Chapter

This lack of order—especially chronological order—of many parts of *The Holy Bible* make it untrustworthy, says Paine. “This shews the uncertain and fabulous state of the bible,” writes Paine. “According to the chronological arrangement, the taking of Laish and giving it the name of Dan, is made to be twenty years after the death of Joshua.... And by the historical order, as it stands in the book, it is made to be three hundred and six years after the death of Joshua....”⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 746.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 744.

4. **The Book of Exodus:** In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine analyzes Exodus 16:34-35, which says:

“And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.”

Thomas Paine points out that Moses died in the wilderness and never came “unto the borders of the land of Canaan.”⁶¹ Therefore, Moses could not be the author of the *Book of Exodus*.

5. **The Book of Deuteronomy:** In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine analyzes Deuteronomy 3: 11-12, which says:

“For only Og king of Ba’Shan remained of the remnant of giants: behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbah of the children of Ammon?”

Thomas Paine says Israel did not take Rabbah “until four hundred years after the death of Moses”⁶² See 2 Samuel 12: 26-27 (“And Jo ab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city.”) Therefore, Moses could not be the author of the *Book of Deuteronomy*.

6. **The Book of Joshua:** In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine analyzes Joshua 24:31, which says:

“And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel.”

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 748.

⁶² Ibid., p. 749.

Paine says that this shows that the writer of this book had lived not only after Joshua dies, but also after the Elders outlived Joshua also died.⁶³ Therefore, Joshua was not the author of the *Book of Joshua*.

7. **The Books of Joshua and Judges:** In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine analyzes precatory language in both the Books of Joshua and Judges:

“Now after the death of Moses....” -- Book of Joshua 1:1

“Now after the death of Joshua....” -- Book of Judges 1:1

Thomas Paine points out that this precatory language in both the Book of Joshua and the Book of Judges show that they were likely written during the same time period and by the same author(s). “This and the similarity of style between the two books, indicate that they are the work of the same author; but who he was is altogether unknown.”⁶⁴

8. **The Books of Joshua:** In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine analyzes Joshua 15:63, which states:

“As for the Jebusites *the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell *with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.*”

During the time of Joshua, the city of Jerusalem did not exist. Therefore, the writing of the Book of Joshua could not have been Joshua—but rather an anonymous author. Thomas Paine writes: “The account therefore given in Joshua, that the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem at this day, corresponds to no other time than after the taking the city by David.”⁶⁵ Thus, the Books of Joshua...could not have been written until, at least, following the reign of

⁶³ Ibid., p. 750.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 752.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 753 – 754.

David “which was 370 years after the death of Joshua.”⁶⁶

9. **The Books of Judges:** In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine analyzes Judges 17:1, which states:

“Now the children of Judah had *fought against Jerusalem*, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.”

Thomas Paine points out here that the city of Jerusalem did not exist during the time period of the Book of Judges. Therefore, the author of the Book of Judges must have lived after the city of Jerusalem was founded. “Thus, the Books of...Judges could not have been written until, at least, following the reign of David “which was 370 years after the death of Joshua.”⁶⁷

10. **The Books of Judges:** In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine analyzes the Books of I Samuel and II Samuel. Paine points out that I Samuel and II Samuel were not written by the prophet Samuel,⁶⁸ since it clearly recounts events during the reigns of Saul and David that occurred well after the death of Samuel. This would mean that these books are anonymous and unauthenticated. Therefore, Samuel himself was not the author of those books, as the true authors were anonymous.

11. **Historical Books of I and II Kings compared to Historical Books of I and II Chronicles:** In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine analyzes and compares the various histories of the historical books I & II Kings and I & II Chronicles. He notes that these four books are filled with “confusion, contradiction, and cruelty.”⁶⁹ When comparing the books of the Kings to those of the Chronicles, Paine notes that “[s]everal of the most extraordinary matters related in one history, as having happened during the reign of such or such of their kings, are not to be found in the other in relating the reign of the same king.”⁷⁰ In the Kings, the prophet Elijah is taken up in a chariot of fire; which, if this event really occurred, ought to also have been mentioned in the Chronicles, but was omitted.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 753.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 753.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 754 – 755.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 757.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 759.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 759 – 760.

12. **The Prophetical Books and the Four Historical Books of I & II Kings and I & II Chronicles:** In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine analyzes the histories of the biblical prophets and inquires into whether the major and minor prophets were mentioned in the four historical books. Paine points out that only Isaiah and Jeremiah are mentioned in the I & II Kings or in I & II Chronicles.⁷² In *The Age of Reason*, Paine published the following Chart:

Old Testament Prophet	Number of Years lived by Each Prophet before I & II Chronicles and I & II Kings were written	Are the Prophets Mentioned in the historical books of Kings or Chronicles?
Isaiah	172 years	Yes
Jeremiah	41 years	Yes
Ezekiel	7 years	Not mentioned
Daniel	19 years	Not mentioned
Hosea	97 years	Not mentioned
Joel	212 years	Not mentioned
Amos	199 years	Not mentioned
Obadiah	199 years	Not mentioned
Jonah	274 years	Not mentioned
Micah	162 years	Not mentioned
Nahum	125 years	Not mentioned
Habbakuk	38 years	Not mentioned
Zephaniah	42 years	Not mentioned
Prophets who lived After the books of I & II Kings and I & II Chronicles were written		

⁷² Ibid., p. 761.

Haggai		
Zechariah		
Malachi		

Although Thomas Paine suggests the possibility that these prophets may not have been real persons, because they were not mentioned in the Old Testament's historical books, I find this observation to be ultimately unpersuasive, since there is no reason to believe that any of these minor prophet's writings were widely circulated, or that they were accessible to the authors of the historical books

9. **The Books of II Chronicles and Ezra:** In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine points out that the writers of the II Chronicles were obviously the same authors as the authors of the Book of Ezra, or, at least, there was substantial plagiarism. Paine reaches this conclusion by comparing the last two verses of II Chronicles to the first three verses of Ezra, to wit:

Last Two verses of II Chronicles	First Three Verses of the Book of Ezra
<p>²² Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,</p> <p>²³ Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.</p>	<p>¹ Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,</p> <p>² Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.</p> <p>³ Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.</p>

10. **The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah**: In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine points out that both the books of Ezra and Nehemiah enumerate the numbers of family members who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon as: “[t]he whole congregation together was forty and two thousand, three hundred and threescore.”⁷³ However, when Paine actually added up the numbers, as presented in Ezra and Nehemiah, he notes that Ezra overstated his estimate by 12,542, and Nehemiah by 11,271! Such inattention to basic facts, whites Paine, is clear evidence of the Bible’s unreliability.

11. **The Book of Isaiah**: In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine is also critical of the Gospel of Matthew’s interpretation of the word “Immanuel” in Isaiah 7:14 as a reference to Jesus Christ.

Paine states that a clearer reading of chapters 7 and 8 of Isaiah clearly point to the fact that the “virgin” and the “son” referenced in Isaiah 7:14 refers to a propheticess, whom Isaiah had sexual intercourse with, and who bore him a “son,” who was named “Maher-shal-hash-baz,” referenced in Isaiah 8:1.

Paine’s observations and criticisms are certainly not isolated, since the Jewish community certainly does not consider “Immanuel” to represent Jesus Christ but rather the son of King Ahaz of Judah.⁷⁴ Indeed, Paine writes: “*In the 14th verse of the 7th chapter, it is said, that the child should be called Immanuel. But this name was not given to either of the children, otherwise than as a character which the word signifies. That of the propheticess was called Mather-shalal-hash-baz, and that of Mary was called Jesus.”⁷⁵

⁷³ Ibid., p. 765.

⁷⁴ “Isaiah 7–8 mentions three children with symbolic names: Shear-jashub, meaning “a remnant shall return”; Immanuel, “God is with us”; and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, “the spoil speeds, the prey hastens”. Isaiah 8:18 informs the reader that Isaiah and his children are signs (“Here am I, and the children the Lord has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the Lord Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion”). **The meaning of these name-signs is not clear**: Shear-jashub has been variously interpreted to mean that only a remnant of Ephraim and Syria will survive the Assyrian invasion, or that a remnant of Judah will repent and turn to God, while in Isaiah 10:20–23 it seems to mean that a remnant of Israel will return to the Davidic monarchy. Maher-shalal-hash-baz is more clearly related to the expected destruction of Ephraim and Syria. As for Immanuel, “God is with us”, Isaiah might mean simply that any young pregnant woman in 734 BCE would be able to name her child “God is with us” by the time he is born; but if a specific child is meant, then it might be a son of Ahaz, possibly his successor Hezekiah (which is the traditional Jewish understanding); or, since the other symbolic children are Isaiah’s, Immanuel might be the prophet’s own son. However this may be, the significance of the sign changes, from Isaiah 7, where Immanuel symbolises the hope of imminent defeat for Syria and Ephraim, to Isaiah 8:8, where Immanuel is addressed as the people whose land is about to be overrun by the Assyrians.” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immanuel>

⁷⁵ Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings*, supra, p. 775.

12. **The Book of Isaiah**: In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine is also critical of the later part of Chapter 44 and the beginning part of chapter 45 of the *Book of Isaiah*, which makes a very strange reference to the reign of Cyrus the king of Babylon.

Isaiah 44:28 says, “That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherded, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.”

And Isaiah 45:1 says, “Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut....”

Another source describes the *Book of Isaiah*'s⁷⁶ descriptions of Cyrus the Great in the following manner:

Cyrus the Great is the only non-Jewish person the Bible refers to with messianic language. In Isaiah 45, the prophet says, “this is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus” (Isaiah 45:1).

The Jewish people would have been shocked to hear this terminology describing a non-Jewish person. In the past, God had used miracles to free them from captivity in Egypt, raised up a series of judges to save them from their enemies, and gave them king after king to lead them—why would he anoint a non-Jewish person to save them?

Isaiah 45 is partially about Cyrus the Great, but it's also a prophecy about how God would save his chosen people however he pleased. And it pleased him to use Cyrus:

“I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness:
I will make all his ways straight.
He will rebuild my city
and set my exiles free,
but not for a price or reward,
says the Lord Almighty.” —Isaiah 45:13

⁷⁶ “The traditional view is that all 66 chapters of the book of Isaiah were written by one man, Isaiah, possibly in two periods between 740 BC and c. 686 BC” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaiah>

But Isaiah, who is considered to be an 8th-century prophet, lived at least 100 years before Cyrus I, the grandfather of Cyrus the Great; and Thomas Paine points out in *The Age of Reason* that it is unlikely that Isaiah would have written those words expressed in Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1.

<p>Isaiah (Old Testament Prophet)</p>	<p>Isaiah (Hebrew: יְהִישָׁע, Yəša‘yahū, "God Is Salvation"; Arabic: إيشعيا, Aša‘yā’ or Ša‘yā; Syriac: ܝܫܥܝܐ, ʾēša‘yā; Ancient Greek: Ἰσαΐας, Ēsaĩās; Latin: Isaias); (US: /aɪˈzeɪ.ə/ or UK: /aɪˈzaɪ.ə/ ; "Yah is salvation"[7]) was the 8th-century BC Israelite prophet after whom the Book of Isaiah is named.... The traditional view is that all 66 chapters of the book of Isaiah were written by one man, Isaiah, possibly in two periods between 740 BC and c. 686 BC....”⁷⁷</p>
<p>Cyrus I</p>	<p>“Cyrus I (Old Persian: Kuruš) or Cyrus I of Anshan or Cyrus I of Persia, was King of Anshan in Persia from c. 600 to 580 BC or, according to others, from c. 652 to 600 BC. Cyrus I of Anshan is the grandfather of Cyrus the Great, also known as Cyrus II.”⁷⁸</p>
<p>Cyrus II (Cyrus the Great)</p>	<p>“Cyrus II of Persia (Old Persian: xxxx romanized: Kūruš;New Persian: کوروش, romanized: Kūroš; c. 600 – 530 BC), commonly known as Cyrus the Great,</p>

⁷⁷ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaiah>

⁷⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrus_I

and also called Cyrus the Elder by the Greeks, was the founder of the Achaemenid Empire, the first Persian empire.... The reign of Cyrus the Great lasted about thirty years.... His treatment of the Jews during their exile in Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar II destroyed Jerusalem is reported in the Bible. The Jewish Bible's Ketuvim ends in Second Chronicles with the decree of Cyrus, which returned the exiles to the Promised Land from Babylon along with a commission to rebuild the temple.... Elsewhere in Isaiah, God is described as saying, "I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight. He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward, says God Almighty." (Isaiah 45:13) As the text suggests, Cyrus did ultimately release the nation of Israel from its exile without compensation or tribute. These particular passages (Isaiah 40–55, often referred to as Deutero-Isaiah) are believed by most modern critical scholars to have been added by another author toward the end of the Babylonian exile (c. 536 BC)."⁷⁹

Paine points out that the prophet Isaiah died soon after the death of King Hezekiah, which was about 162 years before Cyrus issued the decree for the Jews to return from Babylon to Jerusalem. Hence, Paine writes: “[w]hat audacity of church and priestly ignorance it is to impose this book upon the world as the writing of Isaiah....”⁸⁰ Paine conclude that since the prophet Isaiah would not have known about Cyrus I or Cyrus II, it would be irresponsible to assume that the prophet

⁷⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrus_the_Great

⁸⁰ Ibid, p 773.

Isaiah was the author of the Book of Isaiah.

13. **The Book of Jeremiah:** In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine points out that the prophet Jeremiah referred to Nebuchadnezzar as a “servant” of God.⁸¹ This would have been the same Nebuchadnezzar whom God drove from men, and made him to “eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, til his hairs were grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws.”⁸²

Paine points out two discrepancies in the *Book of Jeremiah*. The first discrepancy is that there are two separate accounts of how Jeremiah came to be imprisoned: the first account states that Jeremiah was seized by a guard at the gate, as he was exiting Jerusalem; and the second account is given where he was accused in a conference before King Zedekiah.⁸³

Next, Paine points out that Jeremiah prophesied that the exact fate of King Zedekiah; that he would be captured and subdued by King Nebuchadnezzar; that Zedekiah’s eyes would behold the eyes of Nebuchadnezzar; that they would talk face to face; and the Zedekiah would die in relative peace while in captivity.⁸⁴

But Paine points out that Jeremiah’s prophecy did not come true, because “[t]hat the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes; then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.”⁸⁵

Yet it is not clear, as to whether King Zedekiah’s fate was worsened only because he did not voluntarily surrender earlier when Jeremiah suggested. Instead, Zedekiah chose to put up resistance and to fight, against Jeremiah’s prophetic warning.⁸⁶ Paine omits any meaningful discussion of King Zedekiah’s refusal to heed Jeremiah’s prophetic warning, as the “condition precedent” to Zedekiah’s living and dying a natural death.

14. **The Books of Ezekiel and Daniel:** In *The Age of Reason*,

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 777 (Jeremiah 43:10)

⁸² Daniel 4: 33.

⁸³ Jeremiah 37 and 38.

⁸⁴ Jeremiah 34: 1-3.

⁸⁵ Jeremiah 52:10-11; Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings*, supra, p. 781.

⁸⁶ Jeremiah 38:17 (“Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon’s princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thine house....”)

Thomas Paine is more generous with the books named for the prophets Ezekiel and Daniel. He states that there are no internal marks of forgeries in these books. He observes that these prophets were the prophets of the Babylonian captivity. They spoke of liberation and return to Jerusalem. They spoke in metaphorical terminology, because “it was unsafe for them to speak facts or plain language.... It served them as a cipher or secret alphabet. If they are not this, they are tales, reveries, and nonsense; or at least a fanciful way of wearing off the wearisome of captivity; but the presumption is, they are the former.”⁸⁷ They were not thinking about prophesying the coming of a Messiah, claims Paine:

Scarcely any thing can be more absurd than to suppose, that men situated as Ezekiel and Daniel were, whose country was over-run and in the possession of the enemy, all their friends and relations in captivity abroad, or in slavery at home, or massacred, or in continual danger of it; scarcely any thing, I say, can be more absurd than to suppose, that such men should find nothing to do, but that of employing their time and their thoughts about what was to happen to other nations a thousand or two thousand years after they were dead: at the same time nothing more natural than that they should meditate the recovery of Jerusalem, and their own deliverance, and that this was the sole object of all the obscure and apparently frantic writing contained in those books.⁸⁸

15. **Books of the other minor prophets:** In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine states that these minor prophets were nothing more than superstitious fortune tellers and “poets.” These so-called prophets, says Paine, were never believed to be predictors of future events, as the Christian theologians and priests later made them into. On this point, Paine writes:

But according to the old testament, the prophesying of the Seer, and afterwards of the Prophet, so far as the meaning of the word Seer was incorporated into that of Prophet, had reference only to things of the time then passing, or very closely connected with it; such as the event of a battle they were going to engage in, or of a journey, or of any enterprise they were going to undertake, or of any circumstance then pending, or of any difficulty they were then in, all of which had immediate reference to themselves, (as in the case already mentioned

⁸⁷ Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings*, supra, p. 786.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 787.

of Ahaz and Isaiah, with respect to the expression, Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son) and not to any distant future time. It was that kind of prophesying that corresponds to what we call fortune-telling, such as casting nativities, predicting riches, fortunate or unfortunate marriage, conjuring for lost goods, & c., and it is the fraud of the Christian church, not that of the Jews, and the ignorance and superstition of modern, not that of ancient times, that elevated those poetical-musical-conjuring-dreaming-strolling gentry, into the rank they have since had.⁸⁹

But Paine's analysis is flawed and suffers significantly from the fact that the Prophet Daniel explicitly spoke of a Messiah, in the following terms:

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.⁹⁰

Thomas Paine's failure to rebut the Christological interpretation⁹¹ of Daniel's

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 783.

⁹⁰ Daniel 9: 24 – 27.

⁹¹ See, e.g., https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophecy_of_Seventy_Weeks

“There is a longstanding tradition within Christianity of reading Daniel 9 as a messianic prophecy

prophecy is an obvious deficiency within his criticism.

15. The Book of Jonah: In *The Age of Reason*, Paine forcefully argued that the likelihood of a man surviving being in the belly of a fish for three days is highly improbable and thus the story of Jonah should not be believed. However, he does give the story credit for admitting that “[a]s a moral, it preaches against the malevolent spirit of prediction; for as certainly as a man predicts ill he becomes inclined to wish it.”⁹² But in truth this is the whole purpose and objective of the Old Testament, which is to teach principles of Virtue, Righteousness, and Law—all of which are manifestations of God’s divine attributes. Paine perhaps does admit this to a degree, but he is also firm in his position that *The Holy Bible* should be considered as nothing more than a book of poetry, fables, and literature.

16. The Four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John: In *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine analyzed and critiqued the four Gospels as well. Paine

fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The various christological readings that have been proposed share a number of features in common: Either the "anointed prince" in verse 25a or the "anointed one" in verse 26a (or both) are understood to be references to Christ, who is also sometimes thought to be the "most holy" that is anointed in verse 24 (so the Peshitta and the Vulgate). Some of the early church fathers also saw another reference to Christ in the "prince who is to come" (verse 26b), but this figure is more often identified with either the Antichrist or one of the Roman officials that oversaw the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE (e.g. Titus or Vespasian).

“The seven and sixty-two-week "weeks" are most frequently understood for the purpose of Christological interpretation as consecutive, making up a period of 69 weeks (483 years) beginning with the decree given to Ezra by Artaxerxes I in 458/7 BCE (the terminus a quo) and terminating with the baptism of Jesus. The reference to an anointed one being "cut off" in verse 26a is identified with the crucifixion of Jesus and has traditionally been thought to mark the midpoint of the seventieth week, which is also when Jeremiah's new "covenant" is "confirmed" (verse 27a) and atonement for "iniquity" (verse 24) is made. The "abomination that desolates" is typically read in the context of the New Testament references made to this expression in the Olivet Discourse and understood as belonging to a complex eschatological tableaux described therein, which may or may not remain to be fulfilled.

“Another influential way of reading the prophecy follows Africanus in identifying the warrant given to Nehemiah in 445/4 BCE as the terminus a quo. 483 years from 445/4 BCE would extend somewhat beyond the lifetime of Christ to 39/40 CE, hence some Christological interpretations reduce the period to 476 years by viewing them as 360-day "prophetic years" (or "Chaldee years"), so-called on the basis that various biblical passages—such as Revelation 12:6, 14 (cf. Dan 7:25; 12:7)—appear to reckon time in this way in certain prophetic contexts. The sixty-nine weeks of "prophetic" years are then considered to terminate with the death of Christ in 32/3 CE. The seventieth week is then separated from the sixty-ninth week by a long period of time known as the church age; hence, the seventieth week does not begin until the end of the church age, at which point the church will be removed from the earth in an event called the rapture. Finally, the future Antichrist is expected to oppress the Jewish people and bring upon the world a period of tribulation lasting three and a half years, constituting the second half of the delayed seventieth week. These readings were first popularized through the expository notes written by C. I. Scofield in his Scofield Reference Bible and continue to enjoy support.”

⁹² Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings*, supra, p. 791.

concluded that because the New Testament is founded upon the Old Testament, then the New Testament is also flawed and “must follow the fate of its foundation.”⁹³

Turning his attention to the New Testament, Paine first analyzed the two “genealogies of Jesus Christ” that are presented in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke.⁹⁴ He points out that the Gospel of Matthew’s genealogy (Chap. 1) gives twenty-eight generations from King David to Joseph, the husband of Mary and the step-father of Jesus. However, Paine points out that the Gospel of Luke’s genealogy (Chap. 3), gives forty-three generation from David to Joseph.

Table 1. Genealogies of Christ⁹⁵

Genealogy according to Matthew	Genealogy according to Luke
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christ 2. Joseph 3. Jacob 4. Matthan 5. Eleazar 6. Eliud 7. Achim 8. Sadoc 9. Azor 10. Eliakim 11. Abiud 12. Zorobabel 13. Salathiel 14. Jechonias 15. Josias 16. Amon 17. Manasses 18. Ezekias 19. Achaz 20. Joatham 21. Ozias 22. Joram 23. Josaphat 24. Asa 25. Abia 26. Roboam 27. Solomon 28. David 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christ 2. Joseph 3. Heli 4. Matthat 5. Levi 6. Melchi 7. Janna 8. Joseph 9. Janna 10. Mattathias 11. Amos 12. Naum 13. Esli 14. Nagge 15. Maath 16. Mattathias 17. Semei 18. Joseph 19. Juda 20. Joanna 21. Rhesa 22. Zorobabel 23. Salathiel 24. Neri 25. Melchi 26. Addi 27. Cosam 28. Elmodam

⁹³ Ibid., p. 792.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 793.

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 794 – 795.

- | | |
|--|--|
| | 29. Er
30. Jose
31. Eliezer
32. Johim
33. Matthat
34. Levi
35. Simeon
36. Juda
37. Joseph
38. Jonan
39. Eliakim
40. Melea
41. Menan
42. Mattatha
43. Nathan
44. David |
|--|--|

According to Thomas Paine, the discrepancies in these two genealogies constitute a lack of trustworthiness, if not clear fraud. “Now if these men, Matthew and Luke,” writes Paine, “set out with a falsehood between them (as these two accounts shew they do) in the very commencement of their history of Jesus Christ, and of who, and of what he was, what authority (as I have before asked) is here left for believing the strange things they tell us afterwards? If they cannot be believed in their account of his natural genealogy, how are we to believe them when they tell us he was the son of God, begotten by a ghost, and that an angel announced this in secret to his mother?”⁹⁶

But Paine does not consider the possibility that Matthew and Luke addressed two different genealogies: Matthew’s genealogy measured that of Joseph, the stepfather of Jesus; and Luke’s genealogy measured the genealogy of Mary, the mother of Jesus—based upon the conventional wisdom that, due to the patrifocal nature of Jewish culture, the name “Joseph” was substituted for the name “Mary” in the Gospel of Luke’s genealogy.⁹⁷

Paine next charges that the New Testament gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were not written by the actual apostles who are alleged to have written those books.⁹⁸ “[T]hey are impositions,” concludes Paine.⁹⁹ But Paine offers us no

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 795 – 796.

⁹⁷ “Aren’t the Genealogies of Jesus Given in Matthew and Luke Contradictory?”
https://www.josh.org/answer/arent-genealogies-jesus-given-matthew-luke-contradictory/?mwm_id=496610987446&mot=J79GNF&gclid=EAiaIQobChMI9JSxz4GF8wIVdsqUCR3jUw6TEAAYASAAEgIUafD_BwE

⁹⁸ Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings*, supra, p. 796.

details. He provides no histories, statements, or even rumors of how the four Gospels might have been assembled, or by whom. He ignores the fact that the reports of Jesus' sayings and parables are remarkably similar in all four of the Gospels.¹⁰⁰ And several of the events are very similar, such as the miracles that Jesus is reported to have performed, and the confrontations he is reported to have engaged in with scribes and Pharisees.¹⁰¹

And of all Paine's biblical criticisms, the logic and reasoning which supports his arguments that the various disagreements within the four Gospels prove their inauthenticity, and that the purported authors did not write those books, are Paine's weakest criticisms and arguments throughout the entire *The Age of Reason*. For example, Paine writes:

The disordered state of the history in these four books, the silence of one book upon matters related in the other, and the disagreement that is to be found among them, implies that they are the productions of some unconnected individuals, many years after the things they pretend to relate, each of whom made his own legend; and not the writings of men living intimately together, as the men called apostles are supposed to have done. In fine, that they have been manufactured as the books of the old testament have been by other persons than those whose names they bear.¹⁰²

But any experienced trial lawyer or judge would readily admit that it is quite possible for 2 or more persons to observe and experience the exact same event but report slightly different stories, with some of testimonies leaving out seemingly critical materials or facts that were included in the testimonies of other witnesses. In fact, this experience is not only within the lone province of lawyers and judges, but is a universal human experience. Paine writes that the four Gospel writers could not even agree on the following of most basic of facts: the inscription affixed

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Although this scholarship may not have been available to Thomas Paine during the 1700s, there is a theory that that might have been a separate document—a "Source Q"—which contained Jesus's teachings and sayings and which was used by the writers of the four Gospels. "Q Source," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Q_source :

The "Two-source Hypothesis" proposes that the Gospels of Matthew and Luke were written independently, each using Mark and a second hypothetical document called "Q" as a source. Q was conceived as the most likely explanation behind the common material (mostly sayings) found in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke but not in the Gospel of Mark. Material from two other sources - the M source and the L source - are represented in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke here by green and teal respectively.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

at the head of the cross, to wit:

Not any two of those writers agree in reciting exactly in the same words, the written inscription, short as it is, which they tell us was put over Christ when he was crucified...

The inscription is thus stated in those books.

Matthew... This is Jesus the king of the Jews.

Mark... The king of the Jews.

Luke... This is the king of the Jews.

John... Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews.

We may infer from these circumstances, trivial as they are, that those writers, whoever they were, and in whatever time they lived, were not present at the scene.¹⁰³

Similarly, Paine points out the scene in the Gospel of Matthew, where Herod kills the children under the age of two, is not mentioned in the other three Gospels. That omission, according to Paine, is quite strange, since “the thing would have been too striking to have been omitted by any.” The Gospel of Matthew also mentions darkness, an earthquake, the tearing of the veil of the temple, and an army of saints rising from the grave and appearing throughout Jerusalem,¹⁰⁴ after Jesus gave up the ghost and died—but the other Gospel writers failed to mention these details.¹⁰⁵ Of course, Paine’s criticism of the various discrepancies found within the four Gospels suffers from the plain fact that this criticism does not reflect human experience. Human beings often disagree on their assessment of facts and provide explanations of events in a wide variety of unique ways. Indeed, two or three or four witnesses, all of whom may be eye-witnesses to the same event, have been known to give slightly different testimonies, some of which might omit important details of incidents or statements which had been included in previous or later testimonies. Paine’s criticism also suffers from the plain fact that Mark and Luke were not one of the twelve disciples of Christ. Mark (also called John Mark) was a disciple of St. Peter, who was one of the twelve disciples of Christ; and Luke was a disciple of St. Paul, who was not one of the original twelve disciples. Therefore, the New Testament does not hide the fact that both Mark and Luke were not eye-

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 797 – 798.

¹⁰⁴ Matthew 27: 50-54.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings*, supra, p. 798.

witnesses to the events reported in those Gospels.¹⁰⁶

Paine says the *immaculate conception* is a fabulous story that should not be believed. “[w]ere any girl, that is now with child, to say, and even to swear it, that she was gotten with child by a ghost, and that an angel told her so, would she be believed? Certainly she would not. Why then are we to believe the same thing of another girl who we never saw, told by nobody knows who, nor when, nor where. How strange and inconsistent is it, that the same circumstances that would weaken the belief even of a probable story, should be given as a motive for believing this one that has, upon the face of it, every token of absolute impossibility and imposture?”¹⁰⁷

But here we must consider the “totality of the circumstances” as well as the context in which the story of the virgin Mary’s immaculate conception is said to have occurred. Without these additional facts and circumstances, of course, the story of the immaculate conception ought to not be believed. But when we consider that the Gospel writers were giving the Old Testament a “Christocentric” interpretation, and they were trying to identify the Messiah, and to identify Jesus Christ as that Messiah, then it was necessary to demonstrate Christ’s divinity and fulfillment of the divine prophecy contained within the Old Testament. This was the primary objective of the four Gospels: to show beyond a shadow of doubt that Jesus was the Messiah (i.e., Christ), and that his ministry was mentioned and prophesied throughout the Old Testament. See, e.g., Table 2, “Christocentric Interpretation of the Old Testament.”

Table 2. Christocentric Interpretation of the Old Testament

47 Old Testament Verses About Jesus as Messiah			
	Prophecies of Jesus	Old Testament Scripture	New Testament Fulfillment
1	Messiah would be born of a woman.	Genesis 3:15	Matthew 1:20 Galatians 4:4
2	Messiah would be born in <u>Bethlehem</u> .	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1 Luke 2:4-6
3	Messiah would be <u>born of a virgin</u> .	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:22-23 Luke 1:26-31
4	Messiah would come from the line of <u>Abraham</u> .	Genesis 12:3 Genesis 22:18	Matthew 1:1 Romans 9:5
5	Messiah would be a descendant of <u>Isaac</u> .	Genesis 17:19 Genesis	Luke 3:34

¹⁰⁶ This fact that Mark and Luke are self-identified not as being members of the twelve disciples of Christ clearly establishes the fact that neither of their Gospels purport to be accounts from witnesses with first-hand knowledge. But Thomas Paine is correct, however, in referring to the Gospels of Luke and Mark as “hearsay.”

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

47 Old Testament Verses About Jesus as Messiah

		21:12	
6	Messiah would be a descendant of Jacob.	Numbers 24:17	Matthew 1:2
7	Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah.	Genesis 49:10	Luke 3:33 Hebrews 7:14
8	Messiah would be heir to <u>King David's throne</u> .	2 Samuel 7:12-13 Isaiah 9:7	Luke 1:32-33 Romans 1:3
9	Messiah's throne will be anointed and eternal.	Psalms 45:6-7 Daniel 2:44	Luke 1:33 Hebrews 1:8-12
10	Messiah would be called <u>Immanuel</u> .	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:23
11	Messiah would spend a season in Egypt.	Hosea 11:1	Matthew 2:14-15
12	A massacre of children would happen at Messiah's birthplace.	Jeremiah 31:15	Matthew 2:16-18
13	A messenger would prepare the way for Messiah.	Isaiah 40:3-5	Luke 3:3-6
14	Messiah would be preceded by a forerunner.	Malachi 3:1	Matthew 11:10
15	Messiah would be rejected by his own people.	Psalms 69:8 Isaiah 53:3	John 1:11 John 7:5
16	Messiah would be a prophet.	Deuteronomy 18:15	Acts 3:20-22
17	Messiah would be preceded by <u>Elijah</u> .	Malachi 4:5-6	Matthew 11:13-14
18	Messiah would be declared the <u>Son of God</u> .	Psalms 2:7	Matthew 3:16-17
19	Messiah would be called a Nazarene.	Isaiah 11:1	Matthew 2:23
20	Messiah would bring light to <u>Galilee</u> .	Isaiah 9:1-2	Matthew 4:13-16
21	Messiah would speak in <u>parables</u> .	Psalms 78:2-4 Isaiah 6:9-10	Matthew 13:10-15, 34-35
22	Messiah would be sent to heal the brokenhearted.	Isaiah 61:1-2	Luke 4:18-19
23	Messiah would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek.	Psalms 110:4	Hebrews 5:5-6
24	Messiah would be called King.	Psalms 2:6 Zechariah 9:9	Matthew 27:37 Mark 11:7-11
25	Messiah would enter Jerusalem on a donkey.	Zechariah 11:12	Matthew 21:4-5
26	Messiah would be praised by little children.	Psalms 8:2	Matthew 21:16
27	Messiah would be betrayed.	Psalms 41:9 Zechariah 11:12-13	Luke 22:47-48 Matthew 26:14-16
28	Messiah's price money would be used to buy a potter's field.	Zechariah 11:12-13	Matthew 27:9-10
29	Messiah would be falsely accused.	Psalms 35:11	Mark 14:57-58
30	Messiah would be silent before his accusers.	Isaiah 53:7	Mark 15:4-5
31	Messiah would be spat upon and struck.	Isaiah 50:6	Matthew 26:67
32	Messiah would be hated without cause.	Psalms 35:19 Psalm 69:4	John 15:24-25
33	Messiah would be <u>crucified</u> with criminals.	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27:38 Mark

47 Old Testament Verses About Jesus as Messiah

		15:27-28
34	Messiah would be given vinegar to drink.	Psalm 69:21 Matthew 27:34 John 19:28-30
35	Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced.	Psalm 22:16 Zechariah 12:10 John 20:25-27
36	Messiah would be mocked and ridiculed.	Psalm 22:7-8 Luke 23:35
37	Soldiers would gamble for Messiah's garments.	Psalm 22:18 Luke 23:34 Matthew 27:35-36
38	Messiah's bones would not be broken.	Exodus 12:46 Psalm 34:20 John 19:33-36
39	Messiah would be forsaken by God.	Psalm 22:1 Matthew 27:46
40	Messiah would pray for his enemies.	Psalm 109:4 Luke 23:34
41	Soldiers would pierce Messiah's side.	Zechariah 12:10 John 19:34
42	Messiah would be buried with the rich.	Isaiah 53:9 Matthew 27:57-60
43	Messiah would <u>resurrect from the dead</u> .	Psalm 16:10 Psalm 49:15 Matthew 28:2-7 Acts 2:22-32
44	Messiah would <u>ascend to heaven</u> .	Psalm 24:7-10 Mark 16:19 Luke 24:51
45	Messiah would be seated at God's right hand.	Psalm 68:18 Psalm 110:1 Mark 16:19 Matthew 22:44
46	Messiah would be a sacrifice for sin.	Isaiah 53:5-12 Romans 5:6-8
47	Messiah would return a second time.	Daniel 7:13-14 Revelation 19

In other words, the Gospel writers were writing a “Christocentric” interpretation of the Old Testament, in order to demonstrate how Christ fulfilled the promises of God that are mentioned in the Old Testament—especially the promises made to Abraham. The Gospel of John, says, for example: “These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.”¹⁰⁸ And the Gospel of Matthew leads off the New Testament with a reference to the Book of Isaiah, as follows:

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” ~ Matthew 1: 21-23

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” ~ Isaiah 7:14

¹⁰⁸ John 12: 41.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counseller, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” ~ Isaiah 9:6-7

Now, the Christocentric method of interpreting the Old Testament involves some form of allegorical interpretation, where the “anti-type” of the New Testament is reflected in the “type” of the Old Testament. So that, for instance, in Genesis 22:8 (“And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.”)-- this passage, using a Christocentric interpretation, points to Jesus the Messiah.

Therefore, the key to understanding Thomas Paine’s criticism of the New Testament is his utter rejection of the Christocentric of the Old Testament. He gives this Christocentric interpretation no credit and no credence. For Paine, Christocentric theological interpretation amounts to mere lying. For example, when analyzing Isaiah 7:14, Paine states that when the person named Isaiah supposedly wrote that verse, he had no intentions of prophesying about a future Messiah who would be born 700 years later. That reference, says Paine, relates and pertains only to the son that would be born of the virgin prophetess whom Isaiah had sex with, as referenced in Isaiah 8:3.¹⁰⁹ Paine insists that “Christocentric” theology constitutes a “whole structure of superstition.”¹¹⁰ But it is clear that Jesus Christ himself initiated Christocentric theological interpretation of the Old Testament, as he expressly identified himself with being the prophet spoken of by Moses,¹¹¹ and with being the Messiah spoken of by Isaiah.¹¹² And so the followers of Jesus—the apostles and priests—had Christ himself for their example. And so, to the Christian, the New Testament is hidden in the Old, and the Old Testament is revealed in the New. Thus, for the Christian, everything in the Old Testament points to Christ—and this Thomas Paine, along with his Jewish sympathizers whom he acknowledges, utterly rejects.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings*, supra, p. 774.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Luke 24:44; John 5:46.

¹¹² Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61:1. See also, Isaiah 53.

Finally, in *The Age of Reason*, Paine opines that the Christian religion arose and spread largely through the influence of the emotional trauma and hysteria created from the brutal execution of the righteous person known as Jesus of Nazareth. Paine believed that the stories of his sayings and works were largely fabricated or exaggerated, Paine argues. These fabulous stories about Jesus filled an important void which was man's hopelessness and sense of vulnerability—it gave them something upon which to cleave.¹¹³ “Once start a ghost and credulity fills up the history of its life,” writes Paine, “and assigns the cause of its appearance. One tells it one way, another another way, till there are as many stories about the ghost, and about the proprietor of the ghost,” writes Paine, “as there are about Jesus Christ in these four books.”¹¹⁴

But Paine could not point to any historical parallels to the story of Jesus. No other historical figure has been able to become so famous and so impactful with so little social, economic, or political influence as Jesus of Nazareth had at time in which he lived. Thomas Paine criticizes Jesus because he “wrote not account of himself, of his birth, parentage, or any thing else. Not a line of what is called the New Testament is of his writing.”¹¹⁵ But Paine's apparent disqualification of Christ actually helps to prove his divinity. And not only that, but Jesus' disciples were willing to suffer martyrdom rather than to renounce to truth of Christ. Nay, the church grew only because of the blood of these and other martyrs, such that the message of Christ endured and, eventually, conquered the western world. Paine is correct, that there is a “strange mixture of the natural and the impossible” in the life and story of Jesus, but he dishonestly ignores the powerful and positive influence of the Christian religion (i.e., the “law of Christ”¹¹⁶) upon western law, education, and culture.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 807.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 808.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 670.

¹¹⁶ The “law of Christ is “to love ye one another” (John 15:12); “to do justice and judgment” (Genesis 18:18-19; Proverbs 21:1-3); “to judge not according to appearance but to judge righteous judgments” (John 7:24); and to do “justice, judgment, and equity” (Proverbs 1:2-3).

CONCLUSION

Thomas Paine (1737 – 1809) was a true Deist who did not believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ or in the orthodox Christian faith. Nor did he believe in the divinity, integrity, or sacredness of *The Holy Bible*. Paine was an 18th-century natural-law and natural -rights political theorists. But it would be a mistake to assume that Paine’s deism and version of natural law and natural rights were reflected in the American *Declaration of Independence* (1776). Paine’s views certainly overlapped those of the other founding fathers such as John Adams, George Washington, John Witherspoon and John Jay who were also natural-law and natural-rights theorists but how to orthodox views of Christian polity, law, and society. Indeed, by the late 1790s, President George Washington and very many others had made it clear that the American Revolution would not go so far as to overthrow the traditional, orthodox and Christian foundations of law and order—as was the case in revolutionary France. If there was competition between Paine’s deism and the Christian worldview of polity, the American founding fathers clearly chose the later and rejected the former. However, Paine’s lasting influence upon American constitutional law would be to emphasize the sacredness of civil liberty, freedom of the press, and the right of conscience. It should also be noted that Paine’s deism was also deeply-rooted in the “golden rule”—it was not an ungodly or immoral philosophy. Paine believed in a God of nature, but he rejected all forms of revealed religion.

THE END

“A Christian Lawyer’s Rebuttal to Thomas Paine’s *The Age of Reason*”

by
Roderick O. Ford, Litt.D.

Every first year law student soon learns that there are two basic elements of every case: the FACTS of the case and the LAW of the case. Legally speaking, *The Holy Bible* should be read as a “book of law” and not a book of facts. As a “law book,” the Old Testament represents the “Law of Moses” and the New Testament represents the “Law of Christ.” As the Christian world reads both of these testaments, they collectively represent the “law of Christ.”¹¹⁷ What do we mean when we say the “law of Christ”? Let’s start with the “Parable of the Good Samaritan,” which contains facts not literally presented as a true story, but rather as a hypothetical or as a fictitious scenario designed to tell a moral story about the meaning of the mandate: “love thy neighbor.”

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Luke 10: 25-37

²⁵ And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

²⁶ He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

²⁷ And he answering said, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God** with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and **thy neighbour as thyself.**

²⁸ And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

¹¹⁷ The “law of Christ is “to love ye one another” (John 15:12); “to do justice and judgment” (Genesis 18:18-19; Proverbs 21:1-3); “to judge not according to appearance but to judge righteous judgments” (John 7:24); and to do “justice, judgment, and equity” (Proverbs 1:2-3).

²⁹ But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

³⁰ And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

³¹ And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

³² And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

³³ But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

³⁴ And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

³⁵ And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

³⁶ Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

³⁷ And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

I mention this parable because it summarizes the entire law of Moses as well as the entire law of Christ. We might quibble over such delicate questions, as Thomas Paine does in *The Age of Reason*, such as:--

- Who were the first-hand witnesses to this account of the “Good Samaritan” as told by Jesus?
- Did this story of the Good Samaritan really take place?

However, if we assume arguendo that the story the Good Samaritan did not really occur, then would fictitious story change the validity and nature of the moral principle that is taught therein? The only way to answer that question is through our use of “reason” and our experience with the “law of nature.” And both “reason” and the “law of nature” teach us that Jesus’ “Parable of the Good Samaritan” is a sublime and noble lesson and principle of ethical conduct—nay, a principle that is the cornerstone of human civilization. We may fairly conclude that it does not matter whether the story of the Good Samaritan is fictitious or a historical fact—its moral principle to “*love thy neighbor as thyself*” is affirmed through our reason and experience to be universally accurate.

Furthermore, when we connect this moral principle that is taught in the “Good Samaritan” to our “reason” or to the “law of nature,” we see that there is indeed a nexus between “revealed religion” and “natural religion.” *The Holy Bible* teaches us, through poems, histories, and parables, various moral principles which may be self-authenticated in our observations and experiences with nature. This nexus between revealed religion and natural religion was taught to us, first, by St. Paul, who had apparently some familiarity with the writings of Cicero. In Romans 1:20, St. Paul clearly connected “revealed religion” to “natural religion,” as follows:

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

And in Romans 2:14-16, St. Paul says:

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

And in *The City of God*, St. Augustine of Hippo explicitly adopts St. Paul’s theology, citing the exact same scriptures, and concludes that God through nature

teaches his law, even to men and women who do not have the formal Hebrew Scriptures for their use. And St. Thomas Aquinas, who formally set forth the jurisprudence of the Western Church, connects human laws to natural law; and natural law to the revealed law of the sacred scriptures; and the law of the sacred scriptures to God's eternal law. For Thomas Aquinas, God is the very essence of "reason." This Church conceptualization of "reason" and "law" was bequeathed to the Church of England, and sewn into England's jurisprudence for more than half a millennium. The Anglican Church had long taught that the very principles of "reason" and "natural law" were manifestations of Christ's "law of love," to wit:

The Law of Nature in Anglo-American Constitutional Law

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

– Jesus of Nazareth (1 – 33 A.D.)¹¹⁸

"The first branch of which rule containeth the first and fundamental law of nature; which is, to seek peace and follow it. The second, the sum of the right of nature; which is, by all means we can, to defend ourselves.... This is that law of the Gospel: whatsoever you require that others should do to you, that do ye to them."

– Thomas Hobbes (1588 -1679)

"The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges everyone; and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it, that, being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions."

– John Locke (1632 – 1704)

"[W]hat is Justice in England... is raised upon... principal Foundations.... Upon the Law of Nature, though we seldom make Use of the Terms, The Law of Nature. But we say, that such a Thing is reasonable, or unreasonable...."

– Thomas Wood, *Institutes of the Laws of England*
(1720)

"This law of nature, being coeval with mankind, and dictated by God himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe in all countries, and at all times: no human laws are of any validity, if contrary to this; and such of them as are

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

valid derive all their force and all their authority, mediately or immediately, from this original.”

– William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1753)

“When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.-- ... In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.... And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”

– Thomas Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence* (1776)

“We come now to our duty to man. This may be reduced to a short sum, by ascending to its principle. Love to others, sincere and active, is the sum of our duty.”

– John Witherspoon, *Lectures on Moral Philosophy* (circa 1770s - 90s)¹¹⁹

Thomas Paine’s *The Age of Reason*, however, assumes facts about the Western Church which simply do not exist—facts which state falsely that Christianity deprecates and supplants “reason” and the “law of nature,” with superstition and false claims about miraculous events. In reality, *The Holy Bible*’s accounts of miracles teach us nothing except God’s absolute sovereignty and omnipotence, so that He alone is to be obeyed above all other authorities.

But if we accept all of Thomas Paine’s criticisms in *The Age of Reason* as truthful, and we accept that none of the “miracles” in the Bible ever occurred; that

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 52.

Moses, Joshua, the named Old Testament prophets, and the named Gospel authors did not write the books whose names appear on the headings; and that a cadre of Jewish priests, based upon fragmentary and oral histories and traditions, assembled those books called the Bible several decades or centuries after the purported biblical events occurred, then we are still left with the unassailable doctrines which summarize the law of Moses, to wit: **“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.”** This bifurcated principle of love of God and neighbor takes nothing away from any of Paine’s essential arguments in support of deism. For this reason, I find Paine’s criticisms of the Christian religion—as stated within the four corners of *The Holy Bible*—to be unduly harsh.

There were great and renowned Christian deists whom Paine must have known about but strangely omitted in *The Age of Reason*—one of whom is the great Bishop Joseph Butler, author of *The Analogy of Religion* (1736) and the Christian deist Matthew Tindal, author of *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (1730). Both authors held explicitly that “Christianity is a republication of natural religion.” It does not seem that Paine would not have known about these great Christian writers as late as 1794 when *The Age of Reason* was first published.

Now in closing, I must say something about the nature of jurisprudence and the Anglo-American court system. I recognize that Thomas Paine was not a lawyer and so he likely may not have recognized the significance of the Christian mandate of love to England’s equity jurisprudence. The law of equity was derived from the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church. Its relationship to the common law and to statutory law is multifaceted. Certain aspect of “equity” constitute the “fundamental law” of the land: e.g., “equal protection of the law” and “due process of law.” Other aspects of “equity” applies to commercial transactions, family law, and the law of real property. In either event, “equity” demands fair treatment between litigants in legal proceedings. Equitable principles have been enunciated by courts of chancery or ecclesiastical courts—both derivatives of the canon law of the church which applies the “law of Christ,” to wit:

- “to love ye one another” (John 15:12);
- “to do justice and judgment” (Genesis 18:18-19; Proverbs 21:1-3);
- “to judge not according to appearance but to judge righteous judgments” (John 7:24); and
- to do “justice, judgment, and equity” (Proverbs 1:2-3).

Even today, in modern Anglo-American jurisprudence, this equity jurisdiction is part and parcel of the secular legal system.¹²⁰ The contributions of the Christian religion to promote “reason” in the science and practice of jurisprudence are monumental. Paine, of course, omitted any analysis of these contributions to English life, culture, and law. The “law of reason” is tantamount to the “law of nature” in English jurisprudence; and, furthermore, this “law of reason” is not in competition (or in conflict) with the “law of Christ.”¹²¹ (The Anglicans John Locke (1632 – 1704), Dr. Matthew Tindal (1657 – 1733), and Bishop Joseph Butler (1692- 1752) and many others had already settled the apparent contradictions of the relationship of “reason” to *The Holy Bible: no scriptural interpretation that contradicts clear reason is valid*. And Paine’s contemporary the Reverend John Wesley (1703 – 1791) devised a similar formula for synthesizing Christianity with secular philosophy and science, to wit: the Wesleyan quadrilateral, which guided the Methodist faithful— *Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, Reason, and Human Experience*.) Therefore, Paine’s omission of these philosophical and theological developments amongst the Christian faithful is somewhat unforgivable, if not altogether reckless. See, e.g., Woods’ *Institutes of the Laws of England* (1720).

Thomas Woods in *Institutes of the Laws of England* (1720), to wit:

“As Law in General is an Art directing to the Knowledge of Justice, and to the well ordering of civil Society, so the Law of England, in particular, is an Art to know what is Justice in England, and to preserve Order in that Kingdom: And this Law is raised upon ... principal Foundations.

1. Upon the **Law of Nature**, though we seldom make Use of the Terms, *The Law of Nature*. But we say, that such a **Thing is reasonable, or unreasonable, or against the....**
2. Upon the **revealed Law of God**, Hence it is that our Law punishes Blasphemies, Perjuries, & etc. and receives the Canons of the Church [of England] duly made, and supported a spiritual Jurisdiction and Authority in the Church [of England].
3. The third Ground are several general *Customs*, these Customs are properly called the *Common Law*. Wherefore when we say, it is so by **Common Law**, it is as much as to say, by

¹²⁰ See, e.g., Roderick O. Ford, *Jesus Master of Law: A Juridical Science of Christianity and the Law of Equity* (Tampa, Fl.: Xlibris Pub., 2015).

¹²¹ The “law of Christ is “to love ye one another” (John 15:12); “to do justice and judgment” (Genesis 18:18-19; Proverbs 21:1-3); “to judge not according to appearance but to judge righteous judgments” (John 7:24); and to do “justice, judgment, and equity” (Proverbs 1:2-3).

common Right, or of common Justice.

Indeed it is many Times very difficult to know what Cases are grounded on the **Law of Reason**, and what upon the *Custom* of the Kingdom, yet we must endeavor to understand this, to know the perfect Reason of the Law.

Rules concerning Law

The *Common Law* is the **absolute Perfection of Reason**. For nothing that is contrary to Reason is consonant to Law

Common Law is common Right.

The Law is the Subject's best **Birth-right**.

The Law respects the **Order of Nature....**"

Source: Thomas Wood, LL.D., *An Institute of the laws of England: or, the Laws of England in their Natural Order* (London, England: Strahan and Woodall, 1720), pp. 4-5.

For these reasons, I find Thomas Paine's accusation that the Christian religion is inconsistent with "reason" to be quite harsh, misplaced and excessively critical.

THE END