

BULLETIN

OF THOMAS PAINE FRIENDS

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THE AGE OF REASON

Excerpts are from *The Life and Works of Thomas Paine*, edited by William Van der Weyde, 1925,
New Rochelle NY: Thomas Paine National Historical Association, vol. VIII

From Van der Weyde's introductory comment:

In a letter to Samuel Adams, in 1803, Paine recites the dramatic circumstances under which he wrote this first part [1793-4] of "The Age of Reason" in Paris, when "my friends were falling as fast as the guillotine could cut their heads off, and I every day expected the same fate..... death was on every side of me, and I had no time to lose."

Paine, a man of deeply religious nature, had long intended to chronicle his thoughts upon religion and hastened to do so because, as he deplored, "the people of France were running headlong into atheism..."

Paine was in his fifty-seventh year when he wrote this famous theological treatise, which probably has been more misrepresented and misinterpreted than any work of the kind ever published.

From: **THE AGE OF REASON, PART I** (written in 1793-4)

THE AUTHOR'S PROFESSION OF FAITH

It has been my intention, for several years past, to publish my thoughts upon religion. I am well aware of the difficulties that attend the subject, and from that consideration, had reserved it to a more advanced period of life. I intended it to be the last offering I should make to my fellow-citizens of all nations, and that at a time when the purity of the motive that induced me to it could not admit of a question, even by those who might disapprove the work. The circumstance that has now taken place in France of the total abolition of the whole national order of priesthood, and of everything appertaining to compulsive systems of religion, and compulsive articles of faith, has not only precipitated my intention, but rendered a work of this kind exceedingly necessary, lest in the general wreck of superstition, of false systems of government and false theology, we lose sight of morality, of humanity and of the theology that is true.

As several of my colleagues, and others of my fellow-citizens of France, have given me the example of making their voluntary and individual profession of faith, I also will make mine; and I do this with all that sincerity and frankness with which the mind of man communicates with itself.

I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

I believe in the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy.

But, lest it should be supposed that I believe many other things in addition to these, I shall, in the progress of this work, declare the things I do not believe, and my reasons for not believing them.

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 my own church.

All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.

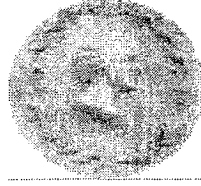
I do not mean by this declaration to condemn those who believe otherwise; they have the same right to their belief as I have to mine. But it is necessary to the happiness of man that he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbelieving; it consists in professing to believe what he does not believe.

Continued on page 5, *The Age of Reason*

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Thomas Paine Friends, Inc., gratefully acknowledges recent dues and generous donations from members and benefactors.



A Short Mission Statement

The Mission of Thomas Paine Friends, Inc., is to encourage people to learn about and from Thomas Paine, his times and philosophy so that they may be inspired to participate in public affairs reflective of the spirit of Paine's life, thought and ideals.

To Know Paine, Read Him

Florence Stapleton -- Thomas Paine Chronicler

Some Websites and Blogs

thomas-paine-friends.org --Our TPF website is maintained by Ed Dodson. Anyone advocating for Paine can send Paine-related news to: edod08034@gmail.com.

facebook.com/thomaspainefriends?ref=br_tf --Facebook page of TPF. Enter discussions here.

religionpaine.org --Maurice Bisheff maintains this site of several essays and seminar pieces by him and James Tepfer, about Paine's religious and philosophical views.

valorww2.com --This site, maintained by Victor Madeson, contains many articles about Paine, including *Commons Sense Clubs, Societies of Political Inquiry, and other subjects*.

cooperativeindividualism.org --The School for Cooperative Individualism, Director, Edward J. Dodson, contains a large archive of articles about Paine. Also, summary of the life of Henry George and list of courses at the Henry George Schools.

historyisonourside.wordpress.com --Frances Chiu's blog has excerpts of writings of 18th century and later authors, such as James Murray, Richard Price, certainly Thomas Paine, with relation to our current political, social, cultural matters.

algerblog.blogspot.com --Blogger Algernon D'Amassa writes on a range of subjects, such as Paine's life, ideas, and influence, plus Zen Buddhism, politics, environment, arts, and more.

floridaveteransforcommonsense.org --In Sarasota FL, it sponsors an annual Paine birthday gala, as well as many human rights, peace and justice forums. TPF members Gene Jones and Mike Burns are president and vice president.

thomaspainesociety.org --Website of Thomas Paine Society, Pasadena CA. A Research Library is a major facility of TPS; see the website for details of its use and how to donate publications.

thomaspainesocietyuk.org.uk --This Thomas Paine Society in England publishes articles about liberal-progressive thinkers and movements in its *Journal of Radical History*.

rjlindsey.com --One-man show, "Thomas Paine, Voice of the American Revolution," by TPF member, Robert J. Lindsey. He has a new show, "Benjamin Franklin: Stories of Revolution".

thelifeofthomaspaine.org --Ian Ruskin performs his Paine monologue at many locations. News of the film schedule on PBS, plus related events, is at the website.

commonsensesociety.com --This society in Hungary holds many international forums and workshops, including in the U. S.

facebook.com/pages/Fort-Lee-Common-Sense-Society/199545953428717 --Fort Lee NJ Common Sense Society is preparing to raise its new Paine statue in 2018.

thomaspaine.org --Thomas Paine National Historical Association, located in New Rochelle NY.

kenburchell.blogspot.com --The Thomas Paine Review posts recent publications and news on Paine and related subjects.

www.thomas-paine-friends.org
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Why Care About Thomas Paine?

This is some of Paine's accomplishments. He is best known in America for *Common Sense*.

A few excerpts from Victor Madeson's website, <http://www.valorww2.com>
from his Independence Day message



Fifteen years later, his two-volume *Rights of Man* would decisively change Europe and within twenty-five years his later writing would inspire the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* [adopted by the United Nations in 1948]. Now that corporatism has returned much of the world to colonial status, we hope that citizens can put aside diversions and follow the path of his restless spirit. With the robber baron running dogs in hot pursuit, Paine's works can shelter a memory of liberty while we mobilize against freedom's oldest enemy: *the passion of the few to rule the many*.

He inspired global change. John Adams, who respected English legalism and royalism, hated Paine's ideas and half-seriously proposed renaming the *Age of Reason* as the *Age of Paine* (Oct. 1805) because he did not know any other man who had influenced the inhabitants or affairs of the world more for the previous thirty years. Despite his dislike of Paine, in 1814 John Adams paraphrased Joel Barlow to write that: "*There is but one element of government and that is THE PEOPLE,*" and "...Without the pen of Paine, the sword of Washington would have been wielded in vain." Adams later conceded (1818): "...a change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people, was the real American Revolution."

[Paine] is often dismissed as a *radical*. The best answer to such detractors was in President Franklin Roosevelt's speech to the Daughters of the American Revolution: "*Remember always that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists.*" (20 April 1938)

Note: To understand the true meaning of Independence Day, consider viewing Ian Ruskin's play "To Begin the World Over Again: The Life of Thomas Paine". The idea that Americans are brainwashed to forget the inspiration of history might be hard to accept. That case is made elsewhere, but you should consider if the current history of the 4th of July would help mobilize *against the few who rule the many*. Did the Founders pledge "...our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor" for tea bag taxes or for "a new birth of freedom"? The actual history of American Independence is directly linked to Bastille Day in France (14th July).

Letter from Franklin to Paine...Again: Views on Religion

In the last *Bulletin*, volume 19, number 1, we printed a letter addressed to Thomas Paine and signed by Benjamin Franklin in which the writer expresses stern caution about publishing negative views on religion. The letter is undated. The *Bulletin* made the assumption that Franklin was criticizing Paine's *The Age of Reason*, and clearly erred in that unwarranted assumption.

BUT, Victor Madeson, TPF vice-president, made a good catch on this article: *The Age of Reason* was published in 1794-5, Franklin died in April 1790, obviously he could not be writing a letter about the published work. Madeson continues, that Franklin's letter would have been written to someone else, on the same topic, and, of course, earlier than 1790. So far, Madeson has not sent further information or clues about the Franklin letter: that is, when and to whom it might have been written.

So, awaiting additional information or discussion, we offer the following thoughts on the letter.

○ It is found in volume X, pages 281-282, in Jared Sparks' exhaustive ten-volume compendium, *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, of 1840. There it is addressed to Paine, without date, and signed by Franklin.

○ Paine had stated several times that he planned to write his opinions on religion. "Soon after I had published the pamphlet 'Common Sense,' in America, I saw the exceeding probability that a revolution in the system of government would be followed by a revolution in the system of religion." The subject was long in his mind, and he may have put some thoughts on paper.

○ Some components of the letter suggest that what Franklin could have been commenting on were Paine's ideas drafted in

preliminary, manuscript, digest form, which Paine, rightly devoted to Franklin and looking for his critical thinking, may have sent on to him.

~ The letter's first sentence refers to a manuscript, not a publication: *I have read your manuscript with some attention.*

~ And, towards the end of the first paragraph, it is clear that the manuscript has not yet been sent to be published: *....the consequence of printing this piece will be, a great deal of odium drawn upon yourself, mischief to you, and no benefit to others.*

~ Then, near the end of paragraph two, another sentence hints that the article or book has not gone to publication: *You might easily display your excellent talents of reasoning upon a less hazardous subject, and thereby obtain a rank with our most distinguished authors.*

~ The third, and last, paragraph starts with this sentence: *I would advise you, therefore, not to attempt unchaining the tiger, but to burn this piece before it is seen by any other person; whereby you will save yourself a great deal of mortification by the enemies it may raise against you, and perhaps a good deal of regret and repentance.* According to Franklin, the manuscript has not been seen by anyone else, and it should not be. If it were already published, of course, it would have been seen by anyone and everyone.

~ The letter concludes with the sympathetic words that usually passed between the two friends: *I intend this letter itself as a proof of my friendship, and therefore add no professions to it;...*

We hope to learn some substance on this topic. Stay tuned.

From *Critical Introduction of Thomas Paine*, by Frances A. Chiu,
a 13,000-word article in *Scribner's British Writers Supplement XXIV*, pp. 199-221,
Ed: Jay Parini, 2017, New York: Gale Cengage Learning

THE AGE OF REASON



Sculpture of Thomas Paine
by Malvina Hoffman
Colonnade of the Immortals
Hall of Fame, Bronx NY
campus of Lehman College,
formerly New York University

If *Rights of Man* shocked and scandalized the ruling classes, *The Age of Reason* (1794–1795) was to prove an even more controversial work. Although Paine's avowed purpose was to counter the rise of atheism in France, with his declaration that he believed "in one God and no more" (*Complete Writings*, p. 464*), he nonetheless proceeded to disavow organized religion, including "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" because "all national institutions of churches appear to me no other than human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit" (p. 464). Simply put, "My own mind is my own church" (p. 464). For Paine, "infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbelieving" but rather in "professing to believe what he does not believe" (p. 464). In this work, he would question the premises of the Bible, rejecting the conjoined ideas of mystery, miracles, and revelation; "truth never envelops itself in mystery," he insisted:

But the resurrection of a dead person from the grave, and his ascension through the air, is a thing very different as to the evidence it admits of, to the invisible conception of a child in the womb. A thing which everybody is required to believe, requires that the proof and evidence of it should be equal to all, and universal. Instead of this, a small number of persons, not more than eight or nine, are introduced as proxies for the whole world, to say they saw it, and all the rest of the world are called upon to believe it. But it appears that Thomas did not believe the resurrection, and, as they say, would not believe without having ocular and manual demonstration himself. So neither will I, and the reason is equally as good for me, and for every other person, as for Thomas. (p. 468)

How can anyone trust mere hearsay—regardless of how long it has been around? Yet, that is exactly what these claims amount to, according to Paine. So even as he described Jesus, "the reformist and revolutionary," as "a virtuous and an amiable man" (p. 469)—viewing his morality as "the most benevolent" without being "exceeded by any" (p. 467)—readers took offense at his

* Page numbers refer to *Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, edited by Philip Foner, New York: Citadel Press, 1945, reprint in 1969.

claim that "not a line of what is called the New Testament is of his own writing". (p. 468)

No less shocking was Paine's disavowal of redemption—an idea that he found repulsive from an early age, in the belief that "it was making God Almighty act like a passionate man, that killed his son when he could not revenge himself in any other way" (p. 497). After all, when someone commits a crime, "moral Justice still cannot take the innocent for the guilty, even if the innocent would offer itself" (p. 481). For Paine, such flawed logic indicated that "the doctrine of redemption is founded on a mere pecuniary idea corresponding to that of a debt which another person might pay" (p. 481). Instead, the true word of God is "THE CREATION WE BEHOLD" (p. 482): in nature, in the various planets, and other universes.

More troubling to Paine's critics, however, was his painstaking deconstruction of the Bible in part 2, not to mention his irreverent tone, as he delved into contradictions and confused details: was there, in fact, "sufficient authority for believing the Bible to be the Word of God?" (p. 518). Evidently not. Venturing further than d'Holbach, who viewed the Bible as a "hotchpotch," Paine would maintain that "every book in the Bible, from Genesis to Judges, is without authenticity" (p. 535). If the books of Moses indicated anyone but him to be the author, and to be written several hundred years later no less, the same could be said of the Book of Joshua; for "in the name of common sense, can it be Joshua that relates what people had done after he was dead?" (p. 532) Paine would proceed to deplore the book of Isaiah as "one of the most wild and disorderly compositions ever put together," forming only "one continued incoherent, bombastical rant, full of extravagant metaphor, without application, and destitute of meaning" (p. 552). Nor did he regard the book of Jeremiah as anything more than a "medley of detached, unauthenticated anecdotes put together by some stupid bookmaker" (p. 559). Similarly, the book of Judges "has not so much as a nominal voucher" but "is altogether fatherless" (p. 534). As for the book of Job, it was one of the better sections, but most likely not of Hebrew origin (given its scientific bent) and probably did not belong to the Bible either, while the Psalms of David were obviously penned by various writers.

Like Voltaire and d'Holbach, Paine would also express horror and disgust at biblical depictions of violence. In part 1, he had already complained that "whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon, than the word of God" (p. 474). In addition, "there are matters in that book, said to be done by the express command of God, that are as shocking as anything done by Robespierre, by Carrier, by the English government in the East Indies" (p. 518). No less abhorrent was Moses, one of most "detestable villains than in any period of the world have disgraced the name of man" (p. 528).

Continued on page 5, *Critical Introduction*

...Critical Introduction, from page 4

Equally offensive were the accounts of sexual license—most notably, the circumstances involved in the birth of Jesus. “Blasphemously obscene,” the story “gives an account of a young woman engaged to be married” only to be “debauched by a ghost. Notwithstanding which, Joseph afterward marries her, cohabits with her as his wife, and in his turn rivals the ghost” (p. 571). In short, it is a tale where “there is not a priest but must be ashamed to own it” (p. 571).

To sum up, only one dire conclusion could be drawn of Christianity: that of all religions, there were “none more derogatory to the Almighty, more unedifying to man, more repugnant to reason, and more contradictory in itself, than this thing called Christianity” (p. 600). It was an “engine of power” that produced “atheists and fanatics” (p. 600). Flatly denying any value to theology, Paine slammed it repeatedly as “nothing”:

The study of theology as it stands in Christian churches, is the study of nothing; it is founded on nothing; it rests on no principles; it proceeds by no authorities; it has no data; it can demonstrate nothing; and admits of no conclusion. Not any thing can be studied as a science without our being in possession of the principles upon which it is founded; and as this is not the case with Christian theology, it is therefore the study of nothing. (p. 601)

What was the alternative to the study of this “nothing”? Certainly not the dead languages as taught by traditional universities where the “philosopher is lost in the linguist” (p. 492), but the sciences. As Murray, Priestley, and others before him had extolled the sciences, an emboldened Paine would defend it as the true “Bible of creation,” because one could “know God only through his works” and by “the order and manner in which it acts” (pp. 601–02). It is science that fully reveals the sublimity of God’s creation:

But it is not to us, the inhabitants of this globe, only, that the benefits arising from a plurality of worlds are limited. The inhabitants of each of the worlds of which our system is composed enjoy the same opportunities of knowledge as we do. Neither does the knowledge stop here. The system of worlds next to us exhibits, in its revolutions, the same principles and school of science to the inhabitants of

their system, as our system does to us, and in like manner throughout the immensity of space.

Our ideas, not only of the almightiness of the Creator, but of his wisdom and his beneficence, become enlarged in proportion as we contemplate the extent and the structure of the universe. We see our own earth filled with abundance, but we forget to consider how much of that abundance is owing to the scientific knowledge the vast machinery of the universe has unfolded. (p. 503)

Here, God is no longer a lowly trickster, performing “miracles” for entertainment, but the “great mechanic of the creation, the first philosopher and original teacher of all science” (p. 603).

Not unlike *Rights of Man*, *The Age of Reason* was prosecuted by the government for blasphemy. But unlike *Rights of Man*, few chose to defend it, as part 2 proved to be too much for many to stomach, including Joseph Priestley and fellow defender of the French revolution, Gilbert Wakefield. A few people, however, defended, if not embraced, this highly controversial text. William Blake was to argue that Paine was a better Christian than Richard Watson, the bishop of Llandaff and author of a 1796 rebuttal to *The Age of Reason*. In 1818, the radical journalist Richard Carlile would unequivocally agree to be sentenced for six years in prison for printing it, rejecting any legal conditions on a one-year term—after defiantly reading aloud *The Age of Reason* from beginning to end at his trial. ~ ~ ~



For the full 22-page article, contact the author at, drfranceschiu@gmail.com.

Frances Chiu, a TPF Board member, has taught history and literature at The New School since 2002. Her online course on Paine and the Enlightenment is probably the first course in the US to focus on Paine. Her other courses concern 19th century horror literature as well as 17th – 18th century social and democratic movements. In 2009, she organized a colloquium, “A New Era for Politics: Thomas Paine and the Rise of Modern Liberalism.” In 2011, she was nominated for a Distinguished University Teaching Award. She is now completing a textbook on *Rights of Man* for Routledge Books.

...The Age of Reason, from page 1

It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind as to subscribe his professional belief to things he does not believe he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime.

He takes up the trade of priest for the sake of gain, and in order to qualify himself for that trade he begins with a perjury. Can we conceive any thing more destructive to morality than this?

Soon after I had published the pamphlet “Common Sense,” in America, I saw the exceeding probability that a revolution in the system of government would be followed by a revolution in the system of religion. The adulterous connection of church and

state, wherever it has taken place, whether Jewish, Christian or Turkish, has so effectually prohibited by pains and penalties every discussion upon established creeds, and upon first principles of religion, that until the system of government should be changed, those subjects could not be brought fairly and openly before the world; but that whenever this should be done, a revolution in the system of religion would follow. Human inventions and priestcraft would be detected; and man would return to the pure, unmixed and unadulterated belief of one God, and no more. (pp. 3 – 6)

Continued on page 6, *The Age of Reason*

CONCERNING MISSIONS AND REVELATIONS

EVERY national church or religion has established itself by pretending some special mission from God, communicated to certain individuals. The Jews have their Moses; the Christians their Jesus Christ, their apostles and saints; and the Turks their Mahomet, as if the way to God was not open to every man alike.

Each of these churches show certain books, which they call *revelation*, or the Word of God. The Jews say their Word of God was given by God to Moses, face to face; the Christians say that their Word of God came by divine inspiration; and the Turks say that their Word of God was brought by an angel from heaven. Each of these churches accuses the other of unbelief; and for my own part, I disbelieve them all.

As it is necessary to affix right ideas to words, I will, before I proceed further into the subject, offer some observations on the word *revelation*. Revelation, when applied to religion, means something communicated *immediately* from God to man.

No one will deny or dispute the power of the Almighty to make such a communication, if He pleases. But admitting, for the sake of a case, that something has been revealed to a certain person, and not to any other person, it is a revelation to that person only. When he tells it to a second person, a second to a third, a third to a fourth, and so on, it ceases to be a revelation to all those persons. It is revelation to the first person only, and *hearsay* to every other, and consequently they are not obliged to believe it.

It is a contradiction in terms and ideas, to call anything a revelation that comes to us at second-hand, either verbally or in writing. Revelation is necessarily limited to the first communication---after this it is only an account of something which that person says was a revelation made to him; and though he may find himself obliged to believe it, it cannot be incumbent on me to believe it in the same manner; for it was not a revelation made to *me*, and I have only his word for it that it was made to him..... (pp. 6 - 8)

OF THE TRUE THEOLOGY

BUT if objects for gratitude and admiration are our desire, do they not present themselves every hour to our eyes? Do we not see a fair creation prepared to receive us the instant we are born---a world furnished to our hands, that cost us nothing? Is it we that light up the sun, that pour down the rain, and fill the earth with abundance? Whether we sleep or wake, the vast machinery of the universe still goes on.

Are these things, and the blessings they indicate in future, nothing to us? Can our gross feelings be excited by no other subjects than tragedy and suicide? Or is the gloomy pride of man become so intolerable, that nothing can flatter it but a sacrifice of the Creator?

DEFINING THE TRUE REVELATION

BUT some, perhaps, will say: Are we to have no Word of God--no revelation? I answer, Yes; there is a Word of God; there is a revelation.

THE WORD OF GOD IS THE CREATION WE BEHOLD and it is *this word*, which no human intervention can counterfeit or alter, that God speaketh universally to man....(p. 41)

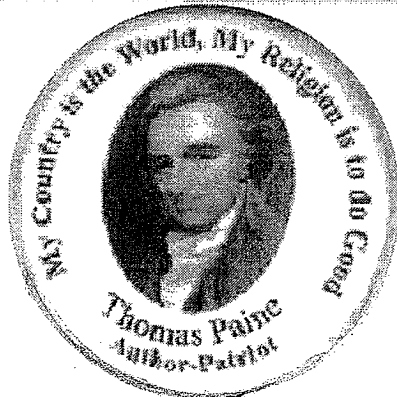
It is only in the CREATION that all our ideas and conceptions of a *Word of God* can unite. The Creation speaks a universal language, multiplied and various as they be. It is an ever-existing original, which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be counterfeited; it cannot be lost; it cannot be altered; it cannot be suppressed. It does not depend upon the will of man whether it shall be published or not; it publishes itself from one end of the earth to the other. It preaches to all nations and to all worlds; and this *Word of God* reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of God.

Do we want to contemplate His power? We see it in the immensity of the creation. Do we want to contemplate His wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate His munificence? We see it in the abundance with which He fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate His mercy? We see it in His not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful. In fine, do we want to know what God is? Search not the books called the Scripture, which any human hand might make, but the Scripture called the creation. (pp. 43 - 44)

RECAPITULATION

...That the moral duty of man consists in imitating the moral goodness and beneficence of God, manifested in the creation, toward all His creatures. That seeing, as we daily do, the goodness of God to all men, it is an example calling upon all men to practice the same toward each other; and, consequently, that everything of persecution and revenge between man and man, and everything of cruelty to animals, is a violation of moral duty....(p. 101)

---Selections by Martha Spiegelman



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To Know Paine, Read Him ~ Florence Stapleton, Thomas Paine Chronicler

A Late Poem -- Thomas Paine Mocks the Federalists

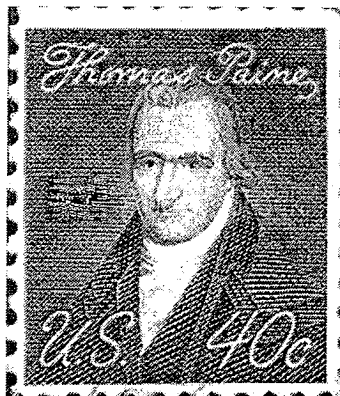
From Mr. Paine to Mr. Jefferson, on the occasion of a toast being given at a federal dinner at Washington, of "MAY THEY NEVER KNOW PLEASURE WHO LOVE PAINE" (On February 23, 1803)

(In: *The Life of Thomas Paine*, Moncure Daniel Conway, 1892, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, vol. II, pp. 316-17)

I send you, Sir, a tale about some Feds,
Who, in their wisdom, got to loggerheads.
The case was this, they felt so flat and sunk,
That they took a glass together and got drunk.
Such things, you know, are neither new nor rare,
For some will harry themselves when in despair.
It was the natal day of Washington,
And that they thought a famous day for fun;
For with the learned world it is agreed,
The better day the better deed.
They talked away, and as the glass went round
They grew, in point of wisdom, more profound;
For at the bottom of the bottle lies
That kind of sense we overlook when wise.
Come, here's a toast, cried one, with roar immense,
May none know pleasure who love Common Sense.

Bravo! Cried some,--no, no! some others cried,
But left it to the waiter to decide.
I think, said he, the case would be more plain,
To leave out Common Sense, and put in Paine.
On this a mighty noise arose among
This drunken, bawling, senseless throng.
Some said that Common Sense was all a curse,
That making people wiser made them worse;
It learned them to be careful of their purse,
And not be laid about like babes at nurse,
Nor yet believe in stories upon trust,
Which all mankind, to be well governed must;
And that the toast was better at the first,
And he that didn't think so might be cursed.
So on they went, till such a fray arose
As all who know what Feds are may suppose.

Postage stamp issued in 1968,
through the efforts of Joseph Lewis,
with assistance of Eleanor Roosevelt



From a late portrait by
John Wesley Jarvis, ca. 1805