His name is Paine, a gentleman about two years from England—a man who, General Lee says, has genius in his eyes." So John Adams wrote to his wife in 1776. Dr. Franklin had been more reserved, but well disposed, when Paine approached him in England and, explaining his plans to emigrate to America, asked for a letter of introduction to the people of Philadelphia. Franklin consented to write the letter. The bearer, he said, was "an ingenious worthy young man"—though in truth the young man was thirty-seven years old, young only to the aging Doctor.

Philadelphia worked a miracle on Paine. He arrived almost a ne'er-do-well, a drifter who had never found his vocation, an unknown and insignificant lower-class Englishman who, little suspecting his own powers, had never yet published a single line. Philadelphia kindled his genius. Introduced by Franklin's letter to literary

1 Life, I, 69n. References are given only for direct quotations, and all except footnote 19 are to the works of M. D. Conway, Life of Thomas Paine (2 vols., New York, 1893), and Writings of Thomas Paine (4 vols., New York, 1894-96).

2 Life, I, 40.
and philosophical circles, he became editor of the first *Pennsylvania Magazine*. The keen air of the city of sages sharpened his wits, the lifting of old-world repressions freed his pen, and in the storm of the American Revolution was born the Tom Paine that we know, the man whose writings were variously to thrill, exalt, disgust, or horrify, but always to excite.

Tom Paine (always called Tom, according to Walter Savage Landor,\(^3\) not out of disrespect but because of his good nature) was more than a pamphleteer and rather less than a philosopher, though quite as much a philosopher as some in France, for example Raynal, who called themselves *philosophes*. He was more than an agitator, and rather less than a revolutionary statesman, though perhaps as much so as Samuel Adams or Patrick Henry. More than a maker of phrases, he was less than a maker of thought. His ideas were not new, nor was his mind creative. His genius was of another kind, the genius of “an ingenious worthy young man” to see the thoughts of philosophers as a plain man sees them, to smash pretension and worldly dignity, but also to sweep aside fine distinctions and qualifications, boiling everything down to a gigantic true-or-false test, with no ifs, ands or buts. In a way, he is the least original, but the most typical, of the school he represents. His works are a pure essence of eighteenth-century thinking. He had an uncanny gift for hitting the bull’s eye. Everyone in his time favored “common sense”; Paine made it the title of his first pamphlet. The theory of natural rights is now recognized as the upshot of a century of liberal philosophy; it was Paine who wrote a book called the *Rights of Man*. That the eighteenth century was a reasonable age was universally believed by contemporaries; it was Paine who launched the phrase which has stuck ever since—the *Age of Reason*.

As he typified the reforming philosophy of the day, so also he typified its revolutionary activity. He is the only person who played a prominent part in revolutionary disturbances in England, America and France. He knew Washington, Franklin and Jefferson; Lafayette, Danton and Robespierre; Dr. Priestley, Mary Wollstonecraft and Horne Tooke. He was an American revolutionist, a French revolutionist, and an English revolutionist, all in about equal measure, and without much distinction in his own mind, since for him

\(^3\) *Ibid.*, II, 294.
there was only one revolution, the revolt of humanity against oppression.

Paine was born at Thetford in Norfolk in 1737. His people were of the lower class. In this respect he differed from most radical writers, and from most leading revolutionists, in either England, France or America. His origins and early life remind one of Rousseau, who also came from humble stock. Paine's father was a Quaker, and his background was that of the Friends. He thus stood in relation to the rest of England somewhat as the Protestant Rousseau stood to Catholic France. In both men there was an unmistakable moral intensity, not altogether characteristic of the day, very different from the apparent flippancy of Gibbon or Voltaire. Paine, like Rousseau, had an unsatisfactory childhood, and never received much schooling. Like Rousseau, he left home in his teens, but where Rousseau wandered off into amorous adventures, Paine went to sea, serving for a short time on a privateer in the Seven Years War. For twenty years, like the vagabond from Geneva, Paine lived by finding such occupations as he could. For a while he worked as a corsetmaker; then he took a government job, becoming a minor official in the collection of the excise. Like Rousseau, he was approaching middle age before he discovered his extraordinary talent for writing.

The parallel with Rousseau does not hold for their characters. Paine never developed in adversity Rousseau's sentimental self-pity and self-extenuation. He scorned becoming a dependent of others. Far from living on the money of other people, he habitually gave away his own. He remained foreign to everything soft, dreamy or romantic. He believed in the goodness of human nature, but not in the goodness of impulse, considering man to be a creature of reason. Rousseau's relations with women would have shocked him. Twice married, with both marriages cut short, one by death, the other by legal separation, Paine lived most of his life as a bachelor of regular habits. He played chess, checkers and dominoes, "but never at cards"; he drank, but drank to excess only in certain critical moments of his life. He tells us that he had some aptitude for poetry in his youth, but gave up writing it because he distrusted the imagination. In short, Paine, like many others of Puritan background, remained a Puritan long after ceasing to accept Christianity. There is

\[Ibid., I, 321.\]
no reason to suppose that he had difficulties of interest to a psycho-
analyst. If he lacked Rousseau’s creative genius, he lacked also his
persecution complex, and if he lacked Rousseau’s depth of insight,
he lacked also his pathological absorption in himself.

Probably it was from his Quaker elders that Paine first acquired
his distinctive habits of mind, in particular his humanitarian aversion
to cruelty and his bold faith in his own judgment. In Quakerism the
world was polarized, so to speak, between God and the individual
soul. Everything between God and the individual man, everything
customary, historical, or inherited—church and state, tradition and
precedent, rank and worldly status, the “wisdom of the ages,” the
Bible itself unless the reader were touched by the spirit—became a
mere dead weight worthy of no respect. The Quakers had been the
radicals of the seventeenth century. Their doctrine, with its low
valuation of established forms, easily passed into the radicalism of
the Age of Reason.

The transition was effected in Paine, as in others, by the study of
science. From his small savings as a corset-maker and excise-man he
bought books and scientific apparatus to complete his sketchy edu-
cation. Science then meant chiefly mathematics, astronomy and
mechanics, subjects dealing with abstract but very definite concepts
—quantity, mass, motion, force—and with the invariably regular
relationship of these elements to one another. On these ideas Paine
modeled his view of the world. He believed in a great universal
natural law, from which human customs were unnatural aberrations.
He believed in a fundamental natural harmony, an underlying
peaceableness of society which the interference of governments dis-
rupted. He brought to social and human problems, and to all the
complications of politics, the simple clarities of the Quaker con-
science or of the mathematical logician, reducing such problems to
plain propositions and applying his true-or-false test—to which he
had all the answers. He believed that science represented modern
enlightenment, and that there was very little enlightenment in
anything else. Indifferent to history, suspicious of imaginative litera-
ture, knowing no language but his own, he assumed that everything
true could be put in explicit terms. Words that went beyond the
tangible or logical, figurative or symbolic language, intimations of
the unsayable, were all to Paine mere fancy stuff that hid the truth.
His own style is the reflection of his mind; his works are supreme in the literature of blunt directness.

In the England where he spent twenty years of adult life he found much to shock both his conscience and his reason. It was a country in which “Merrie England” and the sturdy yeomen were already a quaint tradition, where thousands were falling into misery and degradation, where the operation of the poor laws created a kind of legal serfdom, and men were publicly whipped for killing a landlord’s game. Paine knew all this; he knew also that the savagery of the criminal code worked chiefly against the lower classes. He had a Quaker’s horror for the Church of England, with its tithes and privileges and aristocratic inequalities, by which a bishop of Durham enjoyed £10,000 a year and a parish curate only thirty. He knew about rotten boroughs; in his own birthplace of Thetford thirty-one persons elected two members of the House of Commons; politics throughout England depended on family influence and corporate monopolies. As an employee of the government he could see the corruption of its administration and the hypocrisy of its principles. Being an idealist he saw chiefly the black part of reality, and knowing little of the past or of other countries he found the blackness very black indeed. Finally, made a scapegoat for having represented his fellow excisemen in a request for an increase of wages, he lost his government job and had to sell his possessions to escape imprisonment for debt. He now considered himself beaten by the social system, and, having also separated from his wife, he decided to begin over in the New World.

He arrived in America late in 1774. Finding himself free and respected, received as a “gentleman” and man of letters, his picture of England became still more clouded, and his hatred of English institutions became hardly distinguishable from hatred of England itself. After a year in Philadelphia, where he meanwhile made himself known as an abolitionist and friend of the Negro, he published Common Sense, summoning the hesitant colonists to assert their independence. He wrote as a complete Anglophobe. England is “that barbarous and hellish power.” Its king is “the Royal Brute of Great Britain,” the “sullen-tempered Pharaoh of England.” He finds it wrong-headed to regard England as the mother country: “Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America. This
new World hath been the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from every part of Europe." To the parentlands of Americans he would add Africa. He anticipates hemispheric ideas, taking a broad intercontinental view, seeing America as a new world sprung from all the peoples of the old. He anticipates accordingly the American doctrine of isolation:

'Tis repugnant to reason, to the universal order of things, to all examples from former ages, to suppose that this Continent can long remain subject to any external power. . . . There is something absurd in supposing a Continent to be perpetually governed by an island. In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet; and as England and America, with respect to each other, reverse the common order of nature, it is evident that they belong to different systems. England to Europe; America to itself. 5

Fortified by arguments somewhat more circumstantial, but expressing mainly this cosmic sense of detachment, Common Sense swept through the colonies, rolling up a reported total of half a million copies, which if correct indicates that it was read by virtually every American who could read. Never was a pamphlet more electrically effective. In half a year came the Declaration of Independence. The proceeds from Common Sense, which he published anonymously, Paine gave to the patriot cause.

Paine remained in America thirteen years. He issued serially the papers called the Crisis, exhorting the weary Continentals to perseverance; he served as secretary to Congress; he retired after the war to Bordentown, New Jersey, where the Congress endowed him with certain lands confiscated from Tories. He returned to his old scientific and mechanical interests as a way of doing good for humanity, working at plans for an iron bridge (then a new idea) to be built over the Schuylkill. To further these plans he decided to make a trip to France, where engineering was best understood, and in 1787 sailed from New York, expecting soon to return.

In France he found himself famous, partly as the friend of Franklin and other Americans venerated by French liberals, partly as the author of the Letter to the Abbé Raynal, since Raynal was then considered a very important philosopher. The Academy of Sciences approved the plans for the bridge. Paine crossed to England, his head full of projects for human progress both mechanical

5 "Common Sense," in Writings, I, 100, 99, 93, 87, 91-92.
and political. The importance of Paine’s belief in progress, and the significance of his letter to Raynal, are dealt with more fully by Mr. Gibbens and Mr. Abel in the articles that follow. Paine’s bridge was eventually constructed in England, though he himself got no credit for it, and made no profits. It was social engineering that henceforth claimed him. He made many friends among Reformers and Whigs, including Edmund Burke, with whom, as an old friend of America, he found much in common at this time.

The events of 1789 in France settled, or unsettled, the destiny of Thomas Paine. Eager to observe the regeneration of humanity on the spot, he crossed the Channel again toward the end of the year. Old “Common Sense” (he was now over fifty) saw with rapture the rejuvenation of human society, the advent of reason, the Year One of Liberty. It did not so appear to Burke. Disgusted and terrified by the French doings, and by the attitude of English sympathizers, Burke published in 1790 his Reflections on the French Revolution, predicting disaster for the new movement, and revealing a philosophy incomprehensible to Paine. This philosophy disapproved of equality and restricted individual liberty, exalted tradition, custom and respectfulness, stipulated that change, if any, must be gradual and organic, knew nothing of human rights but only of the rights of Englishmen, threw an aura over the community, the national group, the “culture,” as one would say today, to which men owed all that raised them above the brute, and which therefore no mere individual should be so arrogant as to contemn. Paine was indignant, morally outraged. His answer was the Rights of Man.

This book, translated immediately into French and German, and into Spanish thirty years later, is a monument to the Revolutionary Age. Its very want of originality makes it the more accurate a mirror of its time. The underlying premise is the optimism of the eighteenth century, the faith in human nature, the conviction that man’s powers, when operating freely, operate for good; the sublime conviction that the human mind, when emancipated, will gladly see the truth, and that human beings, when enlightened, will have no occasion for disagreement or struggle. The great enemy is ignorance. Man is not an enemy to himself, in the sense that both good and evil are in his nature. Evil is not in human nature, but in a social environment that corrupts human nature. This environment exists only by ignorance,
and can be transformed by rational enlightenment. The problem is to do away with prejudices and superstitions, the like of which human beings, when once free, will never revive. Man has at last discovered that "to be free it is sufficient that he wills it."  

There are, says Paine, two kinds of government in the world, the elective and the hereditary. The first is called republican, the second monarchical or aristocratic. The first is based on reason, the second on ignorance. English government is of the latter type: "Everything in the English government appears to me the reverse of what it ought to be, and of what it is said to be."  

The governments created by the American and French revolutions are of the former type. "The American constitutions were to liberty what a grammar is to language." America is the only true republic, and republicanism is the only true form of government; the principles now recognized in America are binding on all mankind, and insofar as peoples now vary from American practice they still labor under ignorance and oppression. But the world revolution has begun:

What were formerly called Revolutions were little more than a change of persons, or an alteration of local circumstances. They rose and fell like things of course, and had nothing in their existence or their fate that could influence beyond the spot that produced them. But what we now see in the world, from the Revolutions of America and France, are a renovation of the natural order of things, a system of principles as universal as truth and the existence of man . . .

From a small spark, kindled in America, a flame has arisen not to be extinguished.

Paine often speaks of the "nation," and even said, in a proclamation written for the English radicals in 1791: "We know of no human authority superior to that of a whole nation." He also declared that to reason with existing governments was to argue with brutes, and that reform could come "only from the nations themselves." But he was no nationalist in any developed sense; by the nation he meant only the body of the citizenry, no different in one

6 "Rights of Man," in Writings, II, 454.
7 Ibid., II, 315, and Life, I, 284 n. 2.
8 "Rights of Man," in Writings, II, 336.
9 Ibid., II, 386, 454.
10 Life, I, 316.
11 "Rights of Man," in Writings, II, 274.
country from another. The nation was simply a legal conception used in vindicating the right of revolution against hereditary authorities. Paine's real values are wholly cosmopolitan and individualistic. Every human being, he holds, draws existence directly and equally from God. He quotes the first chapter of Genesis with approval to show the unity of mankind. Governments (Paine's bugbear) introduce false intermediate objects of loyalty between the individual man and the universal whole.

It is not among the least of the evils of the present existing governments in all parts of Europe that man, considered as man, is thrown back a vast distance from his Maker, and the artificial chasm filled up with a succession of barriers, or sort of turnpike gates, through which he has to pass. I will quote Mr. Burke's catalogue of barriers that he has set up between man and his Maker. Putting himself in the character of a herald, he says: "We fear God—we look with awe to kings—with affection to Parliaments—with duty to magistrates—with reverence to priests, and with respect to nobility." Mr. Burke has forgotten to put in "chivalry". He has also forgotten to put in Peter. The duty of man is not a wilderness of turnpike gates, through which he has to pass by tickets from one to the other. It is plain and simple, and consists but of two points. His duty to God, which every man must feel; and with respect to his neighbor, to do as he would be done by. If those to whom power is delegated do well, they will be respected; if not, they will be despised; and with regard to those to whom no power is delegated [kings, lords, clergy, etc.], but who assume it, the rational world can know nothing of them.12

Paine could respect only the Absolute. He could feel no obligation toward anything actual, concrete, local, relative or particular. Quaker individualism and rationalist abstraction combined to produce in him the pure type of cosmopolitan revolutionary. Citizenship, as a matter of abstract right, he could understand; but, underrating the force of fact, he was almost unconscious of nationality. This cosmopolitanism was the beginning of his troubles.

In England, where he signed republican manifestoes and toasted "the Revolution of the World,"13 his abstract non-national ideas seemed simply pro-French. In France for a time he fared better. Cosmopolitanism rode high in the early years of the Revolution, reaching its climax in 1792, when the Girondists set out to free all peoples from all tyrants. Paine was elected to the French Convention, being one of two foreigners to sit in that body. He could neither

---

12 Ibid., II, 305-6.
13 Life, I, 326.
speak French nor understand it. To address the Convention he stood silent in the tribune, a comic figure in that voluble assembly, eying his audience while an interpreter read his speech. He sided with the Girondists, his nearest brothers in cosmopolitan zeal. His political activity was cut short by their fall. The French Republic, as the war progressed, became increasingly nationalistic. The government of the Terror, installed in 1793, had few illusions about the Republic of the World. Robespierre branded dreams of universal revolution as "ultra"—a leftist deviation. Meanwhile, England having entered the war, French Anglophobia reached new heights. A law ordered all Englishmen in France, irrespective of political complexion, to be arrested and interned. So in December, 1793, Paine went to prison, stigmatized as an international adventurer, a "cosmopolitan charlatan."

Meanwhile, only a few hours before the police came to arrest him, he had finished the manuscript of another book. As his Girondist friend Condorcet, hiding from the guillotine, wrote at this time his Progress of the Human Mind, so Paine, unsure of his own life, some of his friends already dead, expecting arrest momentarily, delivered a last testimonial to his faith in the Age of Reason. It was a direct frontal attack on revealed Christianity. Two years before, in the Rights of Man, Paine had spoken respectfully of the Bible. But the last months of 1793 saw the climax in France of what was called Dechristianization. Paine's Age of Reason was a product of this movement. He wrote with a mixed purpose, partly to prevent Dechristianization from passing into atheism, and partly to banish Christianity from the human mind, leaving in its place a philosophical deism, the religion of most republicans of the day. Could Robespierre have read Paine's manuscript he would probably have found in it another sign of leftward deviation, for Robespierre, though a deist, objected on political grounds to the radical Dechristianizers, and was trying to prevent further violence against the Catholic Church.

The distinctive thing about the Age of Reason is not the blasphemy but the utterly moral approach to the subject. Nowhere is Paine's difference from Voltaire so obvious. Voltaire thought the "Christian superstition" ridiculous, Paine thought it wicked. Voltaire jests, Paine is desperately in earnest. He is profoundly concerned
about matters of religion and conscience. I believe in no church, he says: "My own mind is my own church." He is the ultimate religious individualist; he will tolerate nothing between his own mind and his God.

In this inner sanctum of his own church, Thomas Paine sits down to read his Bible, in the light only of his own common sense, considering only what the words explicitly say, ignorant of the original languages, unaffected by the prestige of commentators. And he is simply shocked by what he finds. He is shocked too that people should accept what the Bible says, because the worst of all evils, producing incalculable "moral mischief," is the inward lie, the dishonesty in one's own soul, a man's "professing to believe what he does not believe." Whether the earth is round or flat does not matter; physical truths are morally neutral. "But when a system of religion is made to grow out of a supposed system of creation that is not true . . . the case assumes an entirely different ground." Apologists for Christianity have made their position immoral, because they have tried to identify their religion with physical theories demonstrably false. It is immoral to fear science. It is immoral also to accept testimonies flatly inconsistent in logic, and to respect histories loaded with episodes that revolt any decent man.

Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled [the word "Bible" to Paine meant the Old Testament alone], it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon, than the Word of God. It is a history of wickedness, that has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind; and, for my own part, I sincerely detest it, as I detest everything that is cruel.

The New Testament fares no better. Paine confuses the virgin birth and the immaculate conception, but his argument is not affected; the story of Jesus' origin is "blasphemously obscene," reporting the seduction of an innocent woman by someone masquerading as a ghost. The New Testament is a fable, and the faith derived from it a "wild and visionary religion." Paine's comments are sometimes absurdly matter-of-fact. The strangest story in this strange

14 "Age of Reason," in Writings, IV, 22.
15 Ibid., IV, 22.
16 Ibid., IV, 60.
17 Ibid., IV, 34.
book, he says, is the one relating how the devil carried Christ through the air to a mountain top, and there showed him all the kingdoms of the world. "How happened it," demands Paine, "that he did not discover America? Or is it only with kingdoms," adds the republican of '93, "that his sooty highness has any interest?" 18

For the rest, the Age of Reason was mostly a restatement of arguments familiar since the time of Spinoza (whom Paine had read), but with a difference—he assaulted holy things directly, naming all names, without irony or protective equivocation, addressing himself, not to the "intelligent classes," but to the ordinary common people. The Age of Reason is an application of the Rights of Man. It asserts the right of the most ignorant person to reject Christianity if he chooses. It exposes to common view ideas familiar to the upper classes for more than a generation. For this kind of sacrilege Paine was not soon forgiven by the respectable.

Paine remained imprisoned in the Luxembourg for almost a year, until after the fall of Robespierre. He hoped to regain his liberty by establishing his American citizenship, but the American minister, Gouverneur Morris, an Anglophile and an aristocrat, would take no action in his favor. Washington also, in 1792, when Paine sent him fifty copies of the Rights of Man, had shown himself chilly toward Paine's ideas. The men operating the new governments in both America and France could agree in one thing with British conservatives: that the philosophy of Thomas Paine, with its radical individualism, was subversive to established authority. In any case, in the 1790's, the American government was trying to placate Britain, and to show concern for so outspoken an Anglophobe would have been diplomatically inconvenient. The cosmopolitan revolutionary had therefore no country to support him. Neither the English nor the French nor the Americans felt toward him as toward one of themselves. To all he seemed an outsider, a restless spirit who appeared among them in times of trouble, but who had no roots among them, and who favored their cause, not for its own sake, but because he saw in it certain universal abstractions.

In 1802, when the truce of Amiens enabled him to cross the Atlantic without fear of seizure by the British, Paine returned to the country which he had not seen in fifteen years, but which, in

18 Ibid., IV, 152, 157, 80.
reviewing the experience of a lifetime (for he was now sixty-five) he could with reason regard as the nearest thing on earth to his spiritual home. The New World had first made him what he was. In Philadelphia he had first discovered his powers. More than England or France, the United States had honored him and rewarded him. In America, more even than in France, he had mixed as an equal with the leaders of public life. The most gratifying part of his career had been the thirteen years so unexpectedly terminated by the fateful sailing from New York in 1787.

But the old life could not be resumed. Since 1787 the United States and Thomas Paine had traveled in opposite directions. The French Revolution carried Paine farther toward his political absolutes. Retorting to Burke, he had made the doctrine of the rights of man a direct antithesis to conservatism. Sharing the French ardors for Dechristianization, he had spurned all compromise between deism and revealed Christianity; he had moreover lived for ten years in a Republic which, while officially tolerating, actually discouraged adherence to the Christian faith. In America the Republic was different. Men who in 1776 stood shoulder to shoulder with Paine gradually revealed that in fighting Great Britain their motives were more mixed than his—that, however well disposed toward the liberation of the human species, they were actually concerned with the founding of the United States. For a time in 1776 John Adams had been thought author of Common Sense. No one in 1802 would imagine that Adams wrote the Rights of Man or the Age of Reason. For a great many Americans, and for the Federalists in particular, sane politics meant the protection of property and the extension of national power. The same men who, to justify a revolution against England, had affirmed the rights of man, now pressed the claims of the rich, the well born and the able. And the same men who had once marched against redcoats side by side with Frenchmen, now favored the aristocratic society of England over the alarming turbulence of revolutionary France.

The early years of Jefferson's presidency were not a time of restrained language in American politics, but it is doubtful whether vilification ever went farther than in the Federalist greetings to the returning Paine, especially since Paine returned aboard an American warship by special invitation of Jefferson. The irresponsible and
groundless charges, the coarse insults and unmerciful vituperation, to which the socially respectable thought it not unfitting to descend, do much to palliate the scurrilities of the Age of Reason. "What! invite to the United States that lying, drunken, brutal infidel . . . ?" cried the staid New England Palladium of Boston. Or as one might read in the Port Folio of Philadelphia:

If during the present season of national abasement, infatuation, folly and vice, any portent could surprise, sober men would be utterly confounded by an article current in all our newspapers, that the loathsome Thomas Paine, a drunken atheist and scavenger of faction, is invited to return in a national ship to America by the first magistrate of a free people. A measure so enormously preposterous. . . . [etc.] If that rebel rascal. . . . [etc.]

In the words of a modern American, "the reactionary press exhausted the resources of the dictionary to express the unutterable, only to sink back at last impotent with rage." 19

The old veteran of world revolution found himself ostracized. Even Samuel Adams broke off his friendship, and Benjamin Rush, Paine's fellow abolitionist of thirty years before, would have nothing to do with him. Jefferson, after bravely inviting him to the White House, found the association politically too awkward. Paine therefore, settling first at Bordentown, then in New York, subsided into a life of obscurity, surrounded only by a handful of loyal friends, and mixing in coteries of deists, odd folks, and devotees of reason. That he took to drink in his last years, or became negligent in his dress, as a consequence of social isolation and of the approach of the illness from which he died, scarcely has for us that providential significance which it once had for his opponents; in any case it is irrelevant to the doctrine set forth in his books.

It was Paine's fate to be left stranded, to become more radical while all three of his countries became less so, to live on into the nineteenth century without ceasing to be a man of the eighteenth. He remained an abolitionist while slavery took a new hold on America, a cosmopolitan while nations grew up about him, an outspoken freethinker while men still deists at heart saw new virtues in the church. He continued to believe in man, in man in the abstract, in man's rights, his goodness, his capacity for rational

19 G. A. Koch, Republican Religion (New York, 1933), 133. The two preceding quotations are also from Koch.
enlightenment and fitness for absolute freedom; and also in God, or at least in a great benign Being whose true word was the Creation, always spelled with a capital C. The tremendous convulsion in Europe, the dashing of generous hopes, the unleashing of terror, barbarity, persecution and war, which caused many others, conservative and revolutionary, to revise their ideas, left Paine's convictions undisturbed. The reaction had no effect on him. It only ruined his reputation. At the end of his life the author of Common Sense, the Rights of Man, and the Age of Reason, works which echoed the thought of one of the most brilliant of centuries, was hardly a hero except to the lunatic fringe. We can see him now for what he was, but would not have liked to be thought, a man of simple and immovable faith, who neither learned from experience nor yielded to circumstance. He summarized his faith three years before he died, in a letter written in 1806 to the mayor of Philadelphia: "My motive and object in all my political works [he would have thought the same of his theological works], beginning with Common Sense, the first work I ever published, have been to rescue man from tyranny and false systems and false principles of government, and enable him to be free. . . ." 20

20 Life, II, 374.

Princeton University

R. R. Palmer