

THOMAS PAINE

1736 - 1809

The Most Valuable Englishman Ever

“The World is my country; to do good is my religion”

This published tribute to Thomas Paine is taken from Arthur Findlay's masterpiece “The Curse of Ignorance” in two volumes. This is the true history of mankind that was published in 1947, totally different to the pack of lies that we are taught in our schools. Findlay knew his book would be banned from our universities and schools. This statement is taken from page 1111 of volume 1:—

“Such, however, is still its influence (The Church) that this book, which tells the story of the past honestly and fearlessly, will be kept out of our schools and universities by the authorities, and consequently only in later life will those with enquiring minds discover the truth.”

Arthur Findlay has carried on the fight for philosophical freedom that was started by Thomas Paine. This great philosopher who died in 1964 must surely be in line for the title of The Most Valuable Scotsman Ever. Findlay, like Thomas Paine, has been written out of our biased history books for committing the same ‘crime’ - daring to tell the truth in a country where the Church and the State are established.

“Somehow, everybody just knows that Christianity is the Church, and the Church is a power-structure, an apparatus for limiting freedom in belief and morals.”

The Rev. Don Cupitt,

Dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge University.

Arthur Findlay's tribute to Thomas Paine, taken from his banned history of mankind, “The Curse of Ignorance” published in 1947.

At the close of the 18th century the common people everywhere were living in a state of moral depravity and intellectual darkness, and nowhere was this state of affairs more pronounced than in Great Britain. It is difficult to find words to describe the appalling conditions in which the poor lived, and how little was done for their social and moral upliftment. The utter indifference of the rich to the surrounding misery is impossible for us to imagine, and they seemed to lack entirely the qualities of compassion and mercy.

Nothing could better illustrate this mentality than to record the treatment of that

age towards one of the greatest benefactors of mankind, a man who devoted his life to raising the people and freeing them from all religious and political tyranny. He was the pioneer of social welfare, of free education for every child, and the originator of our present social system, though his ideas were not put into practice for about a hundred years. He is known by name to few, and yet he was one of the greatest men of his age, a master mind which helped to shape the destiny of the world.

This great champion of liberty and justice was Thomas Paine (1736-1809), whose influence for righteousness and truth was so pronounced that this last section of this chapter will be devoted to his life and work. He was the son of a Quaker, a Norfolk stay-maker, being first an exciseman, then a schoolmaster, shop-keeper, artisan, and finally a journalist. For the good of mankind he accepted poverty and calumny so that he might speak his honest thoughts, and thus help the people to live freer and happier lives. Paine did for Britain and America what Voltaire did for France, and to him we are indebted for much of the liberty we now enjoy.

Born in poverty, in a country where liberty was preached but not practiced, where the privileges of class were more important than truth and honesty, and where the rights of the ordinary individual were ignored by both the clergy and the aristocracy, Paine lit the lamp of reason which illuminated the darkness of his age. He saw oppression on every hand, injustice everywhere, hypocrisy at the altar, bribery and corruption in Parliament and in the Law Courts, and imbecility on the throne. With outstanding courage he espoused the cause of right against wrong, of the weak against the strong, of the poor against the rich. For such a man there was no place in Christian England and no living to be made. So he went to America in 1774, to help the colonists in their struggle against George III and his subservient, incompetent, corrupt ministers, his pamphlet *Common Sense*, published two years later, about which we have already read, being his first contribution to the cause of justice and freedom.

Then, when serving in the ranks of the American army, sharing its defeats and dangers, at the time when the situation seemed to be desperate, he produced his second pamphlet *The Crisis*, which acted as a beacon in the fog of war, cheering the downhearted, and pointing the way to victory. No other two pamphlets ever accomplished such terrific results; no other publications, before or since, ever created a nation. Nothing from the pen of one man had ever laid the foundation, not only of a nation, but of the greatest and wealthiest unified community of all time. That was Paine's greatest contribution to mankind, but he did more than that.

At the end of the war, when independence was won, no one stood higher in the estimation of the American people than Thomas Paine, the best and greatest being his friends and admirers. Still, he felt that he had further work to do, and that he must now bring light to darkest England. So he returned home (1787) to a land where 223 offences were punishable by death, where criminals abounded, the prisons were dens of abomination and filled to overflowing, the scaffolds were crowded, national and local government was corrupt and unrepresentative, and tyranny, injustice, intolerance and cruelty reigned everywhere.

In this atmosphere he wrote *Rights of Man*, a work which everyone should read. It is concise, compact, logical, accurate, natural and convincing; it is the Magna Carta of Democratic civilisation, and it laid the foundation of the liberty we now enjoy. Evil is exposed, and unrighteousness uncovered in brief pithy sentences, some of which bring home his meaning by apt comparison, such as "He pities the plumage but forgets the dying bird," this being a reply to Burke, who was lavishing so much sentiment on the royal family and aristocracy of France during the Revolution, while quite forgetting all that the people had suffered in the past.

The British revolution of 1688 had placed the landed aristocracy firmly in political power. Mostly Tory in politics, the squires had great influence in the parliamentary elections; Episcopalian in religion, they had the appointment of the village priest, and, as Justices of the Peace, they administered the local laws. Besides this they regarded all non-Anglicans as a class apart, as outcasts and untouchable. Since the Revolution the wealth and power of the squires had steadily increased, and they received a terrible shock from the French Revolution, which overthrew the autocratic orthodox oligarchy that had so misruled France.

Consequently, when *Rights of Man* was first published in 1791, a writ was issued the following year for the arrest of Thomas Paine, its author. This was the beginning of the great repression of British Liberal opinion, because it was feared that what had happened across the Channel would likewise take place in Britain. In those days the leaders of the nation could not imagine England without a dominant aristocracy, buttressed by the State Church. Neither could they imagine a country with all its people free and educated, it being considered necessary for the good and safety of the realm that the masses be kept illiterate and in servitude.

Education, in the opinion of both politicians and priests, was the prelude to anarchy, as the State in those days did not rest on reason but on tradition. Into this fabric of custom *Rights of Man* burst as a bomb, because Paine wrote in favour of republican government, and denounced an hereditary monarch who

ruled through the ministers he alone appointed. He did not envisage what time and circumstance brought about, a constitutional monarch who represented his widely scattered people but was prepared to leave to their representatives the management of the affairs of state. With the reactionary George III on the throne, we can well understand how the reformers of the time saw salvation only by means of a republic, especially so as only a few years previously the ministers appointed by the King to do his bidding had, by their crass stupidity, thrown away the greatest and richest part of the Empire.

Within a few months of publication, *Rights of Man* had run into many impressions, because, in spite of the ban placed upon it, the people felt that here at last was a book by an author whose every page glowed with sympathy for their condition. It became the Magna Carta of the poor, because it was the first book to make out a case for the working class from their own point of view. This the author did by setting forth for the first time a sound and reasoned programme for social reform, which gave the illiterate unfranchised masses a goal to strive for, and a programme to work upon.

Paine was 80 years before his time in advocating general education, 120 years in advance in advocating old age pensions, 130 years ahead in his scheme for a League of Nations to prevent war, and 150 years ahead in his ideas on general social welfare, but we have not yet caught up with his programme of the unemployed being given work which will be of service to the nation. He envisaged an era of happiness and prosperity when his programme of reform was put into practice, his words being:

When it can be said by any country in the world, my poor are happy, neither ignorance nor distress is to be found among them, my jails are empty of prisoners, my streets of beggars, the aged are not in want, the taxes are not oppressive, the rational world is my friend because I am the friend of happiness. When these things can be said, then may that country boast its constitution and government.

Paine was the first true democrat in Britain, and declared that "By engrafting representation upon democracy we arrive at a system of government capable of embracing and confederating all the various interests and every extent of territory and population." Only when all are everywhere educated, and then given the vote, would there be "universal security as a means to universal commerce", when riots and revolutions will cease. Thus only by democratic government would come human freedom and liberty without license, when toleration would triumph over orthodox religion and political bigotry. He had no use for

uniformity, believing that differences of opinion were both beneficial and creative.

After drawing attention to the wretched state in which the majority of the inhabitants of civilized countries lived, due in large part to war, and to governments confining their attention only to maintaining law and order and the safety of each country's frontiers, he advocated a government by the people which would plan for the welfare of the people. The following eight points comprised the first essential legislation for this purpose.

(1) Provision for 250,000 destitute families at the rate of £4 per head per annum for each child under fourteen years of age.

(2) Education of the country's 1,030,000 illiterate children.

(3) Annuity of £6 per annum each for all poor persons, decayed tradesmen, and others from 50 to 60 years of age.

(4) Annuity of £10 a year for life to each poor person from the age of 60 upwards.

(5) Gift of £1 for each child born, limit being 50,000 births.

(6) Gift of £1 on marriage, limit being 20,000 marriages.

(7) Funeral expenses under exceptional conditions.

(8) Employment at all times for the casual poor of London. After giving in detail how the necessary money would be raised, and the procedure necessary for its distribution, Paine concludes:

By the operation of this plan the poor laws, those instruments of civil torture, will be superseded, and the wasteful experience of litigation prevented. The hearts of the humane will not be shocked by ragged and hungry children, and persons of seventy and eighty years of age, begging for bread. The dying poor will not be dragged from place to place to breathe their last, as a reprisal of parish upon parish'. Widows will have a maintenance for their children, and not be carted away on the death of their husbands like culprits and criminals, and children will no longer be considered as increasing the distress of their parents.

The haunts of the wretched will be known, because it will be to their advantage, and the number of petty crimes, the offspring of distress and poverty, will be lessened. The poor, as well as the rich, will then be interested in the support of government, and the cause and apprehension of riots and tumults will cease. The plan is easy in practice. It does not embarrass trade by a sudden interruption in the order of taxes, but effects the relief by changing the application of

them, and the money necessary for the purpose can be drawn from the excise collections which are made eight times a year in every market town in England.

In these days each parish tried to avoid having to pay for the expense of burying the poor, and so the dying were moved from parish to parish until they expired.

Only £4,000,000 a year was necessary to put this plan into operation, but nothing came of it. It was beyond the range of Christian charity and Christian ideals, though the national revenue was nearly £16,000,000, at a time when there was no income tax, and the interest on the National Debt was only £9,150,138 a year. Nevertheless, as Paine remarks, "Britain, which cannot educate her children, nor make life even tolerable for her poor, spends £1,000,000 a year to support men from Holland and Hanover, men who understand neither her laws nor her language, and are quite uninterested in her destiny, their capacity moreover hardly fitting them for the office of parish constable." This was taken to refer to the House of Orange and the House of Hanover.

Because Paine wrote in this way about the reigning House of Hanover, which had just lost for Britain her most valuable colony in North America, he was prosecuted for treason. His effigy, with a rope round its neck, was flogged through the streets of the principal towns of the land, every possible indignity being heaped upon it. All who published or sold Rights of Man were imprisoned or banished, one after another going to prison during the next thirty-five years for the crime of reprinting it or offering it for sale; Thomas Muir, a Scottish advocate, being banished (1793) for fourteen years because he passed the book on to his friends.

These prosecutions, and this persecution, were maintained to enable the authorities to retain the ban they had placed on the book. They wished to prevent the people from realising how much the government could do for their welfare, if intelligent planning took the place of the antiquated method of leaving everything for God to provide.

For thousands of years the people had relied on God, or the gods, to order their lives through the dictates of the priests, and in consequence they had lived in misery and poverty. Now the inhabitants of Europe were beginning to realise that nothing would ever come of this insane way of living, and that they must rely on themselves for increased comforts and greater happiness. The Church-controlled aristocratic government, in order to maintain past tradition and their own position and prestige, fought this rising tide of revolt, but their repressive

measures did not have the effect desired, because rioting and unrest continued for the next sixty years, when at long last the people began to obtain their rights as advocated by Paine. Before the date of his trial Paine was elected in 1792 by the Department of Calais to the French Assembly, and he succeeded in slipping away to France. Instead of being tried, and probably hanged, he was now outlawed. After taking his place in the Assembly he was appointed to the committee to draft a new constitution for France, and, if the French had followed his advice, there would have been no Reign of Terror. He was, however, too wise and cautious to please the extreme politicians, who had many old grievances to pay off. Paine wanted these forgotten, and, in his speech against the decision to kill the King, he uttered these wise words, "We will kill the King but not the man. We will destroy the monarchy but not the monarch."

Filled with unbounded love for mankind, his philanthropy boundless, he voted for the destruction of the monarchy, the instrument of tyranny, but against the death of the King. He desired a new order in France, giving privileges to none and justice to all, but had no wish to see this preceded by murder. To vote against the death of Louis XVI was a brave act, as he became at once a suspect. He was arrested in 1793, imprisoned and sentenced to death. George Washington was appealed to, but took no notice of the man who had saved him in his hour of peril. Others, however, made the effort, and he was released the following year.

Now it was that this man of untiring energy, whose one object in life was to free mankind from the bondage of State and Church, turned his attention to the prevailing curse of religious intolerance. When in prison he completed his book *The Age of Reason*, one which every intelligent individual can read with profit and delight. It sets out his belief in God and the after-life, but argued that the universe had not been made in six days, a flood had not covered the earth because of man's wickedness, that there were many mistakes and contradictions in the Bible, that Jesus was not God, and that Christian doctrines had not been revealed from heaven but were the work of ignorant men.

He believed in natural religion, and not in supernatural religion sponsored by priests. His arguments have never been answered, and never will be, because he kept strictly to facts, reason and experience, which in those days was a dangerous thing to do. Not only did he have to suffer for the sake of truth, but 150 people in Britain, who thought like him, were imprisoned for selling this book.

In those days of ignorance such matters as facts and reason in religion received no consideration from the vast majority, the people preferring their mental chains to liberty, and Paine became the object of bitter hatred and loathing. From

the time he published *The Age of Reason* he has been cursed and maligned by most of the clergy in Christendom, the ignorant multitude following their lead, all his past services to the people being forgotten. When he returned to America in 1802 he found that his former friends had deserted him, and that it was unsafe to appear in the streets for fear of being mobbed. The pulpit became the factory for everything vile and false which the priestly mind could imagine.

Under the flag of freedom he had helped to hoist, his life was in danger, and, amongst the people he had worked so hard to set free, he was shunned, loathed and slandered, being treated as if he had some foul disease. All that he had done to secure their independence seemed to have been blotted from their memory.

In America, this land of the so-called free, where intolerance, bigotry and ignorance were as rampant as in Britain, this great champion of liberty was treated as a despised outcast, because he had declared himself not to be a Christian. The all-powerful Protestant Church sacrificed him on its altar of lies, and tore his character to shreds with the sharp-edged knife of hatred. He was a man of unblemished reputation, but he stood for liberty of thought, which, during the era of Christian civilisation, was the greatest of all crimes.

Paine gave his life to secure justice for all, introducing a measure in the Assembly of Pennsylvania to abolish slavery, but without success. He was the first man to write an article for a magazine (1775) advocating the abolition of slavery, and upholding the rights of the negro, every line of which was filled with pity, tenderness, justice and humane feeling, the effect being that the American Anti-slavery Society was formed. Next he wrote about duelling, which, he argued, did not settle the rights of a dispute, and then followed this up with an article against the prevailing cruelty to animals. Lastly, the same magazine printed his article on the rights of women, who were then considered as chattels at law, he being the first to propose that they should have the same rights as men.

His article against slavery aroused violent opposition, and the Bible was quoted in almost every Church to prove that it was a divinely decreed form of labour. Excuse can be made for slavery in Pagan times, when money did not freely circulate, but no excuse can be found for Christian slavery in the 18th century, except for the reason that the Bible, which nearly everyone in those days believed was dictated by God, supports it, an argument which carried no weight with a non-Christian like Paine.

Paine advocated the Religion of Humanity, declaring that his creed was "The world is my country and to do good is my religion." The Trinity he worshipped

was Truth, Liberty and Justice, and yet, because this ardent worker for the upliftment of the human race was honest enough to say that he could not believe in Christian dogma, he became an outcast, and his name has been besmirched by the lie that he was “a dirty little atheist”, he being neither dirty, little, nor an atheist. Though he loved his fellow men more than his own comfort, he was maligned, and for being one hundred years before his time his name was tarnished by every abominable lie, all of which still go around even in our own times. He despised senseless pomp, scorned titles and titled stupidity, the wearing of stars, sashes and ribbons, knowing only too well that fine feathers do not make fine birds, and yet he was greater than most monarchs because his sane and lofty ideals made multitudes better, freer and more intelligent in the century which followed.

Adolf Hitler wrote a book in prison which bound much of Europe in mental chains, and caused untold world-wide destruction and misery. Thomas Paine wrote a book in prison which liberated humanity from the shackles of Protestant bigotry and intolerance. Paine hated war, slavery, injustice, tyranny, intolerance and every form of cruelty - in fact, everything evil - and loved all that was good and kind. He did much to lay the foundation of democracy in Britain, and bring about our age of liberty and tolerance. This being so, the treatment he received, in his day and generation, tells more powerfully than any other record could do of the social and mental conditions at the beginning of the 19th Christian century.

His life and work are a political and religious history of the times, and throw a much more illuminating light on what is called “our Christian heritage” than a bare mention of all the stupidities, cruelties and injustices prevalent in Britain, Europe and America not much more than one hundred years ago.

Arthur Findlay

On Friday 11th October 1991 I fulfilled a lifetime's ambition and walked in the footsteps of Thomas Paine, arguably the greatest enemy of tyranny that has ever lived. Congratulations to the people of Thetford in Norfolk for keeping Tom's memory alive.

The centre of this delightful town has not changed a great deal in two hundred and fifty years. Thomas Paine's birthplace is now The Thomas Paine Hotel. There is a large, gilded statue of Tom, a man who has been described as having “genius in his eyes”. Around the statue's base are extracts from his published writings that warn contemporary tyrants to watch out, because Thomas Paine's army is on

the move.

Every fighter for philosophical freedom throughout the world should make it their business to visit this place in England that produced the man who almost single handedly started to bring the world out of the Christian Dark Ages and into the light of free thinking.

“Of all the tyrannies that affect mankind, tyranny in religion is the worst; every other species of tyranny is limited to the world we live in; but this attempts to stride beyond the grave, and seeks to pursue us into eternity.”

Thomas Paine

Even Conservative M.P.'s like Norman Tebbit and Cecil Parkinson are calling for the disestablishment of the Church. Until this is achieved, Great Britain will remain a religious tyranny.

There is also a wide body of opinion within the Church to disestablish. However, as things stand at the moment only the Liberal Democrats have had the courage to publicly state that they will disestablish. This means that every person in the country who has managed to escape from the clutches of priestcraft is now left with only one political party to vote for.

Perhaps the Conservative and Labour parties will give serious consideration to this matter as we approach the 1992 General Election.

Michael Roll

READING LIST

“The Rights of Man” by Thomas Paine - 1791.

£4.80 including P & P. Dragon Books, 36 Chescombe Road, Yatton, Bristol BS19 4EN.

“The Age of Reason” by Thomas Paine - 1794. £5.80 including P & P. Dragon Books, as above.

“Son Jesus and Big Father” by Alex Gardner - 1986.

£5.50 including P & P. Dragon Books, as above.

Covering the main points raised by Thomas Paine, Arthur Findlay and three hundred years of suppressed, academic criticism of the supernatural absurdities contained in the Christian religion that the law of our country insists is pumped into the young, trusting minds of our children as stone cold facts.

“The Curse of Ignorance” by Arthur Findlay - 1947.

Will be republished by The Headquarters Publishing Co., Ltd., 5 Alexandria Road, West Ealing, London W13 ONP, when the money is forthcoming. Come on you wealthy people, strike a blow for philosophical freedom that will knock every tyrant in the world for six.

“The Rock of Truth” by Arthur Findlay - 1933.

£6.25 including P & P. The Headquarters Publishing Co., Ltd., as above.

The facts about the Christian religion that we are never taught at school. This proves that the priests and religious teachers are guilty of mental child abuse, and this should carry exactly the same penalty as physical child abuse.

“Cosmos” by Carl Sagan - 1980.

Published by Macdonald Futura, London to complement the thirteen part television series that exposed the folly of following priests instead of philosophers and scientists. From main book shops and the public library.

“The Colossus” by R.D. Pearson BSc. - 1991.

This is the introduction to his main book listed below. The Colossus in the title is the scientific and religious establishments working together to suppress all uncomfortable discoveries in subatomic physics.

£1.00 including P & P from Michael Roll, 28 Westerleigh Road, Downend, Bristol

BS16 6AH.

“Intelligence Behind The Universe” by R.D. Pearson BSc. - 1991.

£9.95 including P & P from Michael Roll, as above.

This shows how enlightened physics can explain the so-called paranormal and solve the most intractable problems of cosmology. Including The General Theory of Quantum Gravitation.

“The Suppression of Knowledge” and sequel **“Exposed: An Establishment Conspiracy of Awesome Proportions”** by Michael Roll, 28 Westerleigh Road, Downend, Bristol BS16 6AH. £2.00 including P & P.

A page by page criticism of Paul Johnson’s horror story “A History of Christianity” by Michael Roll. £1.00 including P & P. Address as above.

“Your little booklet is terrific. It deserves wide distribution. It highlights the absurdity of the situation in this country where everybody pussyfoots around a religion that nobody (except the wilfully ignorant) believes in anymore. This has been the state of things for over a century now.”

Tony Grist, ex-priest, now a freelance journalist.