ANTIDOTES TO DEISM: A RECEPTION HISTORY OF THOMAS PAINE'S *THE AGE OF REASON*, 1794-1809

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In the Anglo-American world of the late 1790s, Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* (published in two parts) was not well received, and his volumes of Deistic theology were characterized as extremely dangerous. Over seventy replies to *The Age of Reason* appeared in Britain and the United States. It was widely criticized in the periodical literature, and it garnered Paine the reputation as a champion of irreligion.

This dissertation is a study of the rhetoric of refutation, and I focus on the replies to *The Age of Reason* that were published during Paine's lifetime (d. 1809). I pay particular attention to the ways that the replies characterized both Paine and *The Age of Reason*, and the strategies that his respondents employed to highlight and counteract its "poison." To effectively refute *The Age of Reason*, Paine's respondents had to contend not only with his Deistic arguments, but also with his international reputation, his style of writing, and his intended audience. I argue that much of the driving force behind the controversy over *The Age of Reason* stems from the concern that it was geared towards the "uneducated masses" or the "lower orders." Much of the rhetoric of the respondents therefore reflects their preoccupation with Paine's "vulgar" style, his use of ridicule and low-humor, his notoriety, and the perception that *The Age of Reason* was being read by common people in cheap editions. For Paine's critics, when the masses abandon their Christianity for Deism, bloody anarchy is the inevitable result, as proven by the horrors of the French Revolution.

This dissertation argues that while Paine's respondents were concerned about *what* he wrote in *The Age of Reason,* they were more concerned about *how* he wrote it, *for whom* he wrote it, and *that Paine* wrote it. Drawing on Jürgen Habermas's theories of the *bourgeois public sphere*, I focus on how respondents to *The Age of Reason* reveal not only their concerns and anxieties over the book, but also what their assumptions about authorial legitimacy and expectations about qualified reading audiences say about late eighteenth century print culture.

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PREFACE

I would like to thank the members of my committee generally for their patience with me, and the time it took to complete this dissertation. I appreciate Paula Kane's friendship, her enthusiasm for my work on unbelief and irreligion in American history, and for looking at the many different forms that this dissertation has taken. To Marcus Rediker I offer my gratitude for volunteering to be on my committee, for his "world upside-down" way of seeing history, and for his eloquent reassurances that I was "really on to something" in my research. Van Beck Hall continues to astound me with his encyclopedic knowledge of American history, and I have appreciated his insistence that often times the details have big relevance. Alex Orbach has my sincere thanks for continuing-on with my project even after his retirement, and for asking me questions that I did not usually anticipate. Finally, Adam Shear has been an excellent guide through the doctoral program and the dissertation process; he has set me on the academic straight-and-narrow more than once with his insightful ability to see how the details relate to the big picture, and for his knack for bringing focus to a project.

I am grateful for the kindness, support, generosity, humor and tolerance of my fellow graduate students in Religious Studies, who have put up with my irreligious ways for many years. It was an honor to serve as your representative to the Graduate Student Organization and to be your liaison with the faculty. Special thanks go to Joel Brady, Nancy Klancher, Hongyu Wu, and Melissanne Myers for all of the great discussions we have had on topics sacred and

profane. I truly miss my departed friend Michal Myers, who never let me get away with exaggerations just for the sake of humor.

I would like to thank the American Philosophical Society (APS) for awarding me a Library Research Fellowship in 2010. The month in Philadelphia allowed me to compare the numerous editions of *The Age of Reason* and consult some of the rare replies to it, and I am grateful of the help provided by the librarians and the staff (who were very tolerant of my requests to consult *every* copy of *The Age of Reason* in their collection). The fellowship allowed me the particular scholarly thrill of holding actual letters written by Paine, and during study-breaks, to walk the same streets that Paine had walked in Philadelphia. I am especially grateful to librarian Roy Goodman for his knowledge, his professionalism, his support, and his kindness during my time in Philadelphia. Thanks also to Matt and Amanda Rush, my "Philadelphia Mom and Dad," for allowing me to stay with them (only three weeks after their wedding) while I was doing research at the APS. I hope I didn't wreck the honeymoon!

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My friends Mona Rush and John Friedman kept me grounded with their wit, their good conversation, and their hard work. Finally, my most heartfelt thanks go to my parents Carol and Sean Hughes for their love, humor, forbearance, inspiration, and babysitting; at last we have another "Doctor Hughes" in the family. This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Wanda

Wilson, who made my eleven year stint in graduate school possible, and also to my daughter Julia for reminding me of what things are important. You two are my world.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* was certainly not the first book to attack revealed religion, the Bible, and Christianity. For nearly a hundred years, the fortress of Christianity had been assailed by a cadre of "Deists," who had argued that religious truths must conform to reason, casting divine revelation (such as the Bible) as, at best, unreliable hearsay, and at worse, dangerous superstition. The defenders of Christianity did not sit idly by as the basis of their faith was questioned by these Deists, and for a century they had met the Deist threat squarely, and, in their opinion, with triumph. As Paine's detractors were only too happy to point out, there was very little "new" in *The Age of Reason*, and Paine is frequently charged with being little more than an inept imitator or even an outright plagiarizer of this century-long Deistic tradition. Despite the characterization of *The Age of Reason* as a stale rehashing of a moribund Deist tradition, it nevertheless spawned a wide-ranging controversy, as indicated by the sheer number of replies written in the British Isles and the United States to refute the book. In the immediate wake of the publication of *The Age of Reason*, at least seventy books, pamphlets and tracts were written specifically to refute it.[1] This number does not include the myriad of hostile reviews that appeared in newspapers and review journals, nor does it include works that, while written (or

[1] Paine would find himself in good company of fellow Deists who had received a thorough and extensive thrashing in print. For example, in the 1720s and 1730s, the writings of Matthew Tindal and Thomas Woolston garnered their fair share of hostile response. A quick survey of the British Library's *English Short Title Catalog* (online edition) reveals that Tindal's 1730 *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (which came to be derisively called the "Deist Bible") drew at least forty replies, while Woolston's *Discourse on the Miracles of our Saviour* (1727) had upwards of thirty responses.

preached) against religious infidelity more generally, included large sections devoted to castigating *The Age of Reason*. And the controversy over the book even grew beyond just those who replied directly to Paine; at least sixteen works were written in response to those who had already replied to *The Age of Reason*. Some of these were supportive of Paine and were written as rejoinders to those who had intended to refute *The Age of Reason*. Others, however, were not just hostile to Paine, but were also less than enthusiastic with some of the tracts that had been written to refute *The Age of Reason*.

In this dissertation I examine the controversy over *The Age of Reason,* beginning with the initial publication of the first part of the work in the early months of 1794, when Paine was confined in a French jail cell. I will track the controversy throughout the final years of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth, when it became evident to Paine's detractors that he was not going to desist in his "blasphemous" attacks on the Bible, revealed religion and Christianity. Paine proved his impious perseverance not only by the publication of a second part of *The Age of Reason* in 1795, but also by his continued promise (or threat) of a long-intended "third" part of the work (which was only published after his death in 1809). The manner in which Paine faced death even became a part of the controversy over the views he expressed in *The Age of Reason*. This dissertation does take into consideration some of the arguments that Paine offers in *The Age of Reason*, yet I will pay considerably more attention to those who found the book to be highly dangerous and who took the time to write responses to it.

Over thirty years ago, British historian Gayle T. Pendleton challenged scholars to "try to determine the full extent of the controversy [over *The Age of Reason*] and to consider the

participants without prejudice."[2] In order to prime the pump, as it were, Pendleton offered a bibliography of thirty British and American titles that had been written as responses to *The Age of Reason*, supplementing a bibliography by Michael Lasser from 1967.[3] In this dissertation I am taking-up Pendleton's challenge and examining the controversy over *The Age of Reason* in a transatlantic context. I have focused most of my attention on the books and pamphlets that were published in the immediate wake of both parts of *The Age of Reason*, as well as the myriad reviews and discussion of *The Age of Reason* that appeared in periodicals. What I have found most interesting in my systematic tour through these published sources is not the logical arguments that Paine's respondents used to refute his Deism, but rather the rhetorical strategies that they employed to raise the alarm about the dangers engendered by *The Age of Reason*. Of course, nearly all of the replies to *The Age of Reason* had to contend with Paine's actual arguments, but as many of his respondents themselves admitted, they were not necessarily offering anything particularly novel in terms of refuting Paine's Deistic attacks. Undoubtedly an intellectual historian of Christian apologetics could look to these same tracts for a revealing glimpse into the variety of opinions relating to the rational grounding of Christianity, or the status of biblical scholarship, or the hermeneutical use of texts in the late eighteenth century. Such inquiry would be fruitful, for there is much discourse in the responses to *The Age of Reason* about the validity of revelation, the religious limits to rationality, and the authorship and authority of Biblical texts.

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[2] Gayle T. Pendleton, "Thirty Additional Titles Relating to *The Age of Reason*," *British Studies Monitor* 10 (1980): 41.
[3] Michael Lasser, "In Response to The Age of Reason, 1794-1799," *Bulletin of Bibliography* 25:2, no. Jan-Apr (1967).

However, this dissertation takes at its starting point historian Gregory Claeys' contention that the "intense reaction to *The Age of Reason* was not simply to its deism."[4] As Claeys so ably shows in a brief sub-section of a chapter on Paine's religious views, the political and social context of the 1790s was a major factor driving the controversy over *The Age of Reason*. While Claeys highlights many of the major themes and concerns of Paine's respondents, his treatment of them is frustratingly short, not only because the number of responses that he deals with is quite limited, but also because his spot-on analysis of the larger themes of the responses is more suggestive than it is exhaustive. In this dissertation I take many of the seeds of Claeys' insights and apply them more fully to the larger controversy to show the various ways that Paine's respondents engage in rhetorical alarmism over Deism generally and *The Age of Reason* specifically. Indeed, I will argue that driving the controversy is not so much *what* Paine wrote in *The Age of Reason*, but rather *how* he wrote it, *for whom* he wrote it, and *that Paine* was its author.

My aim in this dissertation is to show how the respondents to *The Age of Reason* had to grapple with much more than just the arguments of Paine's work. They had to raise the alarm against it on many fronts and characterize it as a work that must not only be refuted, but must be done so in a particular way. Their rhetoric reveals not only the danger that the Deism of *The Age of Reason* represented, but also shows attitudes about who could be trusted to read such irreverent tracts. Paine's respondents charge that *The Age of Reason* was written for the "wrong" sort of audience, and a number of the replies were written specifically to negate Paine's dangerous influence on such untrustworthy readers. I will argue that to effectively defuse the perniciousness of *The Age of Reason*, Paine's opponents had to contend with his reputation, his

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[4] Gregory Claeys, *Thomas Paine : Social and Political Thought* (Routledge, 1989), 185.

style of writing, his audience, and the revolutionary implications of his Deism. The context in which both *The Age of Reason* and its replies were written is crucial for understanding the alarmist rhetoric surrounding Paine's Deism. For most of Paine's respondents, it was certainly not surprising that Paine wrote both parts of *The Age of Reason* while in revolutionary France. And in so doing, Paine represented an unsettling nexus between revolutionary France, republican radicalism, and religious infidelity. The French Reign of Terror was the logical and inevitable result of infidelity, and the connections between Christianity and societal stability, and between republican political ideology and revolutionary Deism, plays out frequently in the replies to *The Age of Reason*.

What might be considered material tangential to the actual refutation of Paine's arguments, namely the insults and *ad hominem* attacks, the references to Paine's background and reputation, his "place" and status among his fellow Deists, and speculation about how and why he wrote *The Age of Reason*, take primacy of place in this dissertation. Indeed, it is precisely here that the respondents' concerns, anxieties, and fears about *The Age of Reason* are most evident. I also consider seriously the ways that Paine's opponents reflect on their own refutations of *The Age of Reason*-- how they expressed their motivations and intentions, and what they hoped to accomplish (and for whom) in their answers to Paine. This often comes out in the prefatory material of the replies, wherein an author tips his hand as to why he is even bothering to reply to *The Age of Reason*. But it also occasionally appears in footnotes, in direct addresses to one's readers, and in the "paratexts" of the works.[5] It is in such matter that we see

[5] The term "paratexts" was coined by Gérard Genette as referring to those additional parts of a published work in which an author (and often times a publisher) attempts to set the work's context for the reader. Generally, paratexts include frontispiece materials such as prefaces, table of contents, title pages, and illustrations. In my analysis of *The Age of Reason*, other paratextual elements come into play, such as the pricing of a work, frontispiece quotations,

what Paine's respondents thought was at stake over *The Age of Reason,* leading to a better understanding of the controversy over the work.

Paine was certainly no stranger to heated and bitter controversy. Indeed, he had ridden to international fame with his 1776 *Common Sense,* which helped to galvanize the American cause for independence from Great Britain. And only a few years prior to the publication of *The Age of Reason,* Paine found himself in the middle of a huge that centered on *Rights of Man,* his defense of the principles of the French Revolution written in response to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France.* The so-called "Rights of Man Controversy" was an unprecedented publishing furor that spawned something in the neighborhood of four hundred tracts dealing with both Paine and Burke's interpretations of the French Revolution, and republican political ideology more generally.[6] The furor was not limited to the realm of published discourse, however, and not only was Paine repeatedly burned in effigy throughout the English countryside, but he even had to flee England for France (where he subsequently served as a representative from Calais to the French National Assembly) to escape an indictment for seditious libel, for which he was tried and found guilty *in abstentia*.[7]

While the controversy over *The Age of Reason* does not come close to matching the scale of the outburst over *Rights of Man,* the number of tracts that appeared in its wake is still substantial for a Deistic book. As far as I have been able to discover, Paine was not burned in

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and works by other authors that are appended or included as part of a reply to Paine. See Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* trans. Jane E. Lewin (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[6] Gayle Pendleton has identified more than three hundred forty five tracts that formed a central part of the *Rights of Man* controversy, although as the title of her article suggests, this number should be supplemented. Gregory Claeys has actually estimated that the number of tracts dealing with the controversy numbers closer to about a thousand. Gayle T. Pendleton, "Towards a Bibliography of the Reflections and Rights of Man Controversy " *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities* 85:1(1982). Gregory Claeys, ed. *The Political Writings of the 1790s: the French Revolution Debate in Britain* (Brookfield, VT: Pickering & Chatto, 1995), 1: liv

[7] Historian Frank O'Gorman argues that the approximately five hundred separate incidences of Paine effigy burnings in Britain "must have been among the most widely witnessed events in the long eighteenth century." Frank O'Gorman, "The Paine Burnings of 1792-1793," *Past & Present* Nov, no. 193 (2006): 122.

effigy over *The Age of Reason*, although the book did generate some legal action in England. With Paine in France and effectively beyond reach of English justice, the London printer Thomas Williams was tried, convicted, and served a year in prison for blasphemy for printing a cheap edition of parts one and two of *The Age of Reason.*[8] So while not perhaps as big a controversy as *Rights of Man*, the controversy over *The Age of Reason* is still significant and wide-ranging. Indeed, the discursive and rhetorical momentum of the *Rights of Man* controversy continued on in the reaction to *The Age of Reason*, and much of the concern that Paine's respondents expressed about *The Age of Reason* taps into their anxieties over the reputation (or notoriety) that both *Common Sense* and *Rights of Man* garnered for him. Paine's celebrity was such that he could not be summarily dismissed or ignored, especially when he turned his sights on "a subject of infinite importance to mankind": the authority of the Bible and the truth of the Christian religion.[9] Ultimately, what comes through in the responses to *The Age of Reason*, and what I focus on in this dissertation, is that Paine's reputation, his politics, his writing style, and his association with revolutionary France are all crucial aspects for understanding both the extent of the controversy over *The Age of Reason* and the ways that its respondents went about refuting the work.

In the following chapters I will focus on the different aspects of the controversy and the ways that Paine's respondents sought to counteract the pernicious effect of *The Age of Reason*. In Chapter 2, I trace the publication of the two parts of *The Age of Reason* as well as the replies that were written against each part (or both parts, as the case may be). This chapter on the

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[8] "Proceedings Against Thomas Williams for publishing Paine's 'Age of Reason'," in *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, ed. T.B. Howell (London: T.C. Hansard, 1819), 663.
[9] William Jackson, *Observations in Answer to Mr. Thomas Paine's "Age of Reason." By the Rev. William Jackson, Now a Prisoner in the New-Prison, Dublin; on a Charge of High Treason* (Dublin: Printed for G. Folingsby, 1795), 5.

publication history of *The Age of Reason* will serve as a backdrop to the rest of the dissertation since it will describe the scope and extent of the controversy. But more importantly, a number of issues relating to the publication of *The Age of Reason* (its genesis in France, the pricing of the work, its wide distribution) form a part of the rhetorical bailiwick that his opponents used to counter the work. The history of the publication of *The Age of Reason* goes a long way in helping to understand the reaction to it.

In Chapter 3 I deal with how the respondents to *The Age of Reason* characterize Paine's Deism and its social and political implications. Paine's respondents placed him in the ignoble pantheon of his Deistic forbearers to show not only how unoriginal he was, but also to prove just how low Deism had sunk. The stakes, however, were higher than just theological speculation, and the respondents point out the dire and dangerous implications of Deism on individuals and on society. The French Revolution and the subsequent Reign of Terror were increasingly interpreted as the direct result of Deism, and the respondents to *The Age of Reason* point to France as the concrete empirical proof of the dangers of books such as *The Age of Reason*. As I will show, the replies to *The Age of Re*ason served as a discursive battlefield over political and religious radicalism. For some, *The Age of Reason* exemplified the inherent compatibility of radical republicanism and revolutionary religious infidelity, such that one necessarily entailed the other. Other respondents, however, were unwilling to make such a connection between religious and political radicalism, and they are at pains to distance *The Age of Reason* from Paine's previous political writings.

In Chapter 4 I analyze the ways that the respondents characterized the tone, the writing style, and the affordability of *The Age of Reason*. Nearly all of the respondents to *The Age of Reason* criticized Paine for his blasphemous irreverence and his penchant for indulging in

ridicule. For many, the tone of *The Age of Reason* showed that Paine was not a sincere inquirer after truth and that the work barely merited serious response. But for others, Paine's irreverence was part of his common style of writing, making *The Age of Reason* particularly appealing to an audience that was unqualified and unable to properly evaluate the work: the lower classes and the uneducated. Literacy rates had been steadily climbing, and access to printed materials continued on apace, such that new reading publics were being created around a variety of literature, including political and religious works.[10] Yet the ability to read did not entail the ability to sufficiently or critically evaluate what one was reading, and Paine's respondents worried that *The Age of Reason* was specifically written for such an undiscriminating and unqualified readership. That *The Age of Reason* was being sold in cheap editions (or as some respondents worried, being given away for free), only proved that Paine was trying to spread his Deism to an audience that was unable to resist its infidel lure. Once again, the specter of the mob violence of the French Revolution raised its ugly head. In this chapter I not only discuss how the respondents raised the alarm against *The Age of Reason*'s untrustworthy readers, but also how some attempted to reach a similar audience. If the "poison" of *The Age of Reason* was being broadly disseminated, then it made sense to provide an "antidote" that not only refuted

[10] Assigning concrete numbers to literacy rates has been notoriously difficult, owing partly to definitional problems regarding what constitutes being "literate," and methodological problems in the types of evidence that would serve as relevant data (for example, being unable to sign ones name does not necessarily entail that one is unable to read, since writing involves a different skill set than reading does). Scholars do, however, accept the general trend that literacy steadily increased throughout the eighteenth century in the British Isles and in the North American colonies. The most recent estimates show that between the middle of the seventeenth century and the end of the eighteenth, literacy rates increased as such: in England, literacy rates rose from 33% to 60% for men, and from 10% to 40% for women. In Scotland, literacy rates rose from 44% to 78% for men, and from 13% to 23% for women. The American colonies generally had higher overall literacy rates: in New England, literacy rates for men rose from 60% to 90%. For New England women the increase is not available (but in 1650 an estimated 30% of women were literate). In Virginia, rates for men rose from 65% to 91%, and from 18% to 80% for women. These rates are tentatively given by Martin Lyons, who adds the caveat that while these numbers "cannot be relied on for spot on accuracy," they do indicate general trends of increasing literacy. Martin Lyons, *A History of Reading and Writing in the Western World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 90. Lyon's book is also an excellent overview of scholarly attempts to gauge literacy rates, and the problems that they face in doing so.

Paine for a similar readership, but that also included the strong broth of Christian apologetics and doctrine.

In Chapter 5 I take up the issue of how the respondents to *The Age of Reason* contended with the heavy weight of Paine's reputation, and the effect his notoriety would have on readers. In the eyes of many of the respondents, the Deistic hook was baited with Paine's name, and they feared that those who admired Paine as a champion of liberty were too apt to swallow his brand of religious infidelity. For some political and religious conservatives, *The Age of Reason* proved the dangerous symbiosis of political and religious radicalism. Yet many of the respondents who had some respect for Paine's political writings were unwilling to follow him down the Deistic path, and they were keen to drive a wedge between Paine's religion and politics. They stressed to their readers that however much they may have respected Paine, he had clearly gone beyond the pale in writing *The Age of Reason.* In this chapter I discuss how the respondents could not ignore Paine's reputation, and show the steps they took to mitigate its influence upon the readers of *The Age of Reason*.

In the concluding chapter of the dissertation, I explore how the rhetoric of Paine's respondents highlights some of the fundamental expectations and assumptions of late eighteenth-century print culture. Drawing on Jürgen Habermas' theories of the *bourgeois public sphere*, I will show how Paine's respondents used assumptions about authorship and readership to disqualify *The Age of Reason* from serious consideration. Paine violated the expectations of how a sincere inquirer of religious truth was supposed to write, and he was criticized for writing for an audience that was ill-equipped to understand this. The responses to *The Age of Reason* are, therefore, a window into the assumptions about authorial legitimacy and the expectations regarding qualified reading audiences.

The bibliography of this dissertation should serve as a tool for readers. I have annotated and categorized the responses to *The Age of Reason* according to each title's level of engagement with the book. I have read through the majority of these texts to find out which ones were written specifically to refute *The Age of Reason*, which ones were written against irreligion more generally but include some sections about *The Age of Reason*, and which ones were written generally about Paine's religious views. I have included some of those titles which form the "second tier" of the response to *The Age of Reason*, usually those tracts which were written in response to some other author that had already replied to Paine (either favorably or unfavorably). I have also included biographical information (when available) about the respondents. All of this bibliographic material has allowed me to gain a better grasp of the size and scope of the responses, as well as the variety of authors who participated in the controversy over *The Age of Reason*.

1.1 PAINE AND *THE AGE OF REASON*

Paine characterized the first part of *The Age of Reason* as a book that was long in coming, on a topic that he had been thinking about and studying for years. As Paine notes in the opening paragraph of the work, it had been his "intention, for several years past, to publish my thoughts upon religion."[11] Yet Paine would later admit that he was specifically motivated to finally put his religious views on paper out of a concern that the French were running "headlong into atheism," and he thought that a strongly argued Deist manifesto could prevent the French from completely

[11] Thomas Paine, part one of *The Age of Reason*, in Philip S. Foner, ed. *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, 2 vols. (New York: Citadel Press, 1945), vol 1: 463.

abandoning the idea of a supreme being.[12] In the opening pages of the first part of *The Age of Reason* Paine outlines his own profession of faith, the most central aspect being his forthright adherence to a belief in "one God," a point which many of Paine's later detractors either dismissed or conveniently ignored.[13] Paine's central thrust in the first part of *The Age of Reason* is to argue that for religion to be true, it must be universal and not contingent upon any specific person, culture, language or historical era. To arrive, therefore, at a universally true religion requires only human reason-- anything that contradicts reason cannot be considered true, for it is "only by the exercise of reason, that man can discover God."[14] Paine takes science as the paradigm of reason and rationality, leading him first to discount miracles (which are contrary to the laws of nature) and then divine revelation (as unverifiable second-hand hearsay).[15] The credulity of humanity, Paine argues, bolstered by the centuries-long duplicity of clergy, has led to a distorted and warped conception of God. Paine hopes to sweep away the accumulated untruths about God that have been built upon irrational and "superstitious" foundations, and much of *The Age of Reason* is thereby taken up with contrasting the scientific veracity of Deism against the deficiencies of revealed religion. Paine humanizes and historicizes the Bible by treating it merely as any other historical text, and he deals with issues of the authorship and authenticity of the books of the Bible, as well as analyzing the Bible for internal consistency, which he finds to be wholly deficient. Christianity and Judaism, with their emphasis on revelation for religious truth, their adherence to inconsistent sacred texts, and their wild miracle stories, verge on the perverse and tell us very little truth about God. Not one to pull punches,

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[12] Thomas Paine to Samuel Adams, January 1, 1803, in ibid., vol 2: 1436.
[13] Thomas Paine, part one of *The Age of Reason*, in ibid., vol 1: 464.
[14] Ibid., vol 1: 484.
[15] Paine actually does admit that divine revelation may have some epistemic validity, but *only* to the person receiving the revelation.

Paine characterizes the Bible as little more than a cobbled-together text that is so full of "obscene stories...voluptuous debaucheries...cruel and tortuous executions" that it would be "more consistent that we call it the word of a demon than the word of God."[16] Pressing his attack to a closer target, Paine even goes so far as to assert that a religion like Christianity is so far-fetched and irrational that it may be better to consider it as "a species of atheism; a sort of religious denial of God."[17] Deism, however, which promotes the use of rational scientific inquiry as a means to understanding God, is based on the surest of foundations and therefore may be considered to be universally true. Reason is the basis for knowing God, not "superstitious" folk-tales, second-hand hearsay, or anti-scientific miracles.

While the first part of *The Age of Reason* is characterized by Paine's usual argumentative boldness, the second part of the work was even more strident and hostile than the first. As one of Paine's opponents would derisively note, in writing the first part of *The Age of Reason*, Paine has been "moderately mischievous, and satisfied with throwing little more than snow-balls: but in the second part, he has armed himself with dirt indeed, and threatens to besmear every one that approaches in their defence!"[18] The increasingly hostile tone of the second part of *The Age of Reason* may be chalked up partly to the fact that while writing the first part of *The Age of Reason* Paine did not have access to a Bible and he was working from memory, so his critiques of it were a bit more generalized.[19] Yet when he was writing the second part of *The Age of Reason*, Paine was able to get his hands on a Bible and was able to consult it directly, leading him to opine that the books of the Bible were actually "much worse…than I had conceived," and he gives a

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[16] Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 1: 474.
[17] Ibid., vol 1: 486.
[18] Robert Thomson, *Divine Authority of the Bible, or, Revelation and Reason, Opposed to Sophistry and Ridicule: Being a Refutation of Paine's Age of Reason, Part First and Second* (London: Highham, 1801), 31.
[19] Nevertheless, Paine's recollection of extended passages is impressive and shows that he had a good command of the Biblical texts.

backhanded apology for having previously treated them "better…than they have deserved."[20] So Paine's diminished view of the actual text of the Bible may be one way to account for the harsher tone of the second part of *The Age of Reason*. But the harsher tone may also be due to Paine's eleven-month incarceration in a French prison during most of 1794, which nearly killed him and left him embittered.[21]

While the overall thrust of the second part of *The Age of Reason* is similar to the first, Paine is able to do a much more focused and systematic textual analysis of the Bible in order to cast serious doubts as to the reliability and credibility of the Bible.[22] Biblical authorship, authenticity, and authority are the major themes of the second part of *The Age of Reason*. Paine analyzes the internal evidence within Biblical texts to cast doubt on their authorship. For example, Paine wonders how anyone can believe that Moses was the author of the first five books of the Bible if, within the text, Moses describes his own death. This, and other inconsistencies and discrepancies, cast doubt not only on Mosaic authorship but also on any religious truths which are contained within these books. If God revealed religious truths to Moses, but Moses was not the author of these books, then they are of dubious value. Paine focuses on authorship as a wedge into a larger discussion of the errors and contradictions in the books of the Bible, which make up most of the second part of *The Age of Reason*. For Paine, who sees himself as treating the Bible as any other historical text, Biblical inconsistencies are

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[20] Thomas Paine, part two of *The Age of Reason*, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 1: 517.
[21] Not long after finishing part two of *The Age of Reason*, a brooding Paine published *A Letter to George Washington*, a scathing criticism of his former friend whom Paine held partly responsible for not doing enough to get him out of prison. Hoping to expose the "real" Washington to a public that held him in such high regard, Paine characterizes Washington not only as a false friend but as a manipulative, duplicitous, and corrupt politician.
[22] For an excellent overview of the contemporary scholarly influences on Paine's Biblical criticism, see chapters 3 & 4 of Davidson and Scheick's *Paine, Scripture and Authority*.

merely one more indication that they cannot be relied upon for any sort of religious knowledge.[23] Yet Paine also does a grand-tour through the Bible looking not just for inconsistencies, but also to highlight the abhorrent and immoral behaviors of those who are held up as paragons of Biblical virtues. In essence, Paine is engaged in a prolonged campaign to knock Biblical heroes off of their pedestals by repeatedly pointing to the questionable moral choices (sometimes divinely sanctioned) of central figures in the biblical narratives.[24] Paine does this in order not only to strongly caution against taking the Bible as a guide for morality, but also to point out how completely misguided Christians and Jews are in their conception of God. Paine's increasing virulence can be starkly seen in his treatment of Jesus. In the first part of *The Age of Reason*, Paine praises Jesus as a "virtuous and amiable man" who "preached [a] most excellent morality and the equality of man."[25] Yet in the second part of *The Age of Reason*, Paine holds the morality of Jesus to be against common sense and "impossible to be performed."[26]

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[23] Paine does side-by-side comparisons of the accounts of Jesus in the four Gospels to show how the inconsistencies between these books undercut any claim to religious authority. Paine writes that it is "impossible to find in any story upon record so many and such glaring absurdities, contradictions and falsehoods as are in those books [the Gospels]. They are more numerous and striking than I had any expectation of finding when I began this examination, and far more so than I had any idea of when I wrote the former part of '*The Age of Reason*'." In Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 1: 582.

[24] In his concluding section of part two, Paine charges that from the Old Testament humanity has only learned "rapine, cruelty and murder." The New Testament has only taught that the "Almighty committed debauchery with a woman engaged to be married, and the belief of this debauchery is called faith." In ibid., vol 1: 597.

[25] Thomas Paine, part one of *The Age of Reason*, in ibid., vol 1: 467, 69.

[26] Paine charges that to "turn the other cheek" causes a man to sink to the level of a "spaniel." As for the maxim that we should love our enemies, Paine calls this "another dogma of feigned morality" and for his own part, Paine "disown[s] the doctrine." In ibid., vol 1: 598.

1.2 SCHOLARSHIP ON *THE AGE OF REASON* AND ITS RESPONSES

The Age of Reason has not been ignored by scholars, yet when compared to the large volume of works that have been written about *Common Sense* and *Rights of Man, The Age of Reason* has been somewhat neglected. There are some excellent and provocative works that deal quite well with placing *The Age of Reason* in the canon of Paine's greatest works, and certainly no study of Paine could do justice to him without including some discussion of his religious writings. However, a search of the scholarly literature of the last fifty years evinces a great preoccupation with the political, stylistic, rhetorical, and intellectual content of *Common Sense* and *Rights of Man*, but with considerably less attention paid to *The Age of Reason* as a subject of study in its own right.[27] Edward Davidson and William Scheick's *Paine, Scripture and Authority: The Age of Reason as Religious and Political Idea* (1994) remains the only recent monograph-length work that takes *The Age of Reason* as its main topic of analysis. Indeed, when Davidson and Scheick wrote their book, they similarly commented on the relative lack of

[27]This is not to say that *The Age of Reason* has been completely ignored. An earlier generation of scholars has dealt with understanding and situating Paine's religious views. The late intellectual historian E. Owen Adlridge wrote extensively about Paine and his political and religious thought. For a detailed bibliography of Adridge's writings see the appendix of J. A. Leo Lemay, ed. *Deism, Masonry, and the Enlightenment : essays honoring Alfred Owen Aldridge* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987), 171-80. Ira Thompson's outlines (and critiques) Paine's basic ideas about God, Christianity, and the Bible. In a 1996 article, Jay Smith follows in the footsteps of the previous generation of historians by outlining the basics of Paine's religious views. Other more recent scholars have looked to particular motifs of *The Age of Reason* to tease out some of the themes that are central to Paine's religious outlook. J.F.C. Harrison points out how part of the appeal of both *The Age of Reason* and *Rights of Man* tapped into the political and religious millennialism of the 1790s in the context of republican revolutions of the Atlantic world. Jack Fruchtman's 1993 book *Thomas Paine and the Religion of Nature* points to the centrality and implications of Paine's concept of "nature" in both his political and theological writings. Picking up on Fruchtman's work, Edward Larkin devotes a chapter in his *Thomas Paine and the Literature of Revolution* to dealing with *The Age of Reason* and how Paine's conception of science is central for an understanding of Paine's religious views. See: Ira M. Thompson, *The Religious Beliefs of Thomas Paine* (New York: Vantage Press, 1965).; Jay E. Smith, "Thomas Paine and The Age of Reason's Attack on the Bible," *The Historian* 58(1996).; J.F.C. Harrison, "Thomas Paine and Millenarian Radicalism," in *Citizen of the World: Essays on Thomas Paine*, ed. Ian Dyck (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).; Jack Jr. Fruchtman, *Thomas Paine and the Religion of Nature* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1993).; Edward Larkin, *Thomas Paine and the Literature of Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

monographs that had been written about *The Age of Reason*. They noted that if "there has been a virtual library of commentary of the highest order on the issues raised in *The Rights of Man*, the contexts and concerns of *The Age of Reason* have been of little interest to scholars today."[28]

If the dearth of works treating *The Age of Reason* is notable, then those that deal with the larger controversy over the work have been similarly scant, which no doubt prompted the call for scholars to do a more comprehensive study of the controversy over the work. Scholars have generally acknowledged that *The Age of Reason* was not well received and that it drew polemical condemnation down upon Paine in periodicals, pamphlets and book-length monographs. However, the extent of the controversy has remained largely unexplored, and scholars have only adequately studied a handful of the published tracts written against *The Age of Reason*. Pendleton's call for a more thorough investigation of the controversy over *The Age of Reason* was motivated by her (and Michael Lasser's) bibliographic research that showed the large number of tracts that had been published in the wake of *The Age of Reason*.[29] Indeed, Pendleton calls it "something of a puzzle why so many of these works have gone unnoticed," especially since most of the titles were listed in some of the standard bibliographic reference works such as the *British Museum Catalogue* and the *National Union Catalogue of Pre-1956 Imprints*. Nor were they all of limited circulation, since a number of them did go into second editions.

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[28] Edward Davidson and William Scheick, *Paine, Scripture and Authority: The Age of Reason as Religious and Political Idea* (Bethlehem, Penn.: Lehigh University Press, 1994), 18.

[29] In 1909 Anson Ely Morse identified a number of pamphlets, books and newspaper articles appearing in Federalist newspapers that responded to *The Age of Reason*. Nearly a decade later Vernon Stauffer would "emphasize the depth of the impression which Paine's book made" by enumerating (in an extended footnote) a number of the replies to *The Age of Reason*. Michael Lasser's 1967 bibliographic article was the first systematic attempt to enumerate the transatlantic breadth of responses to *The Age of Reason*, and Pendleton saw her own bibliographic essay as a supplement to Lasser's. Finally, Davidson and Scheick include a detailed appendix in their *Paine, Scripture and Authority* which not only consolidates (and adds to) the work of Lasser and Pendleton, but also provides some citations to contemporary periodical reviews for many of the tracts written against *The Age of Reason*. See the appendix titled "Attacks upon Paine and *The Age of Reason*" in Anson Ely Morse, *The Federalist Party in Massachusetts to the Year 1800* (Trenton, N.J.: Hazlett, Harrison & Co., 1909), 217-19. See also Vernon Stauffer, *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1918), 75-6.

Pendleton does, however, speculate that perhaps the scholarly neglect is rooted in the general trend of scholars to "dismiss the answers to *The Age of Reason* as beneath notice."[30]

There is some truth to this characterization, since there is a general disregard for the responses to *The Age of Reason* which I believe goes back at least to the writings of Moncure Daniel Conway. Conway was one of the most enthusiastic of late-nineteenth century Paine scholars who hoped to rescue Paine from (to borrow a phrase from E.P. Thompson) the "enormous condescension of posterity." Conway edited and published Paine's complete works, wrote a number of popular essays on Paine, helped to curate a Paine exhibition in London (in 1896), and discovered some long-lost writings by Paine. Conway's two volume *Life of Thomas Paine* (1892) remains one of the standard biographies with which all subsequent biographers have had to contend (usually to temper Conway's hero-worship of Paine). Seeking to vindicate Paine from the repeated and entrenched mischaracterizations of his religious views, Conway held that the reaction to *The Age of Reason* was in itself sufficient justification for what Paine had written. Those who were most stung by what Paine had written, the "chief priests and preachers," were only able to answer *The Age of Reason* with "personal abuse and slander, revealing by such fruits the nature of their tree, and confessing the feebleness of its root, either in reason or human affection." Conway further heaps disdain on the authors who responded to *The Age of Reason* by characterizing them as "irrelevant personalities."[31]

Conway's general disregard for the replies to *The Age of Reason* would cast a long shadow. For example, Herbert Morais, whose *Deism in Eighteenth Century America* (1934)

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[30] Gayle T. Pendleton, "Thirty Additional Titles Relating to The Age of Reason," *British Studies Monitor* 10(1980): 36, 40.
[31] Moncure Daniel Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine*, 2 vols. (New York: Putnam, 1893), vol 2:181-2.

remains a central and influential work on American Deism, charged that although there were a few worthwhile and high-minded works that were able to engage Paine,

> most of the works written against *The Age of Reason*, though masquerading under the pretentious titles of Answers, were nothing but emotional diatribes directed against its author…[adding] nothing new to the deistic controversy with the possible exception of a more extensive list of abusive terms which the orthodox could fling at Paine.[32]

G. Adolf Koch, in his standard work on American Deist societies, *Republican Religion: The American Revolution and the Cult of Reason*, similarly characterizes the overall tone of the responses to Paine as being "wretchedly abusive and vulgar."[33]

Having read most of the published responses to *The Age of Reason*, I cannot completely agree with these sentiments, nor can I completely disagree with them. There is quite a bit of abuse flung at Paine, and even the most high-minded of respondents seemingly cannot help getting in a few *ad-hominem* digs at Paine. As one scholar has humorously noted, many of Paine's clerical respondents "were after all repaying Paine in kind for the names he had called them and Christianity."[34] And certainly there are some works which are full of the most hateful invective against Paine, such as that penned by the pseudonymous Delaware Waggoner, who not only characterizes Paine an agent of the Devil, but also calls for Paine to be set up in effigy so that every "true hearted American" could have a "convenient opportunity to piss in your face."[35] But intermixed with the epithets is a genuine grappling with the arguments that Paine levels

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[32] Herbert Morais, *Deism in Eighteenth Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), 164.
[33] G. Adolf Koch, *Republican Religion: The American Revolution and the Cult of Reason* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1933).
[34] James Smylie, "Clerical Perspectives on Deism: Paine's The Age of Reason in Virginia," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 6:2, no. Winter (1972-1973): 212.
[35] Delaware Waggoner [David Nelson?], *An Investigation of that False, Fabulous and Blasphemous Misrepresentation of Truth, Set Forth by Thomas Paine, in His Two Volumes, Entitled The Age of Reason, Dedicated to the Protection of the United States of America. By A Delaware Waggoner: Also Dedicated to the Protection of the United States of America: where the Devil, Mahomet, and the Heathen Philosophers, are Evidences Against Paine's Age of Reason* (Lancaster, Pa: Printed by W. & R. Dickson, 1800), 26.

against the Bible, revealed religion and Christianity. Yet as I will show in this dissertation, it is often through the epithetical asides, the seemingly tangential barbs, and the scurrilous attacks on Paine's character that we get a glimpse of just how high the stakes were for so many of his respondents.

Despite such dismissive characterizations of Paine's opponents, the replies to *The Age of Reason* have not gone completely unexamined. Franklin Prochaska was one of the first to do so in a 1972 article that addressed the dismissive attitude of prior scholars who had "ignored and maligned the contemporary critics" of *The Age of Reason*.[36] In order to give Paine's respondents a bit more intellectual credibility than they had previously been given, Prochaska focused his attention on the responses by Gilbert Wakefield, Joseph Priestley and Richard Watson, all of whom were highly educated and whose tracts (while still engaging in the occasional bit of mud-slinging) are some of the more well-argued tracts written against *The Age of Reason*. Gail Pendleton's call for a more thorough analysis of the controversy over *The Age of Reason* certainly echoed Prochaska's tacit assumption that there may be more than meets the eye in the response to *The Age of Reason*.

Prochaska's article was a good start, yet his focus on those tracts that were written on a more highbrow level to refute Paine's arguments ignores the many tracts that were supposedly written specifically for the common man.[37] In trying to regain the credibility of the reactions to *The Age of Reason*, Prochaska primarily selects those tracts that were written by some highly educated individuals who were no strangers to theological discussion and disputation. Yet many of the replies were written by authors who were not perhaps so well educated and who were

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[36] Franklyn K. Prochaska, "Thomas Paine's The Age of Reason Revisited," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 33:4, no. Oct.-Dec (1972): 576.

[37] For a more thorough critique of Prochaska's article, see Michael Williams, "The 1790s: The Impact of Infidelity," *Bulletin of the Thomas Paine Society* 5:3, no. Spring (1976).

unaccustomed to discussing theological matters in print. Also, Prochaska's article is limited by its British bias, and he does not deal at all with the American side of the controversy, which, while not as large as the British response, was equally vigorous.

Other scholars have looked more closely at some of the American responses to *The Age of Reason*. In the same year as Prochaska's article, James H. Smylie examined reactions to *The Age of Reason* by some clergymen in Virginia.[38] Much like Prochaska, Smylie's goal was to counteract the negative assessment of the responses to *The Age of Reason,* and his article does an excellent job of synthesizing the responses of some of the Virginia clergy such as Andrew Broaddus, James Muir, and Moses Hoge. Smylie provides an excellent analysis of some of the specific issues on which they challenged Paine, such as his conception of "Reason," and his outright rejection of revelation.[39] Ultimately, Smylie points out just how much the Virginia clergy were invested in Enlightenment discourse by trying to reconcile it with the evangelicalism from the First Great Awakening.

Much more recently, Benjamin Park used a handful of the American responses as a lens with which to see how the controversy over *The Age of Reason* served in the formation of American identity in the Early Republic. For Park, the variety of discourse in the replies to *The Age of Reason* by authors Jeremy Belknap, James Muir, Elhanan Winchester, Daniel Humphries and Joel Barlow shows that in all of these responses there was a normative struggle "to define what it really meant to be 'American'," particularly as it relates to the role of religion in the Early Republic. While Park points to the diversity of opinion on crucial issues regarding the role and limits of religion in the United States, he notes that the controversy over *The Age of Reason*

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[38] James Smylie, "Clerical Perspectives on Deism: Paine's *The Age of Reason* in Virginia," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 6:2 (1972-1973): 203-20.
[39] Smylie also explores the religious and political climate of these clerics in their battle for disestablishment in Virginia.

did help to solidify the notion that American culture was "closely tethered to the Bible and associated with Christianity," thereby effectively closing-off Deism as a viable "American" religious option.[40]

There are the occasional useful articles that deal with some of the specific authors and tracts that form a part of the controversy over *The Age of Reason*. In the now defunct *Bulletin of the Thomas Paine Society,* Nigel H. Sinnott fleshed out the background for the Irish Presbyterian minister Thomas Dix Hincks's 1795 refutation of Paine, *Letters Addressed to the Inhabitants of Cork, Occasioned by the Circulation of a Work, Entitled, The Age of Reason.*[41] Similarly, Helio Osvaldo Alves explored Samuel Francis's 1797 *Watson Refuted,* a mildly pro-Paine tract that rebutted Watson's *An Apology for the Bible*, and was actually written by the Portuguese immigrant Francisco Solano Constancio.[42] Richard Popkin added to the discussion in a 1987 article which took seriously the transatlantic nature of the response to *The Age of Reason* by focusing on two of Paine's respondents-- the English Jew David Levi and the American evangelical Christian Elias Boudinot.[43]

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[40] Benjamin E. Park, "Contesting Reason, Constricting Boundaries: Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* and the Formation of American Identities in the 1790s" (Masters Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2010), 69.

[41] Nigel H. Sinnott, "Dr. Hincks and the Age of Reason in Cork," *Bulletin of the Thomas Paine Society* 2:4, no. Summer (1971). Hincks' work went into at least two editions, with the second edition having some alterations from the first. See Thomas Dix Hincks, *Letters Addressed to the Inhabitants of Cork, Occasioned by the Circulation of a Work, Entitled, The Age of Reason, &c. In That City* (Cork: Printed and Sold by J. Haly, King's-Arms, Exchange, 1795); ———, *Letters Originally Addressed to the Inhabitants of Cork, in Defence of Revealed Religion, Occasioned by the Circulation of Mr. Paine's Age of Reason, In That City. Second Edition, with Alterations and Additions* (Cork: Printed for the Author, at Haly's Office, King's-Arms, Opposite the Exchange; And London Sold By Messrs. J. Johnson, No. 72, St. Paul's Churchyard, and Richard White. No. 173, Piccadilly, 1796).

[42] Helio Osvaldo Alves, "Wondering about Wonders: Paine, Constancio and The Age of Reason, 1794-97 " in *Radicalism and revolution in Britain, 1775-1848 : essays in honour of Malcolm I. Thomis* ed. Michael T. Davis (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000). Samuel Francis, (pseud), *Watson Refuted: Being an Answer to the Apology for the Bible. In a Series of Letters to the Bishop of Llandaff* (Edinburgh: n.p., 1797).

[43] For Popkin, both Levi and Boudinot, although not being co-religionists, shared a similar millenarian worldview that put an extremely heavy focus on providential history (as opposed to the secularized history of the Enlightenment). Both Levi and Boudinot saw the events of the late eighteenth century—especially the American and French revolutions—as being fulfillment of prophecy, and an indication that the millennial age was upon humanity. The encroaching millennial age was itself evidence to the validity of the Scriptures that Paine had so cavalierly dismissed. In countering Paine, Levi and Boudinot give some fresh arguments based upon their millenarian

Two works, however, stand out in their treatment of the controversy over *The Age of Reason*. I have already mentioned British historian Gregory Claeys' insightful and suggestive treatment of the responses to *The Age of Reason* in *Thomas Paine: Social and Political Thought.* Davidson and Scheick's *Paine, Scripture and Authority* is valuable for the four-fold typology of the prevalent and recurring themes in the responses to *The Age of Reason*. First, Davidson and Scheick point to the most obvious issue upon which respondents challenge Paine, namely, his assault upon the authority and unity of scripture. Next, they find that Paine's respondents challenged his approach to Christianity, since he treated it as a human-made religion that should be analyzed in the same way as any other religion. Third, Paine's respondents challenged him as a mere propagandist who deliberately sought to manipulate an audience that had been created by his previous political writings. Finally, Davidson and Scheick suggest that Paine was taken to task for his combative and colloquial style, which was deemed more suitable to cheap pamphleteering and political debate than to a supposedly sacred subject matter. While the first two issues that Davidson and Scheick point to are certainly important for understanding the responses to *The Age of Reason*, I have found their last two points to be the most interesting and fruitful for this dissertation. For as I will show, Paine's reputation, his intended audience, and his style of writing weighed heavily on the minds of so many of his respondents and drove so much of the alarmism regarding *The Age of Reason*.

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interpretation of scripture, prophecy, history and the unfolding of the age of revolutions. Richard H. Popkin, "The Age of Reason versus The Age of Revelation. Two Critics of Tom Paine: David Levi and Elias Boudinot," in *Deism, Masonry and the Enlightenment: Essays Honoring Alfred Owen Aldridge.*, ed. J.A. Leroy Lemay. (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1987).

1.3 SCOPE AND SOURCES

In this dissertation I am primarily focusing on British and American responses to *The Age of Reason* that appeared in periodicals, in pamphlets, and in books during Paine's lifetime (d. 1809).[44] Most of the replies to *The Age of Reason* appeared within the first five years of its publication, yet because Paine continued writing on religious topics until the end of his life, a few of his opponents took this as an opportunity to continue the battle against *The Age of Reason*. Indeed, the controversy over *The Age of Reason* did not cease with his death and Paine's religious views would remain controversial throughout the nineteenth century.[45]

In my original conception for this dissertation, I planned to pay more attention to the American responses to *The Age of Reason*, since I saw a bias in the historiography that leaned towards focusing more on the British reactions. Not that I was going to ignore the British reaction, since my aim was to get a better sense of the entirety—British and American—of the

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[44] I realize that to make this dissertation a truly comprehensive and Atlantic project, I would need to include more than just American and British responses. Getting a handle on the large number of Anglophone replies was a daunting enough task, yet I must admit that I was somewhat surprised by not being able to find more contemporary replies to *The Age of Reason* that appeared in other languages. Davidson and Scheick admit to their own surprises at the lack of French responses to *The Age of Reason*. After having searched a number of comprehensive French bibliographies, they admit to the "failed effort to locate French responses to *The Age of Reason.*"(108) I know of at least two non-English responses, but have not been able to examine them due to their rarity. The one was written in Germany (in Latin) by the theologian Frederick Wilhelm Hagen, *Vindiciae Prophetarum Ebraicorum Et Jesu Christi Contra Thomam Paine Ejusque Libelli De Vera Et Fictititia Religione Germaniucm Interpretem* (Norimbergae: 1798). The other was written in French as *Age Du Desordre Pris Pour Celui De La Raison Par Mr. Paine… Ecrit Par Un Laïque* (Londres: Chez F. Wingrave, Strand: 1794).

[45] A decade after Paine died, the controversy over *The Age of Reason* rekindled in Britain when Richard Carlile reprinted both parts of *The Age of Reason*, leading to a second wave of replies to *The Age of Reason.* This consisted of responses that were newly written and others which were reprints from the earlier generation. Since the contemporary "first wave" of responses to *The Age of Reason* in itself presents such a large set, I will not focus on this second wave of the controversy over *The Age of Reason*. It is, however, interesting to note that the controversy and notoriety of *The Age of Reason* and Paine's religious views even continued into the twenty first century, as evidenced by the defeat of a 2007 bill in the Arkansas House of Representatives to officially recognize Paine's birthday. The defeat of what was taken to be a non-controversial bill came after one of the conservative representatives quoted from *The Age of Reason* to show that while Paine had done "some good things for the nation" he was ultimately "anti-Christian and anti-Jewish." See "Bill to Honor Paine Stalls in Arkansas." *The New York Times* February 10, 2007, 35.

controversy over *The Age of Reason*. Owing perhaps to the more developed literary and publishing scene, the British response to *The Age of Reason* is larger than the American response, and in my research I focused first on reading through those tracts that originated from British presses. Having gone through most of those tracts, I next took up the American response to the work. Without a doubt there are differences between the British and American responses to *The Age of Reason,* and throughout the following chapters I will point out some of the different ways that British and American respondents frame their responses to *The Age of Reason*. Yet the more replies I read, the more I was struck by how the similarities of the responses far outweighed the differences. The Americans and the British used the same arguments to refute those made in *The Age of Reason,* they flung the same barbs at Paine, and they showed similar concerns about the implications of Deism on society. Much of this is no doubt owing to a common cultural and religious background that persisted after the American Colonies declared independence from Britain. It is certainly due to a common anti-Deist intellectual tradition from which the more well-educated British and American respondents (often clergymen) were able to draw. To refute Paine, the anti-Deist wheel did not need to be reinvented, and both Americans and Britons drew on the same anti-Deist works and arguments that had been used by Christian apologists during the previous hundred years, such as John Locke, Charles Leslie, Thomas Sherlock and John Leland. [46] Not only did American and British respondents to *The Age of Reason* draw on a common anti-Deist tradition, but they drew on each

[46] John Locke was often touted as the eminent philosopher of his time who maintained his adherence to Christianity and defended its rationality in his 1695 work *The Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures*. Charles Leslie's *A Short and Easie Method with the Deists* (1697) was published a number of times throughout the eighteenth century and became one of the more popular anti-Deistic tracts. The bishop of London Thomas Sherlock defended revealed religion in *The Use and Interest of Prophecy* (1725) and *Tryal of the Witnsses* (1729), which were written against the Deists Anthony Collins and Thomas Woolston. John Leland's *View of the Principle Deistical Writers,* originally published in 1754, served as a source-book for the arguments of Deists and as a guide to refuting them.

other's works, often with notes of praise for their fellow respondents.[47] Some of the more popular replies—such as those penned by Joseph Priestley, Gilbert Wakefield, and Richard Watson—appeared on both sides of the Atlantic. In general, the transatlantic aspect of the responses to *The Age of Reason* had a westward flow, either as imports or reprints from Britain to the United States.[48]

After reading the British and American sides of the controversy, and being struck by the similarities between them, the conceptual line that I had drawn down the center of the Atlantic became increasingly untenable.[49] Rather than have one chapter that dealt with the British reception of *The Age of Reason* and another on the American, I found that my analysis was better served by a thematic approach that highlighted the similar rhetorical strategies of Paine's respondents. By focusing on the similarities, I was better able to see that the respondents to *The Age of Reason* did more than just try to refute Paine's arguments; they tried to show that Paine's book was dangerous, and in the hyperbolized language of a few of the responses, one of the most

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[47] For example, the American evangelical Elias Boudinot admits that his *The Age of Revelation, or, The Age of Reason Shewn to Be an Age of Infidelity* (Philadelphia: Asbury Dickins, 1801) is entirely indebted to the "many conclusive answers [that] have been given to" *The Age of Reason*, and he singles out Richard Watson's *An Apology for the Bible* as one of the "very learned able and judicious" works to appear against Paine. (xix, xxi)

[48] There are a few notable exceptions to this western migration of texts. English Unitarian Joseph Priestley, in exile from his native land, wrote and published his refutation of Paine in the United States before it was reprinted in London. The American Unitarian Elhanan Winchester's *Ten Letters Addressed to Mr. Paine* (Boston: Printed and Sold by John W. Folsom, no. 30, Union-Street, 1794) is the only other American reply that was reprinted in Britain, where it appeared under the title *A Defence of Revelation, in Ten Letters to Thomas Paine* (London: Re-printed for the Editor, by T. Gillet, 1796)

[49] Michael Durey, Richard Carwardine's and Seth Cotlar are among a few who have pushed for scholars to be less insular and national in their thinking about both American and British intellectual currents. Cotlar, for example, has criticized his fellow historians of the early American republic for ignoring the transatlantic aspects of American intellectual life, and for being too wedded to the idea that the 1790s were a time when America "shed its borrowed European ethos" to become distinctly "American." Cotlar's work, which focuses on the cosmopolitanism of American political radicals, chides that "if one only read the secondary literature of America's 1790s, one would think that Americans hardly knew that…European thinkers existed." Seth Cotlar, *Tom Paine's America: The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 7. See also Richard Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism : Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790-1865* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978); Michael Durey, *Transatlantic Radicals and the Early American Republic* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1997).

dangerous books ever published on religion. This dissertation, as an analysis of the rhetoric of refutation, highlights some of the reasons why Paine's respondents (both British and American) thought the work was so pernicious, and the countermeasures they employed to effectively deal with it.

I should note that while my analysis of the pamphlet and book-length published responses has been the most systematic, I have also included reactions to *The Age of Reason* that appeared in unpublished materials (such as diaries and personal letters) or in works (such as novels) that were not specifically written as replies to Paine. I have not done an exhaustive study of the opinions of *The Age of Reason* in these alternate sources, simply because the published responses proved to be so numerous and so rich in content. However, whenever I have discovered these other types of sources and found them to be relevant to my discussion, I have included them.

By way of conclusion, I would like to address what I will not be focusing on in this dissertation. Beyond what I have already written as a means of introducing some of the main points Paine makes in the two parts of *The Age of Reason*, I will not try to give a "correct" reading or interpretation of *The Age of Reason*. Nor will I be judging how well Paine's respondents argue against him, if they successfully refute his arguments, or if they even really "get" what he says in *The Age of Reason*. Some of Paine's respondents certainly are more intellectually rigorous and sophisticated in their replies, while some use arguments that involve a good deal of circular argumentation and leaps of logic. Others seem at times to completely misconstrue or misinterpret Paine's own stated positions, and argue against positions that Paine

never held.[50] However, I will not be judging the merits or validity of the arguments against *The Age of Reason*.

I will not spend much time trying to determine the intellectual sources for Paine's Deism in *The Age of Reason*, even though I will be discussing his opponents' definite opinions regarding from whom Paine "stole" his Deistic ideas.[51] Nor will I necessarily be trying to tease out the intellectual heritage of the respondents' Christian apologetics and anti-Deism, although at times this does become relevant when they make a particular point of emphasizing the numerous times that Deism has already been adequately refuted.

I will not involve myself with trying to determine, beyond the initial controversy, the wide-ranging influence of *The Age of Reason* on the thoughts and writings of subsequent writers.[52] Gauging the extent of intellectual "influence" of one writer upon another is a dicey business and I will not try to establish *The Age of Reason* in the intellectual genealogies of any subsequent writers. Certainly Paine's book became a much admired text among British and American Deists, and as Susan Budd has shown, later nineteenth and twentieth century freethinkers often pointed to *The Age of Reason* as a central text in their intellectual progress to religious infidelity.[53] But the full story of how the book became (and continues to be) a central

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[50] For example, Paine is occasionally portrayed as an atheist who denies the existence of God, which, while perhaps a crafty rhetorical flourish to further anathematize him, is nevertheless squarely at odds with Paine's insistent affirmation in the opening pages of *The Age of Reason* that he does believe in God.

[51] Davidson and Scheick provide a good analysis of the sources and influences that led Paine to write *The Age of Reason.*

[52] Other scholars have tried to gauge the impact of *The Age of Reason* on some notable figures such as Daniel O'Connell, Joseph Smith, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Abraham Lincoln and Mark Twain. See Alan Gribben, *Mark Twain's Library: A Reconstruction* 2vols. (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980); James Guilfoyle, "The Religious Development of Daniel O'Connell, I: From Deist to Roman Catholic," *New Hibernia Review* 2:3(1998); Robert J. Havlik, "Some Influences of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* Upon Abraham Lincoln " *Lincoln Herald* 104:2(2002); Roger D. Lund, "Philosophic Drollery in *Letters from the Earth*," *Mark Twain Annual* 4(2006); Robert Paul, "Joseph Smith and the plurality of worlds idea," *Dialogue* 19:2, no. Sum (1986); Joe Webb, "Echoes of Paine: Tracing "The Age of Reason" through the Writings of Emerson," *ATQ* 20:3, no. Sep (2006).

[53] Budd analyzes the personal writings of a number of British freethinkers to see what books were most influential on their journey to freethought. Budd notes that along with *The Age of Reason*, the other most frequently cited text

part of the freethinker canon will not be the focus of this dissertation. However, this larger story will be indirectly relevant to this dissertation, since the initial controversy over the book forms the very beginnings of a process of canonization of *The Age of Reason.* It is in this initial controversy over the book—in which Paine's opponents declaimed against its accessible writing style, and its availability and affordability--that the seeds of this canonization process are present and visible, and which later generations of freethinkers would look to in their own intellectual development and agendas to promote *The Age of Reason* as a seminal text.

Equally treacherous is trying to judge the level of actual impact that a work like *The Age of Reason* had on its reading audience. Large print runs and circulation of a work do not entail acceptance of it, and as I will show, Paine's reputation and notoriety weighed heavily on the minds of a number of his opponents who feared that Paine's name alone would sell his books.[54] Much of the alarmism of the responses to *The Age of Reason* should be judged with a skeptical eye as rhetoric rather than reality, such as that of the Virginia cleric Moses Hoge who fulminated that that upwards of one hundred thousand copies of "that scurrilous and blasphemous production" had been distributed in the United States alone. I am purposely avoiding, to a certain degree, Jonathan Rose's two-decade old call for a more empirical study of the history of audiences—analyzing the actual reading habits of the common reader.[55] This is not to say that

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was the Bible, which freethinkers found to be so shocking and far-fetched that it led them to reject Christianity and revealed religion altogether. See Susan Budd, "Loss of Faith, Reasons for Unbelief among Members of the Secular Movement in England, 1850-1950," *Past and Present* 36 (1967): 109.

[54] Historian of literacy Harvey J. Graff rightly reminds us that the "Increasing numbers of texts and several editions say nothing definite about reading habits, size of audience or size of editions; in fact, rather than indicating demand, it may merely relate to technological innovations in printing, distribution, or size of print runs." While a useful reminder to not jump to conclusions, Graff wisely frames his reminder as suggestive, rather than conclusive. For it is, of course possible that large print runs are indeed indicative of a high demand. Printers and publishers, while prone to make serious mistakes, were not completely oblivious to which titles and authors could be "sure" sellers. Harvey J. Graff, *The Labyrinths of Literacy : Reflections on Literacy Past and Present. Revised and Expanded Edition.* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 169.

[55] Jonathan Rose, "Rereading the English Common Reader: A Preface to a History of Audiences " *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53:1, no. Jan.-Mar. (1992). Rose's own research on the British working class reader seems to have

Rose's observations and methodological critiques are invalid or irrelevant, but his thrust is more along the lines of gauging impact or influence of certain texts as they relate to reading audiences. Rose hopes that an empirical study of actual readers can tell us more about the reading habits and responses to literature, to see which books actually were influential or had a great impact on readers. What I am more concerned with, however, is how Paine's respondents perceived his intended audience, why this was dangerous, and how they went about trying to target Paine's audience to undermine any influence that Paine was perceived as having. Jonathan Rose has charged that too many literary scholars and historians have fallen into the "receptive fallacy," wherein they assume that whatever messages an author puts into his writings is the message that the common reader gets out of the book; that there is an assumed one-to-one correlation between authorial intent and impact on the readership.[56] I hope that I have avoided this fallacy, since this dissertation is not about the actual impact or influence of *The Age of Reason* on a common audience, but rather the perceptions of Paine's respondents who believed that his brand of infidelity was being swallowed whole and who thereby sought to position their own works as appropriate counterweights. I am focusing on the ways that Paine's opponents *thought* his readership was responding to his work, and the ways that his respondent sought to offer a countervailing influence on this same reading public. Actually, Rose's "receptive fallacy" has been useful less in terms of my own methodology and more in terms of understanding the way

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skewed his approach to the history of audiences to some degree since he focuses so much on the (usually) unpublished diaries, memoirs, and autobiographies of working class readers. A number of the published responses to *The Age of Reason* were written by those who forthrightly promoted themselves as "laymen" or as "plain" men who were writing to their fellow common readers. As I will show in later chapters, this common man's refutation of Paine is part of the larger rhetoric of the danger of *The Age of Reason* on a common audience. Yet I would contend that some, but by no means all, of these common man's refutations of *The Age of Reason* could and should be included in Rose's history of audiences. Indeed, it is precisely these common man's refutations of Paine that show that despite the rhetoric to the contrary, Paine's ideas were not universally being accepted by the common man.

[56] Here is Rose's definition of the receptive fallacy: "That is, the critic assumes that whatever the author puts into a text—or whatever the critic chooses to read into that text—is the message that the common reader receives, without studying the response of any actual reader other than the critic himself"(Ibid., 49).

that Paine's opponents understood reading audiences. For it is usually the respondents to *The Age of Reason* who are themselves engaging in the receptive fallacy—it is they who assumed that the common man is being completely and utterly persuaded by the message of *The Age of Reason*. For them, circulation numbers did indeed indicate an acceptance of Deism, and a number of respondents therefore hoped that they could reach the same audience to convince them of a different religious message.

On a related concern, I should also note that in this dissertation I am not arguing that the perceptions of the responders to *The Age of Reason* are necessarily correct on all counts. They were pretty well on the mark that Paine wrote with an eye towards a large readership and that this was bound up with his lifelong project of enfranchising the common man. We get glimpses throughout all of Paine's writings—political, social, religious-- that he took this to be a hallmark of his writing style. The manner and style in which Paine wrote was bound up with his own optimistic view of the capacities and capabilities of the common man, and it was startlingly evident both to Paine's adherents and his detractors that he purposefully wrote in what one scholar has called an "intellectual vernacular," to include the widest possible audience.[57] So on this count, as well as the relative cheapness of the edition of *The Age of Reason*, Paine's respondents were pretty well on track. They were also rightly aware that an increasing number of people were able to read books like *The Age of Reason*. Indeed, some of the respondents to Paine had to look no farther than their own bookshelves to realize that more than just societal elites were able to read. There is an interesting rhetorical tension in some of the responses written by the self-admittedly "plain" or uneducated authors. On the one hand they raised the alarm about the complete saturation of Deistic ideas on the lower orders. Yet their own works,

[57] Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language, 1791-1819* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1984), x.

supposedly written for their own class to refute *The Age of Reason*, show that the saturation is not complete—that the lower orders were not all just blindly accepting Paine's Deistic trash. Much of the hyperbola had, of course more to do with rhetoric than reality, and were convenient ways of raising the red flag against a book like *The Age of Reason*.

1.4 CONCLUDING NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

For convenience sake, when I refer to "*The Age of Reason*" or to "Paine's book," I mean both parts of *The Age of Reason*. Paine's contemporaries referred to his books as part and parcel of the same basic project, and there is a certain amount of lumping the two together to vilify Paine for writing "*The Age of Reason*." In some of the later replies to Paine it is at times not even all that clear to which part of *The Age of Reason* an author is referring. This makes it somewhat difficult to neatly categorize some of the later tracts into those which were responding to the second part only, to both parts as a set-piece, or to a generalized and vague "*The Age of Reason*."[58] I doubt that such lack of specificity has as much to do with the compiled editions (that included both parts in one single volume), as it does with the view that there was not much of a sufficient difference between the two parts to warrant any quibbling over the different parts of the work.[59] A generalized "*The Age of Reason*" could stand in for the equally pernicious

[58] It is not even always safe to assume that a response that was published *after* the second part of *The Age of Reason* is not dealing solely with the first part of *The Age of Reason*. For example, John Anketell's *Strictures Upon Paine's Age of Reason* was published in 1796 (internal to the text it notes that it was finished in December 1795), well after the second part of *The Age of Reason* had appeared. Yet Anketell's work is written only against the first part and Anketell shows no knowledge of the second part of *The Age of Reason*.

[59] For example, a 1796 London edition calls the work *The Age of Reason* without indicating either specific part, yet the text includes both parts one and two. See Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason, Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology. By Thomas Paine, Secretary for Foreign Affairs to Congress in the American war. And Author*

Deism of both parts. When it is necessary for clarification, I will refer to the specific parts of *The Age of Reason,* but when referring to the controversy over the two works more generally, I will defer to the singular, such as "the controversy over *The Age of Reason*" or the "respondents to Paine's book."

Also, throughout the dissertation I will refer alternatively to the "respondents," "responders," and "response." I generally use these interchangeably as sort of catch-all terms that include those who wrote negatively about *The Age of Reason* in order to refute it. This includes the stand-alone tracts published against *The Age of Reason*, the reviews that appeared in newspaper and review journals, and even those whose critiques of *The Age of Reason* appear in other places, such as in sermons or as parts of larger works. This is not to say that *The Age of Reason* was only met with opposition, for some of Paine's fellow Deists-- Elihu Palmer, John Fowler, Thomas Dutton, Allan Macleod, the "Deist," and the "Citizen of New York" (Joel Barlow?)-- wrote tracts that defended *The Age of Reason* (and Deism more generally) against its critics. These supporters of Paine are certainly part of the controversy surrounding *The Age of Reason*, especially since their defenses of Paine helped to further extend the controversy by attracting replies that were equally hostile (and which usually included a good bit of secondary Paine bashing as well). For example, building on the title of Gilbert Wakefield's *An Examination of The Age of Reason,* Elihu Palmer came to Paine's defense with *The Examiners Examined*. Unfazed by the complicated compounding of titles, William Wyche subsequently fired back with the delightfully alliterative but somewhat convoluted title *An Examination of The Examiners Examined*. To my knowledge, no one wrote an "Examination of the *Examination of the Examiners Examined*"— fortunately, controversies die down before they release too much

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of the Works Entitled, Common Sense, and Rights of Man, &c. (London: Printed for the proprietor, and sold by all political booksellers, 1796).

absurdity. So while the supporters of Paine are assuredly "respondents" to *The Age of Reason*, more often than not when I use this terms I am talking about those who were hostile to *The Age of Reason*.

Finally, the category of religious "infidelity" (or religious "infidels") is a term that I use throughout this dissertation, usually as a broad category that includes those with unorthodox religious opinions, and more specifically those who rejected divine revelation as a source of religious knowledge. For the most part, when I use this term I am not only referring to Deists like Paine who did believe in a supreme being, but also to those who are outright atheists. I am not using this terms pejoratively, but rather to echo the language of Paine's contemporaries who used "infidelity" to categorize their own hostility to unorthodox religious views. Usually, this meant atheists and Deists, but at times Unitarian and other anti-Trinitarian beliefs are also assumed under the free-floating category of infidelity.[60] While some of the responders to *The Age of Reason* are quite clear about the distinctions between Deism and atheism, other responders are content to refer broadly to infidels without much distinction. Still others, however, purposely conflate Deism and atheism, such as James Tytler, who argues that although Paine claims the mantle of Deism, his real religion is "downright atheism" since "the principles of strict Deism differ in nothing, but a mere speculative point, from those of the Atheists."[61]

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[60] A fact not much always much appreciated, as evidenced by the title of Joshua Toulmin's tract *The Injustice of Classing Unitarians with Deists and Infidels*. (London: printed for J. Johnson, St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1797).
[61] James Tytler, *Paine's Second Part of The Age of Reason Answered. By James Tytler, Author of the Remarks on Paine's First Part of The Age of Reason, by a Citizen of the World, Published at Belfast in Ireland* (Salem [Mass.]: Printed by Thomas C. Cushing, 1796), 85, 95.

2.0 THE PUBLICATION OF *THE AGE OF REASON*

In a November 1798 sermon warning his fellow Americans against the astonishing increase of irreligion in the United States, Massachusetts Congregationalist minister Jedidiah Morse singled out Paine as one of the chief propagandists of religious infidelity and radical politics that sought the complete subversion of the country. Remarking on that "infamous book, styled the 'Age of Reason,'" Morse derisively noted that it was "written in France" and published there in the "*English* language" with the expressed intent of being disseminated throughout the English-speaking world. By pointing out that the work was published in France but was intended for English-speaking lands, Morse (who was a persistently harsh critic of the French) raised the specter of the exportability of a certain brand of political and religious radicalism that had French Jacobinism as its source (a theme that he would hammer home in a number of sermons). Indeed, Morse went on to relate with some shock that upwards of fifteen thousand copies of *The Age of Reason* had already been shipped to American shores, and with a conspiratorial flavor, he noted that the book was intended to be foisted on the American populace by being sold "at a cheap rate" or even distributed free of charge.[62] While Paine bears much of

[62] Morse's sermons in the late 1790s are rife with conspiracy theories regarding foreign dangers to the United States. His November 1798 sermon was preached as a follow-up to a sermon from May of the same year, in which he warned the country against the international conspiracy of the "Illuminati"—a clandestine group of political and religious radicals that had already caused the terrible upheavals of the French Revolution and were now setting their sights on the United States. Indeed, Morse's May sermon touched off a frenzy regarding the "Illuminati controversy" and his November sermon was offered partly as a series of proofs that the Illuminati were gaining a foothold in the United States. I discuss Morse at greater length in Chapter 3.

the brunt of Morse's pious indignation, Morse implicated American printers for their complicity in spreading irreligion by the "numerous editions of the same work (shame on our country!)" that had been printed in the United States."[63] The foreign threat was compounded by a fifth column of American printers who were helping in the subversion of the United States.

Morse's terse attack on *The Age of Rea*son is revealing in that he is able to disparage the work merely by referencing its origins, its publication and its distribution. Not only does Paine's religious infidelity garner *The Age of Reason* so much animosity, but the details of its publication also form a part of the rhetoric used against the book. In this chapter I trace the publication of the various parts of *The Age of Re*ason to show the range and scope of the controversy over the book. But I also hold that to understand much of the rhetoric that Paine's respondents used against the book, one must also know the history of the publication of the different parts of the book. For the details of the publication and distribution of *The Age of Reason* weigh heavily on the minds of many of Paine's respondents, and they use such details as rhetorical fodder against the work. That the book was published in France was enough for many to conclude that Paine was but the most recent "champion" of a despised and dangerous French infidel tradition that was wedded to a radical Jacobin political agenda. That *The Age of Reason* was widely distributed in a variety of formats and editions was a predominant concern among respondents, revealing their attitudes about reading audiences, and the necessity of a Christian populace in maintaining social stability. The controversy over *The Age of Reason*, and the ire against Paine persisted for so long in part because of the numerous editions and parts of the work that continued to appear. Paine continued to write on religious topics, and until his death he held out

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[63] Jedidiah Morse, *A Sermon, Preached at Charlestown, November 29, 1798, on the Anniversary Thanksgiving in Massachusetts. With an Appendix, Designed to Illustrate Some Parts of the Discourse; Exhibiting Proofs of the Early Existence, Progress, and Deleterious Effects of French Intrigue and Influence in the United States. By Jedidiah Morse, D.D. Pastor of the Church in Charlestown* ([Boston]: Printed by Samuel Hall, 1798), 68-9.

the promise (or threat) of a "third" part of *The Age of Reason* (which was finally cobbled together and published posthumously by his supporters). In the minds of some of his respondents, Paine's persistence not only showed that he was pig-headedly stubborn in his task of attacking revealed religion, but also that he was arrogantly dismissive of any form of criticism or rebuttal. Paine would not cease his attacks on the Bible no matter how many times he had been proven wrong, and therefore responses had to be just as ceaseless. I will explore many of these issues in more depth in later chapters. In this chapter I focus on the publication of *The Age of Reason* and its responses in order to show how the context of the work set the stage for a good deal of the abuse the respondents leveled at Paine and his work.

2.1 THE FIRST PART OF THE AGE OF REASON

Paine's life is the stuff of drama-- his meteoric rise to international fame for his 1776 pamphlet *Common Sense*, his role as morale booster during the American Revolution, his defense of the French Revolution and his conviction for sedition for *Rights of Man*, his stint as a representative to the French National Convention and his near-death imprisonment during the Terror, his fall from grace in publishing *The Age of Reason*, and his death in 1809 as a marginalized figure. Through it all, Paine had a good sense of how to play-up the dramatic aspects of his life for rhetorical purposes, and his lucid and forceful prose served him well. Nowhere is Paine's flair for the dramatic more compelling than in his description of writing *The Age of Reason*. Paine describes the ominous circumstances in revolutionary France as the real impetus behind his desire to finally relate his thoughts on matters theological. Paine, who was

serving as the representative of Calais to the National Convention, relates that throughout 1793 he was increasingly disquieted by what he saw as the French departing from the "just and humane principles of the revolution."[64] He was equally worried that events of 1793 indicated that the "people of France were running headlong into atheism," and he conceived of *The Age of Reason* as refutation of a dangerously misguided brand of revolutionary godlessness. Adding a more dire personal impetus, Paine worried that if he did not soon put his ideas on religion to paper, the guillotine might soon end his literary career. Looking around him, Paine had good reason to fear. In October of 1793 a number of his friends from the Girondist party were executed for sedition. Additionally, a number of other foreigners with whom Paine lived (on the *Rue Faubourg Saint-Denis*) were either arrested or forced to flee the country. Paine surely wondered when the authorities would come looking for him. He relates that many of his "friends were falling as fast as the guillotine could cut their heads off" and that "every day [I] expected the same fate." With death "on every side," Paine knew he could delay no longer and he resolved to write what would become *The Age of Reason*.[65]

Paine must have suspected that his luck had finally run out when, on December 23rd 1793, Bourdon de L'Oise gave a hostile speech in the Convention against foreigners in general, and Paine in particular. The Convention quickly passed a resolution excluding foreigners from the Convention, all but sealing Paine's fate. With any pretense of parliamentary immunity now gone, Paine made a final push to put the finishing touches on his manuscript of *The Age of Reason*. Having dashed-off the final pages on December 27, Paine celebrated that evening with some American friends at the Hotel Philadelphia (formerly White's Hotel), where he spent a night that ended rather abruptly. At three or four in the morning Paine was roused from his bed

[64] Thomas Paine, part two of *The Age of Reason*, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 1: 514.
[65] Thomas Paine to Samuel Adams, January 1, 1803, in ibid., vol 2: 1436.

by a banging at the door, where he found five policemen and two agents of the Committee of General Security waiting to arrest him. Furthermore, Paine's papers were to be examined and "those found suspicious put under seal and brought to the Committee of General Security."[66]

Although faced with arrest and imprisonment, Paine was able to keep his wits about him. Still in his night-shirt, Paine related to his arrestors that he was only temporarily lodged at the Hotel Philadelphia and that they would have to go elsewhere in order to examine his papers. Paine offered to lead them to his papers, but not until he got his French friend Achille Audibert (who was staying at the same hotel) to serve as an interpreter, since Paine spoke little French. While Paine played the compliant arrestee, he was nevertheless contriving to add some more friendly support to the group. Paine agreed to lead his escort across town to the *Hotel Grande Bretagne*, which Paine "declared through his interpreter to be the place where he had his papers."[67] This was a ruse, for Paine really wanted to get to his American friend Joel Barlow, since he felt it was "highly proper that I should have a fellow citizen of America with me during the examination of my papers."[68] Paine led his escort to Barlow's residence in the *Hotel Grand Bretagne*, whereupon Barlow, who had been assisting Paine with the proofing of *The Age of Reason*, admitted to the authorities that the only papers of Paine's that he possessed were the first thirty one pages of Paine's manuscript and one proof sheet of the book (the remaining portion of the manuscript being back at Paine's actual residence at the *Rue Faubourg Saint-Denis*.) The agents, suspicious of Barlow and realizing that Paine was leading them on a merry chase, searched Barlow's apartment, but found only those papers of Paine's that Barlow had admitted to

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[66] From the original arrest report of Paine's in the Archives Nationales, Paris, quoted in Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine*: vol 2: 104.
[67] Ibid., vol 2: 106.
[68] Quoted in Moncure Daniel Conway, "Newly Discovered Writings of Thomas Paine," *The Athenaeum* August 27 1898, 291.

having. While finding nothing more of Paine's papers, the arrest party decided that "Citizen Barlow could be of help to us" and they agreed to let him accompany them all to Paine's residence at *Rue Faubourg Saint-Denis*. [69]

Upon arriving at Paine's quarters, the police and agents of the Committee of General Security searched them from top to bottom. According to the official report, they "gathered in the sitting room all the papers found"[70] and Paine had to account for each and every sheet, which took "the rest of that night and the whole of the next day."[71] While this must have been a grueling ordeal, Paine remained strangely ebullient. During the search, he took some delight in showing the agents some of his works in progress, as well as the newly completed manuscript of *The Age of Reason*. Paine would later recollect that he found it "satisfactory" that the agents "went through the examination of my papers with the strictness they did," and he praised that "they did it not only with civility, but with tokens of respect to my character." One gets the sense that much of Paine's satisfaction lies in an authorial desire to see the reaction that his words had on his readers, regardless of how circumscribed a set of readers it may have been. Paine even recalled with a sense of pride that after perusing the manuscript copy of *The Age of Reason,* the police interpreter opined that "it is an interesting work; it will do much good."[72] Perhaps Paine knew that if his writings could elicit praise from the very authorities who were charged with his arrest, then his writings could still have power over a general reading public.

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[69] From the original arrest report of Paine's in the Archives Nationales, Paris, quoted in Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine*: vol 2: 106.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Joel Barlow to James Cheetham, 11 August 1809, in Charles Burr Todd, *Life and letters of Joel Barlow, LL.D., Poet, Statesman, Philosopher* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1886), 238.
[72] Quoted in Moncure Daniel Conway, "Newly Discovered Writings of Thomas Paine," *The Athenaeum* August 27 1898, 291.

After the agents examined Paine's papers, they decided that there was nothing suspicious in them and declared that "no seal should be placed" on them.[73] This freed Barlow to take the newly re-united manuscript parts of *The Age of Reason*: the first thirty one pages Barlow had been proofing combined with the remaining forty pages Paine had only recently completed. While his manuscript was free from official censure, Paine himself was led off to the Luxembourg prison, where he spent eleven months. Barlow, in possession of Paine's manuscript, acted as Paine's unofficial literary agent by getting the book printed, as well as petitioning (unsuccessfully) for Paine's release from prison. As Barlow would later relate, he had "no doubt" of the beneficial effect that Paine's book would have, since it represented the "progress of good sense over the damnable imposture of Christian mummery…it must be cavilled at a while, but it must prevail."[74]

The events surrounding the publication of the first part of *The Age of Reason* —the gathering political storm clouds, Paine hurriedly finishing the manuscript hours before being arrested, and contriving to get Barlow the full manuscript of the work—are part and parcel of a life filled with near escapes and lucky circumstances. Paine had been talking about publishing his views on religion for a number of years and in the opening sentence of the work he writes that it had "been my intention, for several years past, to publish my thoughts upon religion."[75] While Paine would later be castigated as a blasphemer, an arch-infidel and an atheist for his attacks on the Bible, his earlier writings were peppered with biblical allusions, quotations and

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[73] From the original arrest report of Paine's in the Archives Nationales, Paris. Quoted in Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine*, vol 2: 106.

[74] Joel Barlow to John Fellows, 23 May 1795. Reprinted in *The Connecticut Journal*, 28 August, 1799. Barlow's favorable opinion about *The Age of Reason* and his role in having the work published would dog him the rest of his life. As Barlow biographer James Woodress relates, Barlow's "political enemies managed to get and print it [Barlow's letter to Fellows] to prove that the Arch Traitor [Barlow] was also a blaspheming atheist." James Woodress, *A Yankee's Odyssey: The Life of Joel Barlow* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1958), 218.

[75] Thomas Paine, the first part of *The Age of Reason*, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 1: 463.

motifs. Yet, even as early as 1775, while referring to the Bible in support of his arguments in *Common Sense*, Paine was not wholly enrapt with the scriptures. John Adams recalled that during an evening spent with him in 1776, Paine had "expressed a contempt of the Old Testament, and indeed of the Bible at large which surprised me." Paine admitted to the taken-aback Adams that he had considered "publishing my thoughts on religion" but believed "it will be best to postpone it to the latter part of my life."[76] John Hall, an English immigrant ironworker who was assisting Paine with a model of an iron bridge that Paine had designed, commented on Paine's religious views in 1786. Comparing America to his native England, Hall related that "Skepticism and Credulity are as general here as elsewhere" and that his employer Paine had "*Common Sense enough* to disbelieve most of the Common Systematic Theories of Divinity but does not seem to establish any for himself."[77] While Paine's theological skepticism had deep roots, it was the dangerous direction of revolutionary France that became the impetus for him finally to put in writing his theological ruminations.

Despite the feverish tone with which Paine describes his last-minute completion of the work, he had been working steadily on *The Age of Reason* probably as early as the end of 1792. There is even some indication that Paine may have completed a draft and had it translated into French as early as March 1793, but that it was suppressed (and perhaps even destroyed) by Georges Couthon, an influential member of the Committee of Public Safety.[78] Whatever the

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[76] Quoted in John Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1995), 390.
[77] John Hall, *Letter*, 4 June 1786, in Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine*: vol 2: 462.
[78] In a private letter, Paine's friend and translator François Lanthenas wrote that a draft of *The Age of Reason* "was written by the author in the beginning of the year '93 (old style). I undertook its translation before the revolution against priests, and it was published in French about the same time." Lanthenas then relates that Couthon "seemed offended with me for having translated this work." Lanthenas to Merlin de Thionville, F7 4774 64, Archives Nationales, Paris, quoted in Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*: 390. Richard Gimbel, a retired Air Force Colonel and indefatigable collector of all-things Paine, discovered what he (and other scholars since) has taken to be the only extant copy of this early 1793 edition of *The Age of Reason*, titled *Le Siecle de la Raison, ou le Sens Commun des Droits de l'Homme.* Since this edition lacks both publication date and any publisher information it cannot be

actual sequence of events surrounding Paine's writing of *The Age of Reason*, his arrest did not preclude his continued work on the book's publication, and he kept up his literary activities while petitioning for release from the Luxembourg Prison. Gouverneur Morris, the newly appointed American Minister to France, was aware of Paine's imprisonment and knew of Paine's preparations for his publication of *The Age of Reason*. Morris, who was no fan of Paine but who probably did not want to see him executed, revealed in a letter to Thomas Jefferson that he was "incline[d] to think that if he [Paine] is quiet in prison he may have the good luck to be forgotten, whereas, should he be brought much into notice, the long suspended axe might fall on him."[79] Yet Morris would surely not have been surprised that Paine did not remain quiet in prison. In addition to petitioning Morris and the French for his release, Paine kept up his literary pursuits, and (in Morris's words) "amuses himself with publishing a pamphlet against Jesus Christ."[80] During his first months in prison, Paine kept in touch with Joel Barlow to track the progress of the publication of *The Age of Reason* and to make further additions to the work. In January of 1794 Paine wrote a post-script for *The Age of Reason* in which in which he defended himself against the attacks leveled at him by Bourdon de L'Oise in the National Convention. He also wrote an appendix to the work in which he described his arrest and imprisonment. This appendix and post-script were included in the very first edition of *The Age of Reason* which was printed in Paris (in English) in late January or early February 1794 by the Parisian printer Théophile Barrois. However, this late-addition appendix and post-script had a short shelf-life,

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concluded whether it is such an early edition of *The Age of Reason*. Gimbel thinks that due to some of the bibliographic anomalies indicate that this edition was perhaps a printer's proof. See Richard Gimbel, "Thomas Paine Fights for Freedom in Three Worlds: The New, The Old, The Next," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 70(1961): 428.

[79] Gouverneur Morris to Thomas Jefferson, 21 January 1794, in Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine*: vol 2: 115. Although Paine blamed Robespierre for his arrest, he also partly blamed Morris for the length of his stay in prison, believing that Morris had done nothing to have him liberated.

[80] Gouverneur Morris to Thomas Jefferson, 21 January 1794, in ibid., vol 2: 215.

and they only appear in this premier edition of the work. M.D. Conway has speculated that the content of these late-additions to Paine's work were such that they were seen as an embarrassment to the French government and were therefore suppressed.[81] This may be partly borne out by the extreme rarity of this edition, and it is not clear if this edition was even circulated before being suppressed. Undeterred, Barrois printed a number of different editions of *The Age of Reason,* all without the offending appendix and post-script.[82] Not until the preface to the second part to *The Age of Reason* (published in 1795) were the details of Paine's arrest and imprisonment put into print.

As with many of Paine's previous works, *The Age of Reason* quickly spread and was printed and re-printed throughout the Anglo-American world. The Barrois editions quickly crossed the Channel and made their way to London, as evidenced by a 1794 and a 1795 edition printed by Daniel Isaac Eaton (a notorious radical himself, who had been tried and convicted for seditious libel for publishing Paine's *Rights of Man* in 1793).[83] Francois Lanthenas quickly translated the work and had it published in French based on Paine's new manuscript.[84] It was even translated into German and printed in Germany in 1794 with the title *Untersuchungen über*

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[81] Conway, "Newly Discovered Writings of Thomas Paine," 291-2.

[82] While primacy is given to a 77-page Barrois edition, it is not clear whether the work was printed for domestic consumption (by English-speaking Frenchmen) or if it was intended for British and American markets. Yet a number of Barrois editions were certainly intended for foreign readership. For example, a 117 page Barrois edition that indicates its origin as Paris, also indicates its price as "Half a Crown," a clear indication that it was for the British market. Also, while the 77 page Barrois edition (and the Lanthenas translation) uses only the new French dating system of "L'an 2e. de la Republique francaise une et indivisible," the 117 page edition dates the work as "1794 [Second Year of the French Republic]."

[83] The title pages for Eaton's editions bear the imprint "Paris: Printed by Barrois. London: Sold by D.I. Eaton, at the Cock and Swine." The pagination and the layout of these Eaton editions are not consistent with other Barrois editions, leading to speculation that Eaton himself printed the work in London.

[84] Lanthenas did take some liberties with Paine's manuscript by breaking up the work into 17 chapters with relevant headings, such as "Chapitre 1er. Profession de l'Auteur" and "Ch IV De bases du christianisme." Such Chapter headings only appear in this French edition, *Le Siècle De La Raison; Ou, Recherches Sur La Vrai Théologie Et Sur La Théologie Fabuleuse / Traduit De L'anglais De Thomas Paine,... Par F. Lanthenas, Depute a La Conventioin Nationale.* (Paris: Au Bureau de l'imprimerie, rue du Theatre-Francais, no. 4. Et chez Gueffier jeune, imprimeur-libraire, rue Git-le-coer, [1794]).

Wahre und Fabelhafte Theologie.[85] Perhaps owing to the social, political and legal firestorm that had erupted over the publication of *Rights of Man*, with the work being ostensibly outlawed in England by Paine's *in-absentia* treason conviction, *The Age of Reason* was only printed in England by a couple of printers. Daniel Isaac Eaton was the main British source of the book and he printed perhaps twenty-four different editions of the work.[86] Another London publisher, J. Johnson also printed the work, although most likely in a somewhat smaller print-run.

That British publishers may have worried that Paine's notoriety could have brought governmental and legal sanctions may be further evidenced by the appearance of *The Age of Reason* with alternate titles without Paine being credited as the author. The Gimbel collection at the American Philosophical Society has a 1794 London edition of the work that is titled *Rational and Revealed Religion Calmly and Candidly Investigated and Compared* and is attributed only to "a Layman." [87] However, the text is entirely that of *The Age of Reason*, and the title of this work might be seen as a nice bit of editorial whistling in the graveyard to keep away the specter of charges that the book represented militant and radical Deism. Paine's name appears nowhere in the work, but the printers of this work could not completely efface its real authorship, since page two of the work reveals that it was written by the same author as *Common Sense*.

In addition to this re-packaging of *The Age of Reason* under a different title, there is also a small (16 page) pamphlet titled *A Lecture on the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, as*

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[85] Thomas Paine, *Untersuchungen Über Wahre Und Fabelhafte Theologie. Von Thomas Paine. Aus Dem Englischen Übersetzt Und Mit Anmerkungen Und Zusätzen Des Uebersetzers Begleitet.* (Deutschland: n.p., 1794). A German edition of the second part of *The Age of Reason* was published in Paris in 1796 but with the title *Das Zeitalter der Vernunft. Zweyter Theil. Eine Untersuchung über die wahre und fabelhafte Theologie.*

[86] See Thomas Randolph Adams, *A Check List of the Separately Printed Works of Thomas Paine [unpublished manuscript]* (Philadelphia 1954).

[87] [Thomas Paine] A Layman, *Rational and Revealed Religion Calmly and Candidly Investigated and Compared. By A Layman*, ed. (London: np, 1794).

Deduced from a Contemplation of His Works.[88] This pamphlet, published as a "sermon" in 1795, bears neither author nor publisher, but is essentially a drastically excerpted (and expurgated) version of *The Age of Reason*. Conway suspected that this tract, along with its appended prayer "An Address to the Deity," was probably published "by some English Unitarians" who agreed with much of Paine's theology but who suppressed Paine's name "in deference to his outlawry."[89]

Paine's writings had long had an international reputation, and it is not surprising then that the first part of *The Age of Reason* quickly found its way to the United States. After all, Paine had dedicated the work to his fellow citizens of the United States, and he obviously hoped that it would find fertile ground in his beloved America. Without the same political and legal baggage that may have deterred many British publishers from printing *The Age of Reason*, the work was taken up by a variety of printers throughout the United States. Word of Paine's newest book was brought to the attention of Americans as early as the beginning of May 1794. A brief dispatch from Paris, which was reprinted throughout American newspapers, alerted readers that despite Paine's imprisonment, he "is determined not to remain idle" and that a "production of his has just made its appearance in English" titled *The Age of Reason*. This was quickly followed in newspapers by "Mr. Paine's Creed," a brief excerpt from the first few pages of *The Age of Reason*.[90] In mid-June of 1794, New York printer John Fellows, who shared Paine's Deistic beliefs and later became a close friend, printed the first American edition of *The Age of Reason*. This first Fellows edition, running to 192 pages, sold well enough. Yet Fellows realized that more money could likely be made if he published an edition that was cheaper than the first

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[88] *A Lecture on the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, as Deduced from a Contemplation of His Works.* [London?]: n.p., 1795.
[89] Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine*: vol 2: 214-15.
[90] See *Daily Advertiser*, May 6 1794.

edition, which advertised for "5s. sewed in blue, 6s. common binding, 7s elegantly bound."[91] In September of 1794 Fellows printed a second edition with a view to increase the market for the book. His advertisement in the New York newspaper *The Daily Advertiser* indicated that the high demand for Paine's "ingenious performance, has induced J. Fellows, to publish a second edition" to be sold at a mere two shillings and six pence.[92] A note to the reader appearing in this second edition indicates that Fellows had a grasp of the public demand for *The Age of Reason* and that the "elegant stile of the first American edition, prevented a great part of the community from having access to it."[93] To remedy this financial barrier and "to give the work as general a circulation as it merits, and the importance of the subject demand" are the reasons that Fellows gives for "offering to the public this cheap edition."[94] Over the course of the following year the popularity of the work led Fellows to print at least six editions of *The Age of Reason*.

Although he was the first American publisher of *The Age of Reason*, Fellows was certainly not the only one. A number of printers and publishers throughout the United States satisfied public demand for the work in a variety of different editions. The work was published in Philadelphia, Hartford, Boston, and Worcester (Mass), and was sold throughout the states. In Boston, the work was advertised by the bookseller Thomas & Andrews as being sold for between two and four shillings, while fellow Bostonian Thomas Hall was selling the work (from his own press) for one shilling, six pence or twelve shillings per dozen.[95] Elizabethtown (New Jersey) grocer A.G. Fraunces, in the same advertisement in which he was seeking a supplier for "Butter by the firkin," mentions that he also "has for sale, a few copies of Paine's Age of Reason" as

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[91] *Columbian Gazetteer* July 28 1794.
[92] *Daily Advertiser*, September 17 1794.
[93] Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason. Being an Investigation of True and of Fabulous Theology. By Thomas Paine, Author of Works Entitled "Common Sense, Rights of Man," &c. Second American Edition.* (New York: Printed by G. Forman, for J. Fellows, No. 131, Water-Street., 1794).
[94] Ibid.
[95] *Salem Gazette* Oct. 14, 1794 and *Mercury* Oct. 21, 1794.

well as Gilbert Wakefield's response to Paine for six shillings.[96] Nor was the work limited to the Northern states, for the work was sold at "Carey's printing office" in Charleston South Carolina, which advertised not only a regular edition, but "also a cheap edition of the Age of Reason, in marble paper." Carey's printing office also offered some British and American responses to the work, such as *The Age of Infidelity* (by A Layman), Gilbert Wakefield's *An Examination of the Age of Reason*, and Samuel Stilwell's *A Guide to Reason*.[97]

Although Paine had dedicated *The Age of Reason* to the citizens of the United States, he was not altogether pleased by the quality of the editions that had been printed and sold there, a matter which occupied his mind after he was released from the Luxembourg Prison and was preparing the second part of *The Age of Reason.* In a private letter to Philadelphia printer Benjamin Franklin Bache, Paine criticized that "by frequently reprinting the former part of *The Age of Reason* in the several states, I am made to say what I never wrote." [98] Despite the efforts of printers such as John Fellows to provide cheap editions of the work, Paine further criticized American editions of the work because they had "been sold higher than I expected or intended."[99] Paine was continually pushing for cheap editions of his work, and as I will show in Chapter 4, the cheapness of editions of *The Age of Reason* became a major concern for many of Paine's respondents.

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[96] *New Jersey Journal* November 5 1794.
[97] *Daily Evening Gazette: and Charleston Tea-Table Companion* February 14 1795. The advertisement mistakenly identifies Thomas Stilwell as the author *A Guide to Reason*, it was actually written by Samuel Stilwell.
[98] Thomas Paine to B.F. Bache, 20 Sept 1795. Castle-Bache microfilm collection, American Philosophical Society Library. Paine also mentions this in a footnote of the second part of *The Age of Reason* when he writes that "The former part of the Age of Reason has not been published two years, and there is already an expression in it that is not mine. The expression is: *The book of Luke was carried by a majority of one voice only*. It may be true, but it is not I that have said it. Some person who might know of that circumstance has added it in a note at the bottom of the page of some of the editions." In Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 1: 585.
[99] Thomas Paine to B.F. Bache, 20 Sept 1795. Castle-Bache microfilm collection, American Philosophical Society Library.

2.2 REACTIONS TO THE FIRST PART OF *THE AGE OF REASON*

While not sparking the same degree or intensity of controversy as *Rights of Man*, which saw Paine burned in effigy throughout the English countryside and garnered him a conviction for sedition, *The Age of Reason* did provoke its fair share of passionate response. The *Sheffield Iris* reported that on a coach-ride between Greenwich and London, a fistfight broke out between a gentleman's servant and a recruiting sergeant, as to whether Paine was a Deist or an outright atheist.[100] The Bishop of London, Beilby Porteus, in his C*harge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of London* (1794) fairly shook with righteous anger as he described the "bold assertions, the intrepid blasphemies, and coarse buffoonery" of Paine's work, which had been "dispersed with incredible zeal and diligence, not only through the metropolis, but through the remotest districts of the kingdom." Most shocking for Porteus, however, was that *The Age of Reason* was being hungrily received by the lower orders—the "mechanic, the manufacturer, the farmer, the servant, the labourer"—who had up until then "largely escaped the contagion of infidelity."[101] Paine's book also inspired poetic reply, as evidenced by a short poem entitled "On Reading Thomas Paine's Age of Reason" in the literary *Gentleman's Magazine:*

> Tom Paine's deistic trash and treason
> His impudence proclaims Right Reason,
> Or Reason's Age; but Tom should know
> He is *Right Reason's* mad-brained foe;
> And that, compar'd with Sacred Writ,
> His *inch* of philosophic wit
> Is but a taper to the sun;
> Right Reason's ridicule and fun.[102]

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[100] *Sheffield Iris*, October 3, 1794, in Claeys, *Thomas Paine : Social and Political Thought*.
[101] Beilby Porteus, *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of London, at the Visitation of that Diocese in the Year MDCCXCIV. By Beilby Lord Bishop of London.* (London: Printed for F. and C. Rivington, 1794), 22-24.
[102] "On Reading Thomas Paine's Age of Reason," *Gentleman's Magazine* 65:1, no. July (1795): 598.

A number of literary magazines in Britain reviewed *The Age of Reason* without much acclaim. A reviewer in the *Analytical Review* admits that Paine's "power of commanding public attention on important subjects" is beyond any doubt, such that not even "contemptuous silence, or coercive prohibition" would be able to keep the work from being read.[103] However, the *Analytical Review* judges that Paine "appears ill qualified to do justice to the subject of revelation from his want of erudition."[104] Similar sentiments are expressed in the *Monthly Review*, which admits that although *The Age of Reason* is neither deep nor erudite, Paine has "a mind capable of conceiving objections with force." While the *Analytical Review* seems generally alarmed by Paine's work, the *Monthly Review* shows much less concern, since Paine's attacks on Christianity are "founded in ignorance," and will therefore be easily refuted and "generally reprobated." The liberal-minded reviewer in the *Monthly Review* even finds some beneficial silver lining to *The Age of Reason*. Paine's work, like many other Deist attacks on Christianity, is as "friction is to the diamond" of Christianity; "it proves its hardness, adds to its luster, and excites new admiration." *The Age of Reason* may also have the added beneficial result in that it could lead to a "farther examination of the sacred writings."[105]

Not surprisingly, one of the most hostile reviews appeared in the Tory literary review the *British Critic*. Calling *The Age of Reason* a "paltry pamphlet" that was a "mere jest against religion," the reviewer notes that it could really only appeal to the vulgar, the ignorant and the weak of mind. Worrying that his own review would only serve to add to the notoriety of *The Age of Reason*, the reviewer considers contemptuous silence to be what Paine really deserves. Despite his misgivings, the reviewer carries on with the review, but not before also having some

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[103] *Analytical Review* 19(1794): 159.
[104] Ibid., 165.
[105] *Monthly Review* 14(1794): 393-97.

sharp words for the replies to Paine that had already begun to appear. Responses to *The Age of Reason* are basically "useless" because the ignorant masses (who are the only ones that Paine could possibly convince) will not read them. Moreover, the replies are themselves "pernicious" because they fan the flames of the controversy and thereby increase the popularity of *The Age of Reason.*[106]

Despite the *British Critic*'s charge of the perniciousness of responding to Paine, British presses turned out a number of replies, refutation and rebuttals to *The Age of Reason.* In Britain, at least twenty two works were written in 1794 and 1795 specifically against the first part of *The Age of Reason*. A number of British authors continued to publish tracts specifically against the first part of *The Age of Reason* throughout the remainder of the 1790s, even after the second part of the work had been published. Two of the better know and widely distributed responses to the work were written by Joseph Priestley (*Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever; in Answer to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason,* 1794) and Gilbert Wakefield (*An Examination of the Age of Reason,* 1794), both of which appeared in numerous editions on both sides of the Atlantic. There is some irony in that Priestley's and Wakefield's ideas on Christianity were far from orthodox, a point that was not lost on a number of critics who felt that their rebuttals of Paine were of more service to the infidel cause than to Christianity or revealed religion. The Rev. Thomas Meek, for example, characterized Wakefield's reply to Paine as "no solid, conclusive answer," and at times "he joins with his antagonist in a laugh against the word of God."[107] Likewise, the Church of Ireland cleric Daniel M'Neille railed against Wakefield's *Examination* as "*hackneyed* in the

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[106] *British Critic* 4(1794): 438.
[107] Thomas Meek, *Sophistry Detected, or, a Refutation of T. Paine's Age of Reason. By the Rev. Tho. Meek* (Newcastle [England]: Printed by M. Angus, 1795), 7.

tenets of Priestley, and contains sentiments as derogatory to Christianity, and as abhorrent from Scripture, as any thing Paine or any other Deist has written."[108]

While not as well know, a number of other books were published in Britain responding to *The Age of Reason*. Some, like the anonymous *Deism Disarmed; or a Short Answer to Paine's Age of Reason* used Paine's work as the pretext for mounting a more general defense of Christianity. Others, like the pseudonymous Protestant Lay-Dissenter's *Remarks on a Pamphlet Entitled The "Age of Reason,"* refuted some of Paine's major points, while also implicating fellow-Christians for having failed to adequately educate the masses in Christian doctrine, leaving them unprepared to ward-off Painite infidelity.[109] Others still, like James Tytler, engaged in a point-by-point, line-by-line refutation of Paine with the ultimate purpose of painting Paine as the ultimate hypocritically irrational buffoon.[110]

Like the British reply to the work, the American reply to *The Age of Reason* was not long in coming. Since the United States still lacked established literary journals comparable to those that existed in Britain, American newspapers served as the medium not only for reviews of *The Age of Reason*, but also as venues to discuss the work, with letters and articles, often in the same newspaper, both damning and praising the work. A reviewer in the Boston weekly *The Mercury* betrays a sense of disappointment in Paine, who, had he undertaken his book in a more serious and candid state of mind, could have treated his subject matter in a much better way. Emblematic of the ambivalence of many of the American reactions to *The Age of Reason*, this

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[108] Daniel M'Neille, *Dogmatism Exposed, and Sophistry Detected: or, a Confutation of Paine's "Age of Reason." To Which is Prefixed, a Brief Account of the Replies Already Published. By Daniel M'Neille, A.M.* (London: Printed for T. Chapman, 1794), 9.

[109] Protestant Lay-Dissenter, *Remarks on a Pamphlet Entitled the "Age of Reason," Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology, by Thomas Paine. By a Protestant Lay-Dissenter* (Dublin: Printed by P. Byrne, No. 108, Grafton-Street, 1795).

[110] James Tytler, *Paine's Age of Reason, With Remarks, Containing a Vindication of the Doctrines of Christianity from the Aspersions of that Author. By a Citizen of the World* (Belfast 1794).

reviewer finds it "difficult to believe, that the same person, who wrote *Common Sense*, *The Rights of Man*, & c. wrote the *Age of Reason*" and calls the book a "strange mixture of sense and nonsense, learning and ignorance...satire and impious ridicule."[111] Both the *Connecticut Courant* and the *Columbian Mirror* ran a series of letters over a number of issues debating the merits of *The Age of Reason,* and the work was reviewed in numerous other American newspapers, magazines and journals.[112] The merits of *The Age of Reason* were actually extolled in a July edition of the New York Federalist newspaper the *American Minerva*, which indicated that *The Age of Reason* "displays in full force all the qualities that characterize Mr. Paine's other writings, and proves that his mind is neither impaired nor embarrassed by the events passing around him, or by what he himself may have suffered." The newspaper then goes on to reprint "Mr. Paine's Creed" as a service to those readers who may not have the "opportunity of seeing the work itself." [113] In the following month, however, one vocal reader of the *American Minerva,* who had the opportunity of reading *The Age of Reason*, was anything but taken with the sagacity of Paine's mind, quipping that that even though Paine is "not an old man…his faculties are evidently impaired, or he could never have called his book the 'Age of Reason'." Paine's book, this incensed reviewer-correspondent opines, would be better titled the "Age of Insanity," but luckily Americans "have too much good sense to be deceived" by Paine's "principles of anarchy, and infidelity." [114]

While lively debates filled the pages of American periodicals over the merits of *The Age of Reason*, American authors did respond in longer and more sustained formats to counteract

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[111] "Observations on Several Paragraphs in Mr. Paine's 'Age of Reason'," *Mercury* 5:21, no. March 13 (1795); ibid., 5:22.
[112] *Connecticut Courant*, January 19, February 2, February 9 1795. The articles from the *Columbian Mirror* (1794) are reprinted in John Fowler, *The Truth of the Bible Fairly Put to the Test, by Confronting the Evidences of its Own Facts* (Alexandria [D.C.]: Printed for the Author, by Price and Gird, 1797).
[113] *American Minerva* July 2, 1794.
[114] "For the Minerva," *American Minerva* 1:204, no. August 4 (1794): 3.

Paine's Deism. While the American pamphlet and book response to *The Age of Reason* was not quite as large as it was in Britain, the rhetoric was just as heated and alarmist. In the wake of the publication of the first part of *The Age of Reason*, twelve responses sprang from American presses to counter Paine's attack on the Bible, Christianity and revealed religion. This was supplemented by the importation or re-printing of a number of British replies to *The Age of Reason*, such as Gilbert Wakefield's *Examination*, and the pseudonymous Layman's *Age of Infidelity*. Along with these re-printed British responses, Americans found their own voices in responding to Paine in various formats. Within the year, American presses in New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Baltimore printed Samuel Stilwell's *A Guide to Reason* (1794), Elhanan Winchester's *Ten Letters Addressed to Mr. Paine* (1794), and the anonymous *Folly of Reason* (1794). Even before publishing a rambling two-volume reply to Paine in 1795, New Jersey clergyman Uzal Ogden lambasted Paine in a long essay that doubled as an advertisement seeking to gain subscribers to underwrite the publication of his refutation. Ogden impressed the dire necessity for such a work to refute Paine in his "rebellion against God."[115]

As with the British response to *The Age of Reason*, the American responses were generally critical of Paine, his arguments, and his motivations for writing the work. Even the most charitable respondents, while conceding certain points to Paine, usually did so in order to attack him where they saw him as going beyond the pale of delicacy or of calm and reasoned discourse. On both sides of the Atlantic, Paine's defenders (at least publicly and in print) were few, perhaps because those who agreed with Paine saw little need for a fully blown treatise supporting Paine's work, or perhaps because they expected that Paine was more than capable of

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[115] See Uzal Ogden, "Proposal for Printing by Subscription, the DEIST UNMASKED," *New Jersey Journal*, October 29 1794. Ogden's two volume work appeared in 1795 with the title *Antidote to Deism. The Deist Unmasked ; or an Ample Refutation of All the Objections of Thomas Paine, against the Christian Religion; as Contained in a Pamphlet, Intitled, the Age of Reason* (Newark: Printed by John Woods, 1795).

mounting his own defense. This is not to say that *The Age of Reason* went completely unsupported in print, although those who did support Paine's religious views often did so as responses to works that had sought to refute Paine. For example, Elihu Palmer, who stands as the main promoter of American Deism in the 1790s by his publishing efforts and through his indefatigable attempts to organize and maintain Deistic societies, remained one of the most ardent supporters of Paine.[116] In 1794 Palmer anonymously published *The Examiners Examined: Being a Defence of the Age of Reason* which not only outlined his optimistic view of a Deistic future that would rise on the rubble of Christianity, but which also critiqued a number of responses to *The Age of Reason*.[117] Palmer's defense of Paine generated its own replies, furthering the controversy over *The Age of Reason* to a secondary-tier of responses. With the alliterative, albeit convoluted title *An Examination of the Examiners Examined,* the recent English immigrant William Wyche found Palmer's defense of Paine to be severely lacking in both content and style.[118] Wyche characterizes Palmer's work as containing "nothing of any great importance" and should therefore be seen as a "whimsical desire of following the example

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[116] For more on Palmer, see: Roderick S. French, "Elihu Palmer, Radical Deist, Radical Republican: A Reconsideration of American Freethought," in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, ed. Roseann Runte (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979); Kerry S. Walters, *Rational Infidels: The American Deists.* (Durango, Colo.: Longwood Academic, 1992); Nathalie Caron, "Introduction to the Life and Work of a Militant American Deist: Elihu Palmer (1764-1806)," *Annales du Monde Anglophone [France]* 1(1999).

[117] Palmer had harsh words for British responders such as Gilbert Wakefield (who Palmer calls "a vain, conceited, boasting pedant; not attending so much to argument as to pomposity,") and the author of the *Age of Infidelity* ("prominent absurdities" offered by a "pious fraud."). Palmer also offered rebuttals to American responses such as Samuel Stilwell's *A Guide to Reason,* the anonymous *The Folly of Reason* (a "mere catch-penny performance"), an advertisement/prospectus for Uzal Ogden's proposed book *An Antidote to Deism* (the "most violent invective that has yet been published,") and two periodical reviews appearing in the *American Minerva* (July 2, 1794, the author of which Palmer labels the "New York Reviewer") and the *Gazette of the United States* (September 15, 1794), which Palmer calls a "jargon of scandal, falsehood and abuse." Elihu Palmer, *The Examiners Examined: Being a Defence of The Age of Reason* (New York: Printed for the Author; and Sold by L. Wayland and J. Fellows, 1794), 49, 51, 22, 81, 79.

[118] On the title page of his work, Wyche specifically notes that he is a "Citizen of the United States of America." In an article about Wyche, legal scholar Robert Emery calls Wyche a "better law writer than religious controversialist." Emery notes that it is not clear exactly when Wyche immigrated from England to the United States, but that he became an American citizen in April of 1794. Wyche most likely died in a yellow-fever epidemic in early 1796 since Emery notes that he completely disappears from the records after 1795. Robert Emery, "William Wyche," *Law Library Journal*, no. 93:3 (2001): 469.

of Thomas Paine."[119] Furthermore, Wyche criticizes Palmer for misunderstanding his opponents, for quibbling over superficial issues while leaving "the most material parts unanswered," and advises that Palmer should become "a little more conversant in spelling and composing his mother tongue" before he engages in polemical controversy. If nothing else, Palmer's book should serve as a negative example to younger writers as a "specimen of faults which they ought to avoid." [120] Along with Wyche's sardonic attack on Palmer, Rhode Island Congregationalist minister William Patten included an appendix on Palmer in his refutation of Paine in *Christianity the True Theology, and Only Perfect Moral System.* Patten is a bit more charitable than Wyche, even giving Palmer credit for having pointed out a number of errors that have plagued other responses to *The Age of Reason*. But as a real and substantive defense of Paine, Patten argues that Palmer has done little more than parrot the specious arguments of Paine and has shown the "indelicacy of his own heart." [121]

The militant Virginia Deist John Fowler was another of Paine's supporters who rallied to the defense of *The Age of Reason*. Having read some of the scathing periodical reviews of the first part of *The Age of Reason* in 1794, Fowler was induced by such "torrent of abuse from each direction" to take up his pen and "to send forth through the same channel a short reply in favour of an absent author and common benefactor."[122] In a series of letters that appeared in the Virginia newspaper the *Columbian Mirror,* Fowler decried the "illiberal, the vulgar, and violent exertions that have been made to suppress and stifle every attempt to investigate what is called

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[119] William Wyche, *An Examination of The Examiners Examined, Being a Defence of Christianity. Opposed to the Age of Reason, By William Wyche, Author of Several Works, and Citizen of the United-States of America* (New York: Printed by Wayland and Davis, and sold by L. Wayland, no. 151, Water-Street, 1795), 22.
[120] Ibid., 7, 23.
[121] William Patten, *Christianity the True Theology, and Only Perfect Moral System; in Answer to "The Age of Reason:" With an Appendix, in Answer to "The Examiners Examined:" by William Patten, A.M. Minister of the Second Congregational Church in Newport* (Warren, RI: Printed by Nathaniel Phillips, 1795), 127, 60.
[122] Fowler, *The Truth of the Bible Fairly Put to the Test,* 17.

revealed religion" and he lauded Paine for his disinterested inquiry, his love of human liberty, and his desire to promote "more just and endearing ideas of the Deity"[123] After the second part of *The Age of Reason* was published Fowler again defended Paine against his detractors by writing two full-length treatises, *The Truth of the Bible Fairly Put to the Test* (1797) and *Strictures Upon Strictures* (1798). In these two works, Fowler pushed for free and rational inquiry into religion (which the clergy have consistently sought to hamper), argued that *The Age of Reason* is irrefutable, and defended Paine and his reputation from those who had tried to besmirch it. With a firm anticlerical outlook, Fowler expressed little surprise at the vehemence to *The Age of Reason* by those, such as Richard Watson, the Rev. James Muir, the Rev. Bryan Fairfax, and all others "who pretend to be on the Lord's side" because "it is their interest to do so." Fowler characterized the harsh reaction to *The Age of Reason* as yet another bit of "striking evidence of its [Christianity's] weakness."[124]

The first part of *The Age of Reason* was also defended by some British Deists. Thomas Dutton's *A Vindication of The Age of Reason* (1795) defended the work against the hostile treatments written by Joseph Priestley and Gilbert Wakefield. Dutton, a professed Deist, acknowledged that a large number of hostile responses to *The Age of Reason* had appeared, yet he strategically singled out Priestley and Wakefield's "Unitarian publications," because Unitarians were generally more intellectually honest and their two books were the "most respectable publications that have appeared in our language on this interesting subject."[125] Dutton therefore saw it as more of a challenge to take on Priestley and Wakefield than it would

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[123] Ibid., 27, 22. I have not been able to get a hold of any copies of the *Columbian Mirror* for 1794, but Fowler reprints his letters, as well as the responses to them in this 1797 work, so page citations are for this work.
[124] Ibid., 150, 16.
[125] Thomas Dutton, *A Vindication of The Age of Reason, by Thomas Paine: Being an Answer to the Strictures of Mr. Gilbert Wakefield and Dr. Priestley, on this Celebrated Performance* (London: Printed for Griffiths and Co., 1795), 8.

have been to refute the biased and dogmatic works penned by the "zealous and avowed partisans of the Established Church."[126] Nevertheless, Dutton was unimpressed with Priestley and Wakefield, and he argued that not only did they fail to adequately defend Christianity from Paine's attacks, but that showed that Christianity was a poor and inherently indefensible system.

2.3 THE AGE OF REASON, PART THE SECOND

Paine fully intended for *The Age of Reason* to be controversial and to inspire discussion, leading, he hoped, to a general repudiation of the superstitions of revealed religion. As he would later reveal in a letter to fellow-Deist Elihu Palmer, Paine criticized those who had written about religion in a "hinting and intimating manner," since such a lack of stridency was sufficient only in producing "skepticism, but not conviction." For Paine, what was wanted was a certain strategic forcefulness, and it was "necessary to be bold." Some readers "can be reasoned into sense, and others must be shocked into it"[127] Paine probably did not completely realize the controversy that had arisen over the publication of the first part of *The Age of Reason*, owing to the fact that he spent most of 1794 in the Luxembourg Prison. Yet it is clear that not long after he finishing writing the first part of *The Age of Reason*, he was already planning to write a sequel. During the first few months in jail, Paine was able to keep up a modicum of his literary pursuits. Yet as 1794 wore on, things became more dire not only for Paine, but for all of the prisoners in the Luxembourg. When Paine was initially consigned to the Luxembourg, the prison was run by Monsieur Benoit, who was generally regarded by the prisoners as a somewhat

[126]Ibid., 52.
[127] Paine to Elihu Palmer, February 21, 1802, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 2: 1426.

genial fellow who gave the prisoners a fair amount of leeway. This changed in June when the Committee for Public Safety removed Benoit and installed Monsieur Gayard who "instituted a reign of terror in the prison."[128] On a more personal level, Paine's health deteriorated. He developed a near-fatal abscess in his side, and a number of times he believed that his release from the Luxembourg would only come from a feverish death. Despite the threat of imminent demise, Paine remained coherent and continued to discuss matters political and theological with his prison-mates, expressing a desire to continue the work he had begun in *The Age of Reason*. One of Paine's fellow prisoners was Mr. Bond, an English surgeon who had apparently been caught in one of the round-ups of foreigners in Paris. In a testimony to Paine's long-time friend and biographer Thomas "Clio" Rickman, Bond (who disliked Paine's political and religious views) related the time he spent as a fellow prisoner with Paine: "Mr. Paine, while hourly expecting to die, read to me parts of his 'Age of Reason;' and every night when I left him to be separately locked up, and expected not to see him alive in the morning, he always expressed his firm belief in the principles of that book, and begged I would tell the world such were his dying opinions. He often said that if he lived he should prosecute further that work, and print it."[129] Paine would get the chance, but not before suffering greatly in the Luxembourg.

News of Paine's imprisonment was greeted with some satisfaction in England, and his most bellicose enemies delighted at the prospect that the same guillotine that had robbed the French king of his head might soon be trained on the neck of the strident critic of monarchy. Rumors even began to circulate that Paine had actually been executed, bolstered by an anonymously published pamphlet that went so far as to provide Paine's final words before the

[128] Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine*: vol 2: 134.
[129] Thomas Clio Rickman, *The Life of Thomas Paine* (London: T.C. Rickman, 1819), 194.

guillotine separated his head from his body.[130] Such a scenario was not altogether fanciful, since throughout the first half of 1794 the Reign of Terror held Paris in its grip, with political purges and mass executions becoming an almost daily routine. Paine's execution had even been ordered, but was never carried out.[131]

Although the guillotine never claimed him, Paine remained in ill health and he nearly died in the Luxembourg. His spirits were somewhat buoyed by the news that Robespierre and the other architects of the Terror had been executed at the end of July 1794. Paine suspected that Robespierre, who Paine saw as his "inveterate enemy," was behind his arrest and continued imprisonment.[132] This suspicion was later confirmed (at least in Paine's eyes) by a note in which Robespierre wrote: "Demand that Thomas Paine be decreed of accusation, for the interest of America, as well as of France."[133] Although Paine hoped that the downfall of Robespierre would lead to his immediate release from the Luxembourg, he remained in prison for another

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[130] *The Last Dying Words of Tom Paine, Executed at the Gullotine in France on the 1st of Sept. 1794, With a Description of the Genuine Water for Converting the Jacobines. Verses on the Death of Paine, and a Dialogue Between a Jacobine and the Devil* (London[1795]). This would not be the first nor the last time that Paine's death was "greatly exaggerated." During the uproar over *Rights of Man* Paine's death was proclaimed in broadsides like the 1792(?) *The Last Dying Speech and Confession, Birth, Parentage, and Education, Life, Character, and Behaviour of That Notorious Traitor Tom Paine, Who Was Executed at Tottenham High Cross, on Monday the 17th of December, 1792…:* ([London?], n.d.). Even after Paine's release from the Luxembourg, his death was reported in American newspapers, which related that "From a London Paper of November the 6th, we understand the much celebrated THOMAS PAINE is dead. He died at the house of the American minister in Paris, of an abscess in his right side." *American Mercury*, January 18 1796.

[131] Paine gave a variety of reasons why he was not guillotined along with so many other of his prison-mates. In the second part of *The Age of Reason* he ascribed it to his illness, and that his jailors either believed he was going to die anyways, or that they did not want to execute such a weak and feverish prisoner. In later writings, Paine related that he was spared the guillotine by matter of a lucky circumstance, which he attributed to the working of a divine providence. As Paine related in an 1802 public letter "To the Citizens of the United States," the practice of the Luxembourg jailors was to put a chalk-mark on the door of those who were to be executed that night. Because of Paine's illness, he had special permission to leave his cell door open during the day to get a cooling cross-breeze to ease his fever. When the jailors came by to put the fatal mark on Paine's door, it was standing open against the wall and the mark was put on the "inside" part of the door. That evening, Paine's cell-door was closed, and as the jailors came to take all of those with the fatal chalk-mark, the "outside" of Paine's door was free of the mark, and in Paine's words, "the destroying angel passed by it." In Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 2: 921.

[132] Thomas Paine to The French National Convention, 7 August 1794, in ibid., vol 2:1339.

[133] Paine relates this in the preface to the second part of *The Age of Reason*. M.D. Conway, however, argues forcefully that the American Minister in France, Gouverneur Morris, was a behind-the-scenes manipulator and is largely to blame for the length of Paine's imprisonment.

three months. By mid-August, Gouverneur Morris was replaced as the American minister in France, and Paine hoped that the new minister, James Monroe, would act on his behalf where Morris had not. Monroe, in his newly appointed post, did not immediately act to secure Paine's release, arguing that he had no direct instructions from the President to do so. Yet after a series of letters from Paine (ranging from pleading to strident), Monroe finally acted on his own initiative and secured Paine's release on November 4, 1794. Paine, still suffering from ill health, stayed in the Parisian house of the Monroe family for well over a year.

With his release from prison and his health improving (not without some setbacks and relapses), Paine was able to again take up his pen, and his desire to follow-up *The Age of Reason* still burned within him. That Paine did not have access to a Bible while he was writing the first part of *The Age of Reason*, relying on his memory alone for biblical quotes and stories, was no doubt a major contributing factor to his desire to do a more in-depth critique of the inadequacies and contradictions of the Old and New Testaments. Indeed, Paine's admitted lack of a Bible while writing the first part of *The Age of Reason* raised not only the incredulous eyebrows of a few of his adversaries, but raised a good bit of ire as well. A pseudonymous British respondent known only as a "Churchman," for example, quipped that because he "keeps no Bible," Paine is able to discern "flaws in the Scriptures which exist only in his own distempered brain."[134] Another author even wittily tells his readers that Paine scarcely needed to admit to not having a Bible, since his overt blunders, misrepresentations and fabrications on "almost every page of his work gives us this information."[135]

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[134] Churchman, *Christianity the Only True Theology; or, an Answer to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason. By a Churchman* (London: Printed, by Vaughan Griffiths, for F. and C. Rivington; and J. Matthews, 1794), 40.
[135] [Helton , John], *The Insufficiency of the Light of Nature: Exemplified in the Vices and Depravity of the Heathen World. Including Some Strictures on Paine's "Age of Reason."* (London: Printed for John and Arthur Arch, and John Wright, 1797), 60.

During his stay in the Monroe house, Paine worked on the second part of *The Age of Reason* throughout the first half of 1795.[136] In a July 1795 letter to his Philadelphia printer Benjamin Franklin Bache (and grandson of Paine's old friend Benjamin Franklin), Paine indicated that he was "preparing the second part of the Age of Reason," but he as yet remained undecided "whether I shall print it here (in France) or wait till my return to America."[137] Later that month the abscess in his side caused his health to take a temporary turn for the worse, putting off his hoped-for speedy return to the United States. Fearing once again that his theological speculations would be cut short by his death, Paine was obliged to "hasten the work I had then in hand, the second part of the 'Age of Reason'."[138] By September of 1795 he had finished the work and sent it to a printer in Paris who printed thousands of copies. Paine immediately sent twelve thousand copies of the work to Bache in Philadelphia, and he advised that he would soon send ten thousand more copies "intended as a supply for the several States." Paine, ever mindful of his reading audience, and with a mind to having his work reach as large an audience as possible, also instructed Bache that the work was "not to be sold higher than one third of a dollar." [139]

With fifteen crates of the work safely on their way to America by the end of September (they did not actually arrive until April of 1796), Paine was shocked to learn that his work had, without his knowledge, been printed in London in October 1795. It turns out that Paine's printer in Paris (an "Englishman") turned out to be more of an opportunist than Paine had bargained for. With Paine's manuscript of the second part of *The Age of Reason* in hand, this printer made a

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[136] Paine also wrote and published *Dissertations Upon First Principles of Government* in 1795.
[137] Thomas Paine to B.F. Bache, 13 July 1795. Castle-Bache microfilm collection, American Philosophical Society Library.
[138] Thomas Paine, *Letter to George Washington* (1796). Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 2:705.
[139] Thomas Paine to B.F. Bache, 20 September 1795. Castle-Bache microfilm collection, American Philosophical Society Library.

"manuscript copy of the work while he was printing it" and had it sent to London, where it was quickly printed without Paine's authorization, by H.D. Symonds.[140] This Symonds edition, which indicates that it was based on "The Author's Manuscript," went into several editions.[141] When Paine got wind of this pirated edition, he was furious, indicating that he had "never sent any manuscript to any person" and called it a "forgery" which "no doubt…is full of errors." Paine further railed against this publisher for surreptitiously claiming "a pretence of Copy Right, which he has no title to." [142]

Paine had good cause for anger. Sales of the first part of *The Age of Reason* had brought him little, if any, financial remuneration. Due to his eleven-month incarceration, he was unable to have much oversight of the printings of the work in Britain or America, which, as already noted, led him to later decry the corruptions that had crept into his text. Paine hoped that with the publication of the second part of *The Age of Reason* he might be able to reap some of the much-needed benefits from sales of the work, as well as having some control over the printing. In his letter to Bache, Paine stressed that the work should be entered "at the proper office, conformably to the Act of Congress, as my property, for I intend to keep the right of publication in my own hands."[143] Paine cited his duplicitous Parisian printer as a prime example of his own inattention to his own financial interests, and he bemoaned that he had "sustained so much loss, by disinterestedness and inattention to money matters…that I am obliged to look closer to my

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[140] Thomas Paine to Colonel John Fellows, 20 January 1797, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 2: 1384.
[141] Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason. Part the Second. Being an Investigation of True and of Fabulous Theology. By Thomas Paine, Author of the Works entitled, Common Sense--Rights of Man, Part the First and Second--And Dissertations on First Principles of Government. From the Author's Manuscript* (London: Printed for H.D. Symonds, No. 20, Paternoster Row, 1795).
[142] Thomas Paine to Daniel Isaacs Eaton, 4 December 1795, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 2:1383.
[143] Thomas Paine to B.F. Bache, 20 September 1795. Castle-Bache microfilm collection, American Philosophical Society Library.

affairs than I have done."[144] In an attempt to regain control of the second part of *The Age of Reason*, Paine sent a printed copy of the work (no doubt the edition printed by his Paris printer) to his friend and fellow-radical Daniel Isaac Eaton, authorizing him to "make a cheap edition of it."[145] Eaton, who had seen brisk sales of the first part of *The Age of Reason*, was only too eager to publish the sequel. Following Paine's wishes, Eaton published a cheap edition priced at "One Shilling and Sixpence" in January of 1796. As a preface to this edition, Eaton re-printed Paine's letter to him, indicating this edition was the only British edition authorized by Paine.[146] Although Eaton promoted his edition as the only authorized British edition, other English printers published the work. The London printer J. Johnson, who had printed part one of *The Age of Reason*, published an edition of the second part. H.D. Symonds issued a second edition of his pirated version, which was subsequently reprinted in New York by Mott & Lyon.[147] While the second part of *The Age of Reason* initially appeared as a stand-alone work, publishers were quick to the market with editions that combined both parts one and two. Daniel Isaac Eaton for example re-printed part one to go as a combined set with part two, even adding page-headers that indicated to the reader either "Part I" or "Part II." For "One Shilling," one could purchase a 120 page edition that contained, in one volume, both parts.

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[144] Thomas Paine to Colonel John Fellows, January 20, 1797, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 2:1384.
[145] Thomas Paine to Daniel Isaacs Eaton, December 4, 1795, in ibid., vol 2:1383.
[146] Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason. Part the Second. Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology. By Thomas Paine, Author of the Works intituled, Common Sense--Rights of Man, Part the First and Second--And Dissertations on First Principles of Government.* (London: Printed for and sold by Daniel Isaac Eaton, Printer and Bookseller to the Supreme Majesty of the People, at the Cock and Swine, No. 74, Newgate-Street., 1796).
[147] Symonds' London edition and the Mott & Lyon New York edition both have an editorial preface which justify its publication, since "All rational men allow Truth to be discovered by free discussion, to follow unrestrained research. The subject which The Age of Reason holds to our view, is confessedly of the first importance" and it is the duty of publishers as "lovers and abettors of Truth (among whom the Publisher of these sheets is desirous to be classed) to hold up both sides of the question, that Reason may determine which is right." Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason. Being an Investigation of True and of Fabulous Theology. Part the Second.* (New York: Reprinted by Mott & Lyon, for Fellows & Adam and J. Reid, 1796).

2.4 REACTIONS TO THE SECOND PART OF *THE AGE OF REASON*

By the time he was writing the second part of *The Age of Reason,* Paine had become well aware of the controversy that surrounded the publication of the first part of *The Age of Reason* and the number of responses it had elicited in both Britain and America. While it is not entirely clear which (if any) of responses to the first part Paine had read, it is certain that he had at least an idea of what others were arguing against him.[148] Paine welcomed these responses, although, with a sense of smug bemusement, he thought they not only missed the point, but they actually helped make his case for him. In one of the rare instances where he mentions his critics at all, Paine gladly accepts that his opponents "may write against the work, and against me as much as they please; they do me more service than they intend, and I can have no objection that they write on." Yet Paine's bemusement quickly turned to an insulting pedantry and he accused his opponents of completely missing the point of *The Age of Reason*, since they "are so little masters of the subject, as to confound a dispute about authenticity with a dispute about doctrines." Paine offers to "put them right, that if they should be disposed to write any more, they may know how to begin."[149]

Since, in Paine's view, his critics had completely missed the point of *The Age of Reason*, he goes on to make it clear that not only did their responses make no impression on him, but that his second part of *The Age of Reason* was in no way a reply to any of them. He writes that his

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[148] I have been unsuccessful so far in finding many hints in Paine's other writings as to which responses to the first part of *The Age of Reason* he may have read, if indeed he had read any. The only oblique mention I could find comes in an 1804 article that Paine wrote for Elihu Palmer's Deistic newspaper *The Prospect* (March 3, 1804), in which he refers to Uzal Ogden's 1795 *Antidote to Deism.* Yet Paine only mentions the title of the work, and does not indicate whether he had actually read it. Paine certainly read some of the responses to the second part of *The Age of Reason*, such as those written by Gilbert Wakefield, David Levi, and Richard Watson. For Paine's mention of Ogden's work, see Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 2:793.

[149] Thomas Paine, second part of *The Age of Reason*, in ibid., vol 1:517.

opponents "will find...by this Second Part, without its being written as an answer to them, that they must return to their work, and spin their cobweb over again."[150] Many would take Paine's bait, and the response to the second part of *The Age of Reason* was as vigorous as it was to the first part. Ten British authors penned responses directly aimed at the second part of *The Age of Reason*, while at least ten more took Paine's religious writings as a set-piece and responded to both parts. On the American side of the Atlantic eight more authors responded either specifically to Paine's latest salvo, or used it as the opportunity to reply either to both parts of *The Age of Reason* or more generally to Paine's religious views.

As in the controversy over the first part of *The Age of Reason*, printers and publishers were eager to cash in on both sides of the controversy by publishing these "answers" to Paine's religious writings. These took the form of pamphlets and full length tracts, and even the occasional compilation, such as the 1796 *A Defence of the Bible* which offered excerpts from three other previously published responses to *The Age of Reason.*[151] The responses to the second part of *The Age of Reason*, much like those written against the first part, were written by authors from a wide variety of backgrounds. Highly educated elites, such as Richard Watson (the

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[150] Ibid. Paine's dismissive attitude towards his critics was nothing new, and Paine's cocksure attitude is revealed as early as 1776 in the third edition of *Common Sense*. In a post-script to the preface of this third edition, Paine notes that it had been delayed because he was waiting for responses to the work to appear; but "as no answer hath yet appeared, it is now presumed that none will." As Edward Larkin has pointed out, the lesson that Paine took from this is not only that his arguments went unanswered, but that they were *unanswerable*. While *Common Sense* was ultimately answered, Paine's rhetorical style throughout his writings is nevertheless characterized by a confidence that borders on arrogance, and if "Paine recognized alternate views, he could never quite accommodate them into his thinking." See Larkin, *Thomas Paine and the Literature of Revolution*: 63. Paine's respondents were quick to point out his pig-headed arrogance as a way of disqualifying the arguments of *The Age of Reason* from any serious consideration. As I will argue in Chapter 6, Paine's respondents saw his arrogance as one of the clearest indication that he was a biased and dogmatic Deist bigot who was not interested in rational or reasoned debate, and therefore he was not a sincere inquirer after truth.

[151] Layman, *A Defence of the Bible; in Reply to Thomas Paine's Age of Reason : Compiled from the Answers to that Book. By A Layman.* (Huddersfield: Printed and sold by J. Brook, Huddersfield ; sold also by Scatcherd and Whitaker, London ; Wilson and Co. York ; Binns and Greenwood, Leeds, &c. , [1796?]). This tract excerpts A Layman's *Age of Infidelity* (a reply to part one of *Age of Reason*) as well as the just-published responses to the second part, Richard Watson's *Apology for the Bible*, and Richard Estlin's *Evidences of Revealed Religion.*

Bishop of Landaff), and the philanthropist and director of the U.S. Mint, Elias Boudinot, wrote replies to the second part of the work. Yet *The Age of Reason* was also called to task by those who eschewed claims to higher learning, but nevertheless saw it as their Christian duty to reply to Paine. The pseudonymous Delaware Waggoner, for example, portrays himself as one of the "middling class of lay-men" whose hand is more accustomed to a horsewhip, but who wants to rhetorically whip Paine by taking up his "pen against such an ignorant antagonist."[152] A key aspect of the rhetoric in tracts like those written by the Delaware Waggoner is as a critique not only of Paine, but also of those responses to *The Age of Reason* that were seen as too scholarly or erudite to be useful to the people who were actually being impacted by the arguments of *The Age of Reason.* I will deal with this issue in Chapter 4, but suffice it to say that a wide variety of authors responded to both the first and second parts of *The Age of Reason*.

Some of the same publishers who had printed *The Age of Reason* also printed some of the more popular replies to Paine. For example, the London printer J. Johnson, who had printed the first part of *The Age of Reason,* also re-published Joseph Priestley's reply to it as *An Answer to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason.*[153] H.D. Symonds, who had provoked Paine's ire by his unauthorized printing of *The Age of Reason,* also published Gilbert Wakefield's reply to the second part of the work.[154] Richard Watson's *Apology for the Bible*, which would become the most popular and widely published responses to Paine, was printed in a number of editions in Philadelphia by James Carey and in New York by T.&J. Swords, all of whom had also published editions of *The*

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[152] Delaware Waggoner [David Nelson?], *An Investigation of that False, Fabulous and Blasphemous Misrepresentation of Truth, Set Forth by Thomas Paine,* 186.
[153] Joseph Priestley, *An Answer to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason, Being a Continuation of Letters to the Philosophers and Politicians of France, on the Subject of Religion; and of the Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever. By Joseph Priestley. With a Preface by Theophilus Lindsey* (London: Reprinted for J. Johnson, 1795).
[154] Gilbert Wakefield, *A Reply to Thomas Paine's Second Part of The Age of Reason. By Gilbert Wakefield, B.A.* (London: Printed for H. D. Symonds, 1795).

Age of Reason.[155] John Francis, in his retrospective *Old New York, or, Reminiscences of the Past Sixty Years* (1858) comments with an indignant incredulity that when *The Age of Reason* made its first appearance in New York it "was printed as an orthodox book, by orthodox publishers, of a house of orthodox faith" who were no doubt "deceived by the vast renown which the author of *Common Sense* had obtained" and had a keener eye for a profit than for the harm that the book might do. However, as Francis relates, the scales quickly fell from the aforementioned publishers eyes and they "made early atonement for their bibliographical error, in their immense circulation for Watsons' *Apology*."[156] Whether any publishers, either American or British, really felt the sting of remorse for propagating Paine's pernicious book is somewhat fanciful, and it is more likely that they were hoping to cash in on the controversy surrounding Paine's Deism. James Carey not only published both *The Age of Reason* and Watson's *Apology*, but he offered both works as part of a single volume so as to "accommodate persons who wish to read both sides of every interesting question."[157] Similarly, Paine's friend and publisher John Fellows offered the first part of *The Age of Reason* alongside Gilbert Wakefield's response to it "sewn together in marble."[158]

Part of the reaction to the second part of *The Age of Reason* may be partly due to a realization that by writing a sequel, Paine was not going to leave-off religious topics and retreat back in to writing about politics. Paine, it seemed, was hell-bent on continuing his attacks on revealed religion, and as he now had access to a Bible, his attacks upon it and Christianity were

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[155] Richard Watson, *An Apology for the Bible, In a Series of Letters, Addressed to Thomas Paine, Author of a Book Entitled, The Age of Reason, Part the Second...*(Philadelphia: Printed by James Carey, 1796). Richard Watson, *An Apology for the Bible, In a Series of Letters, Addressed to Thomas Paine, Author of a Book Entitled, The Age of Reason, Part the Second...*(New York: T. & J. Swords, 1796).
[156] John W. Francis, *Old New York, or, Reminiscences of the Past Sixty Years : Being an Enlarged and Revised Edition of the Anniversary Discourse Delivered before the New York Historical Society* (New York: C. Roe, 1858), 133.
[157] *Carey's United States' Recorder*, January 23 1798.
[158] *Daily Advertiser*, August 20, 1794. Fellows also published an edition of A Layman's *The Age of Infidelity.*

all the more strident, combative and purposefully polemical than in the first part. That Paine also tauntingly challenged his adversaries while simultaneously preemptively discrediting any attempts to counter his arguments certainly compelled some to reply. Another factor which drew increasing ire may be the extent to which the work was spread throughout the Anglo-American world. Connecticut Congregationalist minister Reverend Thomas Robbins confessed to his diary that the second part of *The Age of Reason* was both "shocking" and "blasphemous," and decried that the book "is greedily received in Vermont." [159] Virginia clergyman Moses Hoge, who wrote a reply to the second part of *The Age of Reason* reported in a letter that he was "credibly informed" that upwards of one hundred thousand copies of "that scurrilous and blasphemous production" had been distributed in the United States alone.[160] Adding an indictment of American printers and echoing Hoge's alarmism, William Cobbett's *Political Censor* heaps "lasting reproach" on American printers who had published "thousands upon thousands of that blasphemous work…the instant it arrived in the country," while doing little to "counteract [Paine's] diabolical efforts."[161] While Hoge's and Cobbett's estimates may be exaggerated, they nevertheless do give some indication as to the perceived threat represented by the wide distribution of Paine's work. As I will argue in Chapter 4, it was precisely this perception that *The Age of Reason* was being widely distributed and widely read that motivated many of the replies to the work.

A few of those who had initially taken up their pens to refute the first part of *The Age of Reason* were undoubtedly goaded by Paine's charge that they may "amuse themselves" by vainly

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[159] Thomas Robbins, June 15, August 15, November 5, 1796. In Thomas Robbins, *Diary of Thomas Robbins, D.D. 1796-1854* (Boston Beacon Press, 1886-1887).
[160] Moses Hoge, "Letter from Shepherd's-Town." 12 August 1799. In Smylie, "Clerical Perspectives on Deism: Paine's The Age of Reason in Virginia," 219.
[161] William Cobbett, "Paine's Age of Reason," *Political Censor* IV, no. May (1796): 252.

spinning their theological cobwebs in trying to refute his arguments. Undeterred by Paine's dismissive arrogance, respondents such as James Tytler, Thomas Taylor, the pseudonymous "Layman," and Gilbert Wakefield again sallied forth in their defense of Christianity by publishing replies to the second part of *The Age of Reason*.[162] Their opinions of Paine and his religious views had not improved, with Tytler stating that as bad as the first part of *The Age of Reason* may have been, the second part was much "inferior to the first."[163] Gilbert Wakefield has the added distinction of being one of only a handful of the responders to either part of *The Age of Reason* that we can be sure that Paine actually read. Wakefield and Paine agreed on much in the realm of politics, and their theological views were perhaps more similar than either would have liked to admit (to the extent that a number of more orthodox writers condemned Wakefield for subverting true Christianity rather than defending it). However, in a hostile private letter to Wakefield, Paine calls him a "starved apothecary" who can only offer ineffective antidotes compared to Paine's own "Bible-purge." Paine dismisses Wakefield's tract as a mere "ant-hill about the roots of my sturdy oak," and while it "may amuse idlers to see your work," it can have no real effect on the validity of Paine's own arguments. In language that echoes Paine's own enemies who criticized him for daring to venture into theological topics, Paine advises that perhaps Wakefield's talents might be better "employed in teaching men to preserve their liberties exclusively" and to let God take care of men's souls.[164]

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[162] Layman [Thomas Williams], *The Age of Infidelity. --Part II.-- In Answer to the Second Part of the Age of Reason. With Some Additional Remarks upon the Former. By A Layman* ([Philadelphia?]: Printed by Lang & Ustick, and Sold at no. 79, North Third Street, and by the Booksellers, 1796); Thomas Taylor, *An Answer to the Second Part of Mr. Paine's Age of Reason, Printed in London, as it is Said, from the Author's Manuscript. By Thomas Taylor, V.D.M.* (Manchester [England]: Printed at George Nicholson's Office, No. 9 Spring-Gardens, 1796); Tytler, *Paine's Second Part of The Age of Reason Answered. By James Tytler, Author of the Remarks on Paine's First Part of The Age of Reason, by a Citizen of the World, Published at Belfast in Ireland.*

[163] Tytler, *Paine's Second Part of The Age of Reason Answered*: 11.

[164] Thomas Paine to Gilbert Wakefield, 19 November 1795, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 2:1382-3.

As with the first part of *The Age of Reason*, the second part was not well received in the periodical press, and newspapers and review journals on both sides of the Atlantic cast a cold eye on Paine's sequel. The *British Critic*, which had two years previously expressed frustration that a "paltry" work like *The Age of Reason* would gain some publicity by any sort of review, continues on a similar line in its review of the second part of Paine's work. The reviewer notes that even the most unfavorable review or potent refutation of Paine only serves to give the work "additional notoriety." Even taking steps to actually ban the work would only result in giving the work a certain caché through "contraband distribution." If the *British Critic* hits a somewhat more positive note by assuring its readers that although there "is no danger in this work to enlightened readers," it quickly strikes a more ominous one by warning that there is a danger that "ignorant readers" will be persuaded by Paine not because he is correct, but merely "because he is presumptuous."[165]

A brief article by the "Neighbor" in the *Massachusetts Spy* comes down extremely hard on Paine's use of ridicule in both parts of *The Age of Reason*, noting with a disappointed shock that Paine would "prostitute shining talents for the purpose of ridiculing the most important subjects, and of holding up the religion of his country in the most ludicrous point of light." In contrast to the "buffoonery, the profaneness, and the blasphemy, of such a libertine and infidel, as Tom Paine," the Neighbor praises the pious authors (clerical and lay) who have used their "learned skill" and their "superior abilities" in refuting the errors of *The Age of Reason.* The Neighbor has no love for the first part of *The Age of Reason*, and he is able to denigrate both parts by holding the second part to be "if possible, the worst part of the 'Age of Reason'."[166]

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[165] *British Critic* 7(1796): 326.
[166] The Neighbor, "Miscellany for Thomas's Massachusetts Spy." *Massachusetts Spy* 25, no. 1255 (1797).

While the published refutations and reviews of Paine rarely spared the invectives and insults, the most draconian response to the second part of *The Age of Reason* came through the British legal system. Towards the end of 1796, Francis Place, a leading member of the London Corresponding Society, approached the small-time London printer Thomas Williams with a proposition to publish a "cheap edition of Paines [sic] 'Age of Reason.'"[167] Place, a politically conscious tradesman known as the "radical tailor of Charing Cross," had read the first part of *The Age of Reason* "with delight" two years previously.[168] When the second part of *The Age of Reason* appeared, Place decided to try his hand at publishing a combined edition, and he could think of "no one so likely to undertake it as Thomas Williams, a book binder who dealt extensively in small publications," and the two men agreed to undertake the venture together.[169] Place and Williams produced two thousand copies of a "Crown octavo" edition, and in a fortnight the work had sold out, with demand for the work continuing on apace. In order to keep up with demand, Williams began a larger print run, but not before his relationship with Place had soured. Believing that Williams was trying to cheat him out of some of the profits, Place indignantly washed his hands of the entire affair, and would have nothing more to do with the larger print run of the work.

Yet it was precisely this larger print run that brought Williams to the attention of the Society for Carrying Into Effect his Majesty's Proclamation Against Vice and Immorality. This "Proclamation Society," which promoted itself as the moral guardian of English society, brought an indictment for blasphemy against Williams. Upon learning that he had been indicted, Williams turned to his old partner, mistakenly thinking that Place had also been snared by the

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[167] Francis Place, *The Autobiography of Francis Place (1771-1854), Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Mary Thale*, ed. Mary Thale (Cambridge [Eng.] Cambridge University Press, , 1972), 159.
[168] Ibid., 126.
[169] Ibid., 159.

blasphemy indictment (which he had not). Although clearly taking some smug satisfaction that the supposedly duplicitous Williams was now getting some sort of come-uppance, Place was unwilling to completely abandon him and he pledged assistance in the matter. Place had initially thought in such a case as this, where liberty of the press was at issue, that Thomas Erskine would be the best candidate to be the counsel for the defense. Erskine had made a name for himself as a champion of free expression and had been one of the founders of the Society of Friends of the Liberty of the Press. More pertinently, Erskine had, a mere four years earlier, served as the eloquent counsel for the defense in Paine's *in-abstentia* trial for seditious libel for publication of part two of *Rights of Man*. Additionally, in Place's eyes, Erskine also would be a good pick to defend both *The Age of Reason* and Williams because "he was suspected of being but a weak Christian" and could mount a full-scale defense of a Deist tract.[170] However, much to Place's surprise and consternation, Erskine had already been retained by the Proclamation Society and would subsequently argue the case against Williams for the prosecution. When the case came to trial in the Court of King's Bench in June 1797, Erskine found himself arguing his case in the same courtroom and in front of the same judge, Lord Kenyon, for whom he had argued for the defense of Paine's *Rights of Man* only a few years earlier.

The irony that Thomas Erskine, the purported champion of a free press who had previously defended *Rights of Man*, would now be serving as prosecutor of *The Age of Reason* was not lost on anyone. Erskine himself not only felt obliged to comment on this irony, but he actually made it a centerpiece of his arguments to the jury by showing how a work like *The Age of Reason* had gone beyond the bounds of the protections afforded by a free press. Erskine presumes that freedom of discussion on religious matters is indeed a good and noble thing that

[170] Ibid., 160.

should be liberally protected. However, he makes a crucial distinction between discussion that is honestly undertaken for "well-intentioned, modest and dignified communication of sentiments," as opposed to religious discussion that is undertaken with malicious intent or with a style that is unbefitting of religious discourse.[171] Erskine relates to the jury that he had read *The Age of Reason* only out of a sense of professional obligation, and that it left him full of "astonishment and disgust."[172] Reading to the jury some of the more strident and combative passages from *The Age of Reason,* Erskine characterizes Paine's work as having blasphemously gone beyond the pale of honest or constructive religious discourse and thereby not worthy of the protections entitled by a free press. As Erskine argues to the jury,

> an intellectual book, however erroneous, addressed to the intellectual world upon so profound and complicated a subject, can never work the mischief which this Indictment was calculated to repress—Such works will only incite the minds of men enlightened by study, to a closer investigation of a subject well worthy of their deepest and continued contemplation…But [*The Age of Reason*] has no such object, and no such capacity:-- it presents no arguments to the wise and enlightened; on the contrary, it… stirs up men, without the advantages of learning, or sober thinking, to a total disbelief of every thing hitherto held sacred; and consequently of all the laws and ordinances of the state, which stand only upon the assumption of their truth.[173]

For Erskine, *The Age of Reason* was written neither in good faith nor as a serious inquiry into truth, but rather with malicious and blasphemous intent. Thomas Williams, Erskine argued, had similar intent in publishing *The Age of Reason,* and therefore is rightly indicted for blasphemy and should be found guilty for publishing it.

During the course of the trial, it became increasingly evident, in the arguments for both the prosecution and the defense, that while Williams was the man sitting in the dock, it was Thomas Paine who was really on trial. Williams, as the pretext for both the prosecution and the

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[171] "Proceedings Against Thomas Williams for publishing Paine's 'Age of Reason'," 663.
[172] Ibid., 661.
[173] Ibid., 669.

defense to wage a larger battle over Paine and the implications of his religious views, fades into the background of the trial. Yet when the guilty verdict was "immediately" returned by the jury, it was Thomas Williams and not Thomas Paine who would suffer the consequences. Williams was condemned to a year of hard labor in the House of Correction in Middlesex.

The Williams trial received its fair share of publicity in newspapers and pamphlet accounts, and Erskine's address to the jury was reproduced in a variety of different editions on both sides of the Atlantic.[174] The American Donald Fraser referred glowingly to the "masterly and conclusive arguments" of that "most eminent and judicious" legalist (Erskine), and included passages from Erskine's speech in his 1798 *A Collection of Select Biography.*[175] Erskine's speech (and the Williams trial more generally) even forms a "second tier" of the controversy over *The Age of Reason* since it drew its own responses. One of Williams' solicitors, John Martin, would take some swipes at both Erskine and the presiding justice Lord Kenyon in *A Letter to the Hon. Thomas Erskine, with a Postscript to the Right Hon. Lord Kenyon.*[176] Neither could Paine sit idly by while his book was being picked apart in the Court of King's Bench. Although still residing in France, Paine kept himself apprised of this legal battle surrounding *The*

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[174] Rival publishers provided different editions of Erskine's speech and the Williams trial, such as J. Debrett's *The Speeches of the Hon. Thomas Erskine, in the Court of King's Bench… Together with Mr. Stewart Kyd's Reply, and Lord Kenyon's Charge to the Jury*. (London: Printed for J. Debrett, Picadilly, 1797) which was in competition with Evans and Bone's *The Only Genuine Edition of the Speeches of the Hon. T. Erskine, and S. Kyd, Esq. On the Trial of T. Williams, for Publishing Thomas Paine's Age of Reason; with Ld. Kenyon's Charge to the Jury*. (London: Printed for Evans and Bone, 1797.) A Philadelphia edition is the most stridently titled as *Christianity Vindicated, in the Admirable Speech of the Hon. Tho. Erskine, in the Trial of J. Williams, for Publishing Paine's "Age of Reason"*. (Philadelphia: Printed from the 12th London Edition by J. Carey, no. 83, N. Second-Street, for G. Douglas, no. 2, South Third-Street, 1797.)

[175] Donald Fraser, *A Collection of Select Biography: or, The Bulwark of Truth: Being a Sketch of the Lives and Testimonies of Many Eminent Laymen, in Different Countries, who have Professed their Belief in, and Attachment to the Christian Religion --Whether Distinguished as Statesmen, Patriots, Philosophers, &c. --To Which Are Prefixed Two Letters to Thomas Paine, Containing Some Important Queries and Remarks Relative to the Probable Tendency of his Age of Reason* (New York: Printed for the Author at the Literary Printing-Office, 1798), 181-86.

[176] John Martin, *A Letter to the Hon. Thomas Erskine, with a Postscript to the Right Hon. Lord Kenyon, Upon their Conduct at the Trial of Thomas Williams for Publishing Paine's Age of Reason. By John Martin, Solicitor for the Defendant* (London: Printed by H. Smith; Published by Ballard; Evans and Bone; Leslie, Edinburgh; and May be Had of Every Bookseller in Town and Country, 1797).

Age of Reason, and he wrote an open letter to his former defense counsel in *A Letter to the Honourable Thomas Erskine, on the Prosecution of Thomas Williams, for Publishing the Age of Reason.* [177] In this pamphlet, Paine developed some themes that he had begun in the two parts of *The Age of Reason*, but his main purpose was to charge Erskine with the utmost hypocrisy for proclaiming himself to be a champion of a free press while attempting to put a strict boundary around religious topics. Paine sarcastically recommended that Erskine, in his newfound role as a prosecutor, should "profess himself at once an advocate for the establishment of an inquisition."[178]

The Williams trial no doubt represents the most severe response to *The Age of Reason*, since Williams spent a year in prison for publishing the work. Just as importantly, with Williams' conviction, both parts of *The Age of Reason* were effectively outlawed in England, a fact which later publishers of the work such as Daniel Isaac Eaton and Richard Carlile would discover to their own detriment (more on this later). Yet the public spectacle of the trial may have served to further popularize Paine's work, and while it could not be sold openly in England, the text did circulate covertly and was sold, in the words of one book peddler, "on the sly."[179]

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[177] Thomas Paine, *A Letter to the Honourable Thomas Erskine, on the Prosecution of Thomas Williams, for Publishing The Age of Reason* (Paris: Printed for the Author, 1797). This was re-printed in the United States (Newburgh, NY) by D. Denniston in 1797. Paine's own letter to Erskine was itself responded to by John Marsom, *Falshood Detected: Being Animadversions on Mr. Paine's Letter to the Honorable Thomas Erskine, on the Trial of Thomas Williams, For Publishing "The Age of Reason;" Wherein His Attacks Upon the Bible are Examined, and Shewn to be Founded in Misrepresentation and Falshood. In a Letter to a Friend* (London: Printed for and Sold by the Author; Mr. Chapman; Mr. Knott; Mr. D. Taylor; and Mr. Hatchard, 1798).

[178] Paine, *A Letter to the Honourable Thomas Erskine, on the Prosecution of Thomas Williams, for Publishing The Age of Reason*: iv.

[179] In his 1851 book *London Labour and the London Poor* the English journalist Henry Mayhew relates how an old street hawker of books used to sell the works of Paine clandestinely. This book peddler, who was active in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, claimed that he had to "tread his shoes straight about what book he showed publicly. He sold 'Tom Paine' on the sly. If any body bought a book and would pay a good price for it, three times as much as was marked, he'd give the 'Age of Reason'…The old fellow used to laugh and say his stall was quite a godly stall, and he wasn't often without a copy or two of the 'Anti-Jacobin Review,' which was all for Church and State and all that, though he had 'Tom Paine' in a drawer." See Henry Mayhew, *London labour and the London*

Francis Place notes that even after his release from prison, Thomas Williams "never discontinued the sale of the *Age of Reason* as long as a copy remained, but he ceased to sell them openly in the shop, and only supplied the trade, or let persons whom he knew have them."[180]

2.5 THE "THIRD" PART OF *THE AGE OF REASON*

Although the two parts of *The Age of Reason* were Paine's most sustained theological tracts, and would become the most notorious emblems of his Deism, Paine did continue to write on religious matters, much to the dismay of some of his friends and the frustration of most of his enemies. In his aforementioned *A Letter to the Honourable Thomas Erskine,* Paine not only commented on the Williams trial, but continued his attacks against all those who sought to establish "tyranny in religion" by prohibiting inquiry into the Bible, a "book that has been read more, and examined less, than any book that ever existed."[181] Beyond just a scathing critique of Erskine, Paine also used this open letter to continue some of his textual analysis of the Bible, and he gives an extended critique of the first two chapters of Genesis.

After Paine returned to the United States in October of 1802, he continued to publish his thoughts on religion—first in a defense of the principles of *The Age of Reason* in an open letter to his old friend Sam Adams who had, in a private letter, admitted his shock and dismay that

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poor: the condition and earnings of those that will work, cannot work, and will not work (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1851), vol. 3: 318.

[180] Place, *The Autobiography of Francis Place (1771-1854)*, 171.

[181] Paine, *A Letter to the Honourable Thomas Erskine, on the Prosecution of Thomas Williams, for Publishing The Age of Reason*: 5, 15.

Paine had turned his "mind to a defense of infidelity."[182] Paine also wrote a series of articles in 1805 for Elihu Palmer's Deistic newspaper *The Prospect, or View of the Moral World* in which he defends and promotes Deism, usually by undermining the validity of Biblical theology.

While Paine continued to publish his religious views in short essays and pamphlets, he intended to write a third part of *The Age of Reason,* primarily as a response to Richard Watson's 1796 *Apology for the Bible.* As I have noted, Paine was generally dismissive of his critics, and in the second part of *The Age of Reason* he makes a show of taking no notice of the replies to the first part of the work while preemptively deriding any critics who might try to respond to the second part.[183] Although Paine numbered Watson as one of the "guess-work commentators" who had responded to him, he nevertheless took Watson's *Apology* seriously enough, and he reportedly held it to be "the only one worth noticing."[184] During an 1802 visit with Paine, Henry Redhead Yorke relates an anecdote in which Paine's temper got the better of him during a discussion of *The Age of Reason*. When Yorke conveyed to Paine that his religious views had lost him the good-will of many of his English supporters, Paine "became uncommonly warm" on this subject, lashing out that he was resolute in his religious convictions and that "the Bishop of Landaff [Watson] may roast me in Smithfield, if he likes, but human torture cannot shake my conviction." Yorke, somewhat taken aback by Paine's outburst, tried to calm his companion

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[182] Thomas Paine, "To Samuel Adams," January 1, 1803, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol. 2: 1432-38.

[183] Using a classic metaphor of radicalism, Paine saw himself as a theological woodsman who was taking an "axe to root" of the Bible and to revealed religion, thereby totally destroying the basis of Christianity. Having completely destroyed the theological forest of Christianity, Paine pre-emptively undermines any future critics by arguing for the futility of their cause. The theological trees that Paine has chopped down are now mere lifeless posts; his adversaries "may replant them…they may, perhaps, stick them in the ground, but they will never make them grow." See the second part of *The Age of Reason,* in ibid., 1:570.

[184] Paine, *A Letter to the Honourable Thomas Erskine, on the Prosecution of Thomas Williams, for Publishing The Age of Reason*: 15. Paine's view of the merits of Watson's *Apology* is related in an undated letter from 1802 from John Pershouse to James Pershouse, John Pershouse Correspondence and Papers, 1749-1899, Mss.B.P43, American Philosophical Society Library. In a parenthetical comment, John Pershouse added that Paine's faint praise of Watson was "no compliment…to Priestly and G. Wakefield, both of whom replied to his Age of Reason."

down by challenging that Paine "cannot say that his *Apology* does not breathe tolerance in every page." Paine, still in a heated mood, initially replied that Watsons work was an apology, for sure, but only an apology "for priestcraft." Yorke then relates how Paine searched around his apartment until he found his copy of Watson's *Apology*, which was thoroughly "interleaved with remarks upon it." In an indignant mood, Paine began to read aloud passages from the work, but after a few minutes his bluster had abated and he ultimately "admitted the liberality of the Bishop, and regretted, that in all the controversies among men, a similar temper was not maintained."[185]

That Yorke described Paine's copy of Watson's *Apology* as being "interleaved with remarks upon it" is not surprising, since Paine had been working on a response to it since it was published in 1796. Furthermore, Paine intended such a reply to actually form a third part of *The Age of Reason*. In the preface to his 1797 pamphlet *Agrarian Justice*, Paine mentions that he had "procured a copy of his [Watson's] book, and he may depend upon hearing from me on that subject."[186] He even related, with some satisfaction to Yorke that "I have another rod in pickle, for *Mr. Bishop*."[187] Paine, who often wrote quickly and steadily on a project, must have put his answer to Watson on hold, for we find that in 1800 he was still at work on his third part of *The Age of Reason*. In an 1800 letter to Thomas Jefferson, Paine relates that while he began writing a third part of *The Age of Reason* as soon as he had got a copy of Watson's *Apology*, he was "still making additions to the manuscript, and shall continue to do so till an opportunity arrive for publishing it."[188] Although the manuscript remained unpublished (and perhaps unfinished)

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[185] Henry Redhead Yorke, *Letters from France, in 1802*, 2 vols. (London: H.D. Symonds, No. 20 Paternoster-Row, 1804), vol. 2: 360-2.
[186] Thomas Paine, *Agrarian Justice*, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 1: 609.
[187] Yorke, *Letters from France, in 1802*: vol. 2: 360-2.
[188]Thomas Paine to Thomas Jefferson, 1 Oct 1800, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol. 2:1412.

during his stay in France, Paine was hopeful that upon his return to America publishers there would jump at the chance to publish the work. In a letter from 1802 to his fellow Deist Elihu Palmer, Paine mentions his impending arrival in the United States with his luggage full of pamphlets, including "a third part of *The Age of Reason* to publish when I arrive, which, if I mistake it not, will make a stronger impression than anything I have yet published on the subject."[189] Thomas Jefferson reportedly "advised and requested" that Paine not seek to publish the work, although Paine, with characteristic resoluteness, held that he "never will be advised on that subject."[190]

James Cheetham, who would pen one of the most damaging biographies of Paine in 1809, describes his first meeting with Paine in 1802 in New York City. In the preface to his *Life of Thomas Paine,* Cheetham relates how he and a friend, having been invited to Paine's lodgings, were shocked to be greeted by a small, ill-kempt man who was "staggering under a load of inebriation." Cheetham quickly realized that this was the fabled Thomas Paine, who ushered them in to his sparse apartment. Cheetham relates that upon entering Paine's lodgings, "The Bishop of Landaff was almost the first word he [Paine] uttered, and it was followed by informing us, that he had in his trunk a manuscript reply to the Bishop's Apology." Paine subsequently entertained his guests by repeating, from memory, the entire introductory section of his manuscript reply to Watson, as well as summarizing the arguments in the main part of the manuscript. The incredulous Cheetham, while praising Paine for his excellent powers of recall ("intoxicated as he was"), nevertheless proclaimed Paine to be a dogmatic bombast who loved to

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[189] Thomas Paine to Elihu Palmer, 21 February 1802. in ibid., vol 2:1426.
[190] Related in a letter from Eben Elmer to David More, 11 December 1802, in William M. Van der Weyde, ed. *The Life and Works of Thomas Paine*, 10 vols. (New Rochelle, New York: Thomas Paine National Historical Association, 1925), vol. 1: 425.

foist his opinion on others.[191] Regardless of Paine's own estimation of the value of this reply to Watson, it remained unpublished during his lifetime, either because no publishers were willing to print the work, or perhaps because he continued to make additions to the work and remained unsatisfied with it.[192]

Yet the mere impending threat of a third part of *The Age of Reason* did not go unnoticed by Paine's enemies. For a few of his critics, the continually threatened third part served as a motivation for their own replies to the second part of *The Age of Reason*. For example, in his 1797 reply *A Layman's Protest*, Irishman John Padman mentions that "we meet with small consolation in finding that we are threatened with a third part of the Age of Reason." Padman admits some curiosity as to how Paine could have any chance in standing up against "so cool, dispassionate, and reasonable refutation of his principles" as laid out in Watson's *Apology for the Bible*.[193] Scottish surveyor Robert Thomson notes that his 1801 *Divine Authority of the Bible* was partly motivated by the anticipated third part of *The Age of Reason*. In an "Author's Advertisement" (which appeared in the 1807 Boston edition of the work), Thomson's claims that the reason why his work has appeared so late is that he "wished first to examine all Paine might have to offer on the subject; for he has at this moment, a Third Age of Reason ready for

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[191] James Cheethan, *The Life of Thomas Paine* (New York: Southwick and Pelrue, 1809), xxi-xxii.
[192] In his 1 October, 1800 letter to Jefferson, Paine refers to the trial of Thomas Williams as being one of the means that were used to intimidate publishers from printing the third part of *The Age of Reason*. Paine writes: "…as soon as the clerical Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge knew of my intention to answer the Bishop, they prosecuted, as a society, the printer of the first and second parts, to prevent that answer appearing." In Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol. 2:1412. Eben Elmer, a congressman during Jefferson's presidency, opined that American publishers had more trepidations over financial rather than legal reasons for not publishing the third part of *The Age of Reason*. Elmer explains that because Paine "will pay no expence, nor have any hand in the sale of the work, I do not believe any printer will take his manuscript off his hands." See Eben Elmer to David More, 11 December 1802, in Van der Weyde, *The Life and Works of Thomas Paine*, vol. 1:425.
[193] I [John?] Padman, *A Layman's Protest Against the Profane Blasphemy False Charges, and Illiberal Invective of Thomas Paine, Author of a Book, Entitled "The Age of Reason", Part 1 and 2, Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology. By I. Padman, Jun.* (London: Printed for the Author, 1797), 232.

publication."[194] By 1805, nearly three years after Paine had returned to the United States, the third part of *The Age of Reason* had still not been published, although rumors of its immanent appearance continued. John Pershouse, an expatriate English merchant in Philadelphia who was hostile to most things Paine wrote, noted in a letter to his brother that although Paine's "name is scarcely ever mentioned," rumor has it that the " hoary wretch is employ'd in writing a third part of his Age of Reason." Pershouse derisively adds that he "must admire the impudence of the fellow in undertaking to write down the scriptures, written in a language he does not understand."[195]

If Paine initially began writing the third part of *The Age of Reason* as a reply to Watson's *Apology*, his conception of the book soon expanded beyond just a reply to Watson and it seems as though he used Watson as a springboard for discoursing on a variety of other religious topics not directly related to refuting the *Apology*. There is some intimation of this in his 1800 letter to Jefferson when Paine describes the third part of *The Age of Reason* as serving "*also* as an answer to the Bishop," implying that it was not limited to Watson. Furthermore, in the same letter Paine describes his interest in using Watson's *Apology* as a "background to bring forward other subjects."[196]

By the time Paine had returned to the United States in 1802 he had already completed substantial portions of the third part of *The Age of Reason* that, while inspired by Watson's *Apology*, were not limited to it. Although Paine blamed the timidity of publishers for not bringing the third part of *The Age of Reason* to the public eye, one gets the sense that Paine

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[194] Thomson, *Divine Authority of the Bible*, 4.
[195] John Pershouse to James Pershouse, 25 May 1805, John Pershouse Correspondence and Papers, 1749-1899, Mss.B.P43, American Philosophical Society Library.
[196] Paine to Thomas Jefferson, 1 October 1800, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol. 2: 1412. Italics mine.

himself was never completely satisfied with the work, and it continued to be a perpetual work-in-progress. By the time Paine died in 1809 it is clear that the third part of *The Age of Reason* had, in his own mind, become a work distinct from the reply to Watson. In his last Will and Testament, Paine's mentions that he is "author of a work on religion, 'Age of Reason,' parts the first and second—N.B. I have a third part by me in manuscript, *and* an answer to the Bishop of Llandaff."[197] So clearly, the third part of *The Age of Reason* had, at some point, become a work distinct from a reply to Watson. Although Paine was never to see a full-blown version of the third part of *The Age of Reason* published in his lifetime, there is strong evidence that parts of the work did appear in other forms, and that they were written on topics that were not directly in reply to Watson. For example, one of the very last pamphlets that Paine saw published before his health began to severely deteriorate was an *Examination of The Passages in the New Testament*, which included an introductory chapter "An Essay on Dream," and an appendix "My Private Thoughts of a Future State."[198] The general scholarly consensus holds that these essays were part of the manuscript that Paine considered to be the third part of *The Age of Reason*.

By the time *Examination of The Passages in the New Testament* came out, Paine's reputation as the howling infidel trying to subvert the Christian religion had already been well secured, and in the eyes of many, Paine had already been repeatedly and sufficiently refuted. Yet this did not stop two Americans from quickly firing off responses to Paine's latest theological musings. John Colvin, a Maryland newspaper editor (and ardent Jeffersonian) noted that it "cannot be necessary for me to inform the reader that Thomas Paine has written against

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[197] "The Will of Thomas Paine" in ibid., vol. 2:1499. Italics mine.

[198] Thomas Paine, *Examination of the Passages in the New Testament, Quoted from the Old, and Called Prophecies Concerning Jesus Christ. To Which is Prefixed an Essay on Dream, Sewing by What Operation of the Mind a Dream is Produced in Sleep, and Applying the Same to the Account of Dreams in the New Testament; with an Appendix Containing My Private Thoughts of a Future State, and Remarks on the Contradictory Doctrine in the Books of Matthew and Mark.* (New York: Printed for the Author, 1807).

the Christian Religion; but it may not be improper to state that he has *lately* done so." Colvin characterizes Paine as a persistent and frequent "enemy of a benevolent Religion" who "like zealots of another kind…labors in his vocation, to propagate his doctrines and swell the number of his converts." Colvin saw his own *An Essay Towards an Exposition of the Futility of Thomas Paine's Objections to the Christian Religion* as yet one more necessary counter to the fraudulent and dangerous religious views that Paine had been promulgating since the publication of *The Age of Reason.*[199]

Poughkeepsie lawyer Peter Maison echoed this sentiment in his 1807 *Letters to Thomas Paine*. Admitting that Paine's Deism had already been adequately and amply refuted, Maison craftily implored his readers not to accuse him of plagiarism, since his reply to *Examination of The Passages in the New Testament* was based so heavily on those previous replies to *The Age of Reason*. Maison argued that the pillars propping up the Deism of *The Age of Reason* had been so thoroughly and convincingly knocked out that anything else Paine were to write on the same subject would be untenable. Yet Maison nevertheless justified his own work by arguing that just because Paine's former religious writings were so "completely sifted and exposed," does not make "refutation of his subsequent effusions unnecessary." Indeed, for Maison, the defenders of Christianity must be ever vigilant, for "every year ushers on the stage a new generation of readers, and every attempt to undermine the general pillars of our liberty or our religion, should be promptly exposed and resisted."[200]

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[199] John B. Colvin, *An Essay Towards an Exposition of the Futility of Thomas Paine's Objections to the Christian Religion : Being a Reply to a Late Pamphlet Written by Him, Entitled Examination of the Passages in the New Testament, Quoted from the Old, and Called Prophecies Concerning Jesus Christ &c. &c* (Baltimore: Printed by Fryer and Rider, 1807), 3.

[200] Peter Maison, *Letters to Thomas Paine: in Reply to His Last Pamphlet, Entitled, Examination of the Passages in the New Testament, Quoted from Old, and Called Prophecies Concerning Jesus Christ : and Shewing the Fallacy and Incompetency of Deism as a Rule for the Regulation of Human Conduct* (New-York: Printed by Henry C. Southwick, 1807), iii.

While the 1807 *Examination of The Passages in the New Testament* was most likely a portion of a manuscript that Paine held to be a "third" part of *The Age of Reason*, it was not the only portion that found its way into print. When Paine died in June of 1809, Margaret Bonneville, a close personal friend from Paine's days in France whose family had immigrated to the United States 1803, became the executrix of Paine's estate and had control of his papers. In September 1810, over a year after Paine's death, Bonneville published what was purportedly one of the unpublished chapters from the long-intended third part of *The Age of Reason*, an essay entitled *On the Origin of Free-Masonry.*[201] No sooner had the ink dried on this printing than the New York Deist newspaper *The Theophilanthropist* pointed out that Mrs. Bonneville had expurgated certain portions of Paine's essay. For the benefit of its readers, and to reclaim the integrity of Paine's essay, *The Theophilanthropist* published the expurgated portions of the essay. In one of the expurgated parts of the essay, Paine refers to a previous "chapter on the origin of the Christian religion" which the editors of *The Theophilanthropist* say refers to "the third part of the Age of Reason, not published."[202]

If the *Examination of The Passages in the New Testament,* "An Essay on Dream", "My Private Thoughts of a Future State" and *On the Origin of Free-Masonry* are all sections of what had become, in Paine's mind, the third part of *The Age of Reason*, what then became of the book that Paine initially conceived as the third part of *The Age of Reason* —his reply to Watson's *Apology for the Bible*? While never published during his lifetime, the work did find its way into print soon after his death, albeit in an incomplete format. The June 1, 1810 edition of *The Theophilanthropist* presented for its readers "Extract From Thomas Paine's Answer to Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible" which was "Communicated by a Friend, to whom Mr. Paine

[201] Thomas Paine, *On the Origin of Free-Masonry* (New York: Printed and sold by Elliot and Crissy, 1810).
[202] *The Theophilanthropist* 9, no. September 1 (1810): 370-72.

presented the manuscript some years since."[203] During Paine's futile decade-long task of trying to secure a publisher for the work, a number of people had seen or been given parts of the work. When Paine was convalescing in the home of friend and editor William Carver in 1806, he was cared for by the widow of Elihu Palmer, to whom he gave a transcribed part of his reply to Watson. After Paine's death, Mrs. Palmer dutifully gave to the editors of *The Theophilanthropist* the section of the larger work that Paine had given to her.[204] In this piece, Paine attacks both the authority and antiquity of *Genesis* by proving that the *Book of Job* is not only older than Genesis, but that the ancient Jews essentially stole this book of the Bible (as well as much of the creation myth in *Genesis*) from Gentile sources. While the "Extract From Thomas Paine's Answer to Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible" shows Paine at the top of his game for in-depth Biblical textual analysis, it is nevertheless merely a portion of a larger work, the full text of which has not survived.[205]

The controversy over Paine's religious views, given their notoriety primarily by the first two parts of *The Age of Reason,* would even haunt him on his deathbed. During his final days, Paine was visited by a number of clergymen hoped to guide him to a last-minute conversion to Christianity. Paine had the presence of mind to realize that last-minute "deathbed conversions" of infidels had become a rhetorical weapon in the armory of the pious, and he did not want it to

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[203] Thomas Paine, "Extract from Thomas Paine's Answer to Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible: Never Before Published " *The Theophilanthropist* 6, no. June 1 (1810). Continued in the July 1 1810 edition, 263-72.
[204] Moncure Daniel Conway, ed. *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, 4 vols. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1894-96), vol 4: 258-9.
[205] M.D. Conway suspects that Paine's executrix Margaret Bonneville, in a fit of "pious destructiveness" destroyed the remainder of Paine's manuscript. See ibid. Richard Carlile, who re-printed Paine's collected works in 1817-18, alluded to the rumor that "a superstitious old nurse, who attended [Paine] in his last hours" had consigned the work to the fire. See Richard Carlile, *The Theological Works of Thomas Paine* (London: Printed and published by R. Carlile, No. 183, Fleet Street, 1818), ii. It is also possible that it was merely lost in a mid-nineteenth century fire that destroyed most of the papers Paine had left with the Bonnevilles. I suspect that the biblical analysis that appears as part of Paine's 1797 pamphlet *A Letter to the Honourable Thomas Erskine* may have formed an early part of Paine's intended reply to Watson.

be falsely reported that he had recanted his Deism moments before his death. Paine, therefore, asked some of his close friends to remain at his bedside so that there would be no doubting that he had lived and died a Deist. Nevertheless, upon his death, rumors circulated that with his last few dying breaths he repudiated his Deism by calling on Jesus Christ for forgiveness. Other reports disputed this, affirming that Paine died an infidel.[206] As John Pershouse related in a letter to his brother, "it is said the old Sinner remain'd obstinate to the last."[207] Paine's death became the pretext for both posthumous praise and scorn, for his political views as well as his religious writings. This is marvelously captured in an epitaph that was offered up by some witty opponent:

> Here lies TOM PAINE, who wrote in Liberty's defence,
> But in his Age of Reason, lost his Common Sense.[208]

In Chapter 5 I will deal more fully with the ambivalence that many felt for Paine, with those who admired him for his political writings yet condemned him for having written *The Age of Reason*.

2.6 POSTHUMOUS LIFE OF THE THIRD PART OF *THE AGE OF REASON*

With Paine lying in his grave, the controversy over *The Age of Reason* did not entirely subside, especially since a supposed "third" part of *The Age of Reason* finally found its way into

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[206] Willett Hicks, a Quaker and friend of Paine's in his declining years, stated that he "could have had any sum" if he would falsely swear that he had heard Paine "call on Christ" on his deathbed. Hicks would not give in to monetary temptation to so falsely swear, but one of Hicks' servants did step forward to claim that she heard Paine cry "Lord Jesus have mercy upon me" and declare that that "if the Devil has ever had any agency in any work he has had it in my writing that book [*The Age of Reason*]." Moncure Daniel Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine*, 2 vols. (New York: Putnam, 1893), vol 2: 414-20.

[207] John Pershouse to James Pershouse, 10 June, 1810, John Pershouse Correspondence and Papers, 1749-1899, Mss.B.P43, American Philosophical Society Library

[208] The earliest version of this epitaph that I have been able to find is in the *Federal Republican & Commercial Gazette* 2:172, no. April 24 (1810). It may have been written earlier, perhaps even as a pre-mortem dig against Paine, but it would be repeated in a number of different sources throughout the nineteenth century.

print, although not, to be sure, the way Paine intended it. In England, Paine's old friend and fellow-radical Daniel Isaac Eaton took Paine's final pamphlet, the 1807 *Examination of the Passages in the New Testament* and re-published it as *The Age of Reason. Part the Third.*[209] Eaton had done well with publishing parts one and two of *The Age of Reason*, so it most likely seemed to him that publishing a work proclaiming to be the third installment of Paine's religious views would likely also be a success. Certainly Eaton could not have forgotten that Thomas Williams had been convicted in English courts for publishing parts one and two of *The Age of Reason* in 1797. Eaton, who saw himself as staunch defender and advocate for "Liberty of the Press, Freedom of Speech, and the Rights of Man" may actually even have welcomed a bit of legal danger, and he was certainly not one to shy away from publishing controversial literature as a way to strike a blow for freedom of the press.[210] After all, he had already been indicted and tried a number of times in English courts, and while he had not come away completely unscathed, he had managed to use his trials as platforms for promoting freedom of conscience and a free press. Between 1786 (when he first began the book trade) and 1811, Eaton found himself in British courtrooms seven times for his publishing activities. Throughout the 1790s when the Pitt government, increasingly alarmed by a perceived growth of English Jacobinism, began to step-up repressive measures on dissent, Eaton was brought before English judges for a number of his publications. He was first found guilty of publishing Paine's second part of *Rights of Man* in 1793, but the jury found him guilty "but not with a criminal intention," and he was freed on bail. In Eaton's other court appearances he was able to remain out of prison either by

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[209] Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason. Part the Third : Being an Examination of the Passages in the New Testament, Quoted from the Old and Called Prophecies Concerning Jesus Christ. To Which is Prefixed, an Essay on Dream, Shewing by What Operation of the Mind a Dream...With an Appendix Containing my Private Thoughts of a Future State* (London: Printed, Published and Sold by Daniel Isaac Eaton, 1811).
[210] Daniel Isaac Eaton, *Behold the Man!* [single sheet handbill] (London: D.I. Eaton, 1812).

acquittal or by fleeing to the United States, which he did in 1797. Upon his return to England in 1801, the law finally caught up with him and although he was imprisoned, he soon received a full pardon from King George III. A contrite Eaton abandoned his radical publishing ventures until 1810 when he "acquired a renewed taste for radicalism," and published Paine's "third" part of *The Age of Reason*.[211] Eaton had received a copy of Paine's *Examination of the Passages in the New Testament* from William Duane, editor of *The Aurora* in Philadelphia, and he sought to publish it in Britain. Had Eaton published Paine's pamphlet in England by its original 1807 title, he may have still brought down the weight of the English judicial system upon his head. Yet by re-publishing Paine's pamphlet as the purported third part of *The Age of Reason*, Eaton was inviting prosecution. In March of 1812 Eaton was indicted and tried in the Court of King's Bench for blasphemous libel against the Christian religion. In his address to the jury, the presiding judge Lord Ellenborough not only described Paine's work having a "pernicious tendency" but he also called Eaton's defense "the most opprobrious invective against what we have been always accustomed to regard as holy and sacred."[212] Eaton was found guilty and sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment in Newgate and two hours in the pillory.

When the nearly sixty-year old Eaton appeared in the pillory in the Old Bailey on May 15, 1812 one newspaper reported that nearly "fifteen thousand people" turned out to show him "every possible mark of *compassion* and *applause*" with their cries of "brave old man" and "bravo, bravo!" It was even reported that although some were thwarted in their attempts to "convey him refreshment," one kind person "got to him with a pocket handkerchief, to wipe the

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[211] For more information regarding Eaton, see Michael T. Davis, "Daniel Isaac Eaton," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 158: British reform writers, 1789-1832* ed. Gary Kelly and Edd Applegate, *Dictionary of Literary Biography Vol 158* (Detroit Gale Research, 1996).

[212] Daniel Isaac Eaton. *Trial of Mr. Daniel Isaac Eaton, for Publishing the Third and Last Part of Paine's Age of Reason; before Lord Ellenborough, in the Court of King's Bench, Guildhall, March 6, 1812* (London: Daniel Isaac Eaton, 1812), 42.

sweat from his face."[213] Eaton's trial and imprisonment emboldened the young poet Percy Bysshe Shelley to write *A Letter to Lord Ellenborough* (1812), in which he not only upholds freedom of conscience but scathes Ellenborough's decision in the Eaton trial. Shelley argues that Eaton's imprisonment was caused by a judge relying on "antiquated precedents, gathered from times of priestly and tyrannical domination," and that Ellenborough "persecute[s] [Eaton] because his faith differs from yours."[214]

During his stay in Newgate prison, Eaton did not remain idle. He oversaw the publication of *The Trial of Mr. Daniel Isaac Eaton, for Publishing the Third and Last Part of Paine's Age of Reason* (1812). In this pamphlet, Eaton painted the whole proceeding against him as unjust, he maligned the Attorney-General's speeches as "sophistry" that drew "false conclusions," and he heaped sarcasm on Lord Ellenborough's repeated interruptions of his defense.[215] While still confined in prison, Eaton wrote *Extortions and Abuses of Newgate* (1813), addressed to the Lord Mayor, intending to expose "the glaring abuses" in the prison.[216] Eaton also had a hand in the re-publication of Baron D'Holbach's atheistic *Ecce Homo! Or A Critical Enquiry into the History of Jesus Christ* (1813). Although Eaton served the entirety of his prison sentence, upon his release he was immediately indicted for blasphemous libel for the republishing of D'Holbach's treatise. Eaton biographer Michael T. Davis has written that Eaton's "old age and the years of intimidation, imprisonment and hardship were beginning to

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[213] William Cobbett, "Mr. Eaton.--Paine's Age of Reason," *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* 21, no. 24, June 13 (1812).
[214] See Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Shelley on Blasphemy. Being His Letter to Lord Ellenborough.* (London: Progressive Publishing Company, 1883).
[215] Daniel Isaac Eaton, *Trial of Mr. Daniel Isaac Eaton, for Publishing the Third and Last Part of Paine's Age of Reason; Before Lord Ellenborough, in the Court of King's Bench, Guildhall, March 6, 1812; Containing the Whole of his Defence, and Mr. Prince Smith's Speech in Mitigation of Punishment* (London: Printed, Published and Sold by Daniel Isaac Eaton, 1812), iii.
[216] Quoted in Davis, "Daniel Isaac Eaton."

take their toll."[217] Rather than face another prison term, Eaton accepted a deal with the Attorney General, and he implicated one of his partners, George Houston, who was sentenced to 10 years in Newgate for blasphemy.[218] Although free from judicial intimidation, Eaton's health soon deteriorated, he sold his bookshop, and was dead by the end of the summer of 1814.

By the time Eaton published the third part of *The Age of Reason*, Paine's notoriety and infamy had begun to fade, and replies to the work were sparse. William Cobbett, who had taken an active hand in publishing a number of the initial replies to the first and second parts of *The Age of Reason* in the 1790s, actually tried to drum up some replies to the third part of *The Age of Reason*. While disdaining what Paine had written and Eaton had published, Cobbett nevertheless was a champion of a free press and lampooned the harsh sentence that Eaton received. Part of his empathy for Eaton may also be linked to Cobbett's own situation, since he was just completing his own two year stint in Newgate prison for seditious libel. In a series of articles in his *Political Register* in which he called for replies to the third part of *The Age of Reason*, Cobbett was able to masterfully grind various axes against Painite Deism, censorship of the press, and against a complacent English clergy. Cobbett noted that the trial of Eaton had piqued interest in the publication, but that he had "not yet heard, that this Third Part of the Age of Reason has yet been *answered* by any one of this great number of Clergy." And in a reference to the Eaton trial itself, Cobbett admitted that he had no doubt a reply must certainly appear before too long because "the Church will hardly leave her defence, in this case, *wholly* to the Attorney General, the Special Jury, and the Judges." Assuming the role of a dutiful church-goer, Cobbett

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[217]Michael T. Davis. "Eaton, Daniel Isaac," in *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, ed. Joyce Bellamy and John Saville (Macmillan Press, 2000), 58-63.

[218] After his prison term, Houston emigrated to the United States where he formed a part of a group of freethinking journalists. See Jonathan Sarna, "The Freethinker, the Jews and the Missionaries: George Houston and the Mystery of "Israel Vindicated"," *AJS Review* 5(1980).

suggested that every parishioner has "a right to call upon the minister of his own parish for an antidote against this deadly poison" and he therefore called on his own parish minister, the Rev. Richard Baker (Rector of Botley) to defend the faith.[219] Cobbett would have (had he read it) disagreed with much of the contents of the third part of *The Age of Reason*, and his call for a reply to it may have been genuine. However Cobbett had the ulterior motive of attempting to call-out and embarrass Rev. Baker, with whom he was "at open enmity."[220] Indeed, Cobbett became so incensed by an anti-reform sermon of Baker's that he supposedly admitted that he "longed to horsewhip him in the pulpit for talking such nonsense."[221] Cobbett offered to publish, at his own expense, any reply to Paine that Baker (or any other Church of England cleric) would write. Baker initially took up Cobbett's challenge to provide a "sufficient antidote to the deadly poison" of Paine's latest work, but balked at some of the terms by which Cobbett would publish the work (a major sticking point being that Cobbett would encourage Eaton to sell Baker's reply in his bookshop).[222] As the summer of 1812 wore on, the promised reply never materialized and ultimately Baker withdrew his intent, giving Cobbett the chance to be indignant yet secretly pleased at Baker's lack of nerve. In order to compound the shame, months later Cobbett published a letter from the "father of a family" who had been waiting in vain for Baker's reply, since "by some means Paine's work has got into my family, and as that Gentleman [Baker] says

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[219] William Cobbett, "Mr. Eaton.--Paine's Age of Reason," *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* 21, no. 24, June 13 (1812).

[220] Lewis Melville, *Life and Letters of William Cobbett in England and America* 2vols. (New York: John Lane Company, 1913), vol. 1:250.

[221] Related in an anecdote to Pitt Cobbett, who edited an 1885 edition of William Cobbett's *Rural Rides*. See footnote on page 65 of William Cobbett, *Rural rides in the counties of Surrey, Kent, Sussex, Hants, Berks, Oxford, Bucks, Wilts, Somerset, Gloucester, Hereford, Salop, Worcester, Stafford, Leicester, Hertford, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridge, Huntingdon, Nottingham, Lincoln, York, Lancaster, Durham, and Northumberland, during the years 1821-1832; with economical and political observations by the late William Cobbett.*, 2 vols. (London: Reeves and Turner, 1885).

[222] William Cobbett, "Summary of Politics. Mr. Eaton.--Paine's Age of Reason," *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* 21, no. 25, June 20 (1812).———, "Summary of Politics. Mr. Eaton.--Paine's Age of Reason," *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* 21, no. 25, June 20 (1812).

that it ought to have an antidote…I am very anxious to have it for my children and for myself, as I would not willingly continue in error."[223]

Although Baker never penned his reply to Paine, the third part of *The Age of Reason* did not go wholly unanswered, and Cobbett's call for an antidote to Paine's pernicious pamphlet was taken up by Joanna Southcott (1750-1814), the controversial English mystic, prophetess and founder of a religious sect (the Southcottians). In her 1812 pamphlet *An Answer to Thomas Paine's Third Part of the Age of Reason*, Southcott combined her own direct experiences with prophetic revelation with a millenarian jeremiad against Paine and irreligion. Confirming Cobbett's contention that the Eaton trial had done much to publicize the third part of *The Age of Reason*, Southcott admitted that prior to the trial of Eaton she had never read Paine's religious writings, although she had "heard much talk of his books, and the injury they have done to many." Having read Paine's "blasphemous" new book, she saw it as nothing more than "folly" that reveals the "darkness of [Paine's] understanding concerning the scriptures." Southcott worried for the careless reader with a "weak mind" who was unable to detect the folly of Paine's work and would thereby be "carried away with his pernicious doctrines." [224] While ostensibly alarmed by what she had read in Paine, Southcott was not entirely surprised by it. Placing Paine's book in a prophetic context, Southcott considered infidelity and unbelief as having been foretold in the Scriptures, whereby future ages would scoff in disbelief at the truth of the Christian message. Indeed, Southcott alluded to the spread of infidelity as one of the signs (among others) that the end of days were quickly approaching. Nevertheless, Southcott who saw

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[223] William Cobbett, "Answers," *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* 22, no. 19, November 7 (1812): 606.———, "Answers," *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* 22, no. 19, November 7 (1812): 606.

[224] Joanna Southcott, *An Answer to Thomas Paine's Third Part of the Age of Reason. Published by D.I. Eaton; Likewise to S. Lane, a Calvinistic Preacher, at Yeovil, in Somersetshire; and to Hewson Clarke, editor of the Scourge, and Late of Emanuel college, Cambridge.* (London: Printed by Marchant and Galabin, 1812), 2.

herself as a prophet, called for people to repent or suffer the wrath of an angry God before it was too late. Southcott conceded that Cobbett's call for a clerical response to Paine was appropriate, since "it is the duty of every minister to do all in his power to stop the torrent of this growing evil." Yet, Southcott, who was constantly at odds with ministers of all stripes, was ultimately skeptical as to the result since she asked "how can the clergy convince such men, that are so hardened in unbelief? It is out of their power." [225] Only one power could possibly stand a chance of convincing dedicated unbelievers, and that is the power of God's revelation, which Southcott was most suited to deliver.

Taking a much less controversial approach to defending Christianity was a Yorkshire vicar, the Rev. Timothy Metcalf Shann in his *Observations on Certain Passages of the Old Testament* (1812). Shann took a more conventional approach to the third part of *The Age of Reason,* echoing many of the responses to the first two parts of the work. Shann portrayed the third part of *The Age of Reason* as nothing more than "buffoonery, vulgarity and irreverence," and Paine as little more than a blowhard who let his uneducated mind wander far beyond its capacities. For Shann, there was nothing new in Paine's writings that had not already been argued more capably and in a "more gentlemanly manner," and which had also been soundly defeated innumerable times before.[226] Nevertheless, Shann gave a point-by point refutation of Paine's book, focusing most intently on how to deal with the supposed "difficulties" that Paine had brought up in his attack upon the scriptures.

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[225] Ibid., 39.
[226] Timothy Metcalf Shann, *Observations on Certain Passages of the Old Testament, Cited in the Historical Books of the New Testament, As Prophecies...In Answer to Paine's Age of Reason, Part the Third. By the Rev. T.M. Shann, A.M.* (York: Printed by C. Peacock, 1812), 9.

2.7 CONCLUSION

The controversy over *The Age of Reason* lay dormant for about a decade after Paine's death, until it was re-ignited when Richard Carlile, a central figure in working class radical reform, and a lifelong fan of Paine, began to systematically republish all of Paine's works. In December of 1817, Carlile read Paine's *The Age of Reason* and it had such a deep and lasting impact on him that he would later opine that it "contains a finer system of ethics, and is more calculated to improve and exalt the human faculties than anything which can be congregated from that Book [the Bible] which it so ably investigates."[227] By December of 1818 Carlile began publishing all of Paine's religious writings, beginning with the first part of *The Age of Reason*, which was priced cheaply enough (1s, 6d) that the thousand-copy print run sold out within a month and was soon followed by a second edition.[228] Carlile also printed a bound compilation of Paine's religious writings under the title *The Theological Works of Thomas Paine.*[229] Not surprisingly, the reprinting of Paine's religious writings garnered its own legal reaction. Richard Carlile followed in the footsteps of Thomas Williams and Daniel Isaac Eaton by garnering eleven indictments for blasphemy for republishing *The Age of Reason*, and he spent nearly six years in prison.[230] In the wake of the publicity garnered by Carlile's trial, some old responses to *The Age of Reason* were dusted off and similarly republished, while a few new tracts were written to once again refute *The Age of Reason*. William Wait's tract *The Last Days of a Person*

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[227] Quoted in Joel H Wiener, "Collaborators of a Sort: Thomas Paine and Richard Carlile," in *Citizen of the World: Essays on Thomas Paine*, ed. Ian Dyck (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 106.
[228] Ibid., 109.
[229] Carlile, *The Theological Works of Thomas Paine*. This compilation contains parts one and two of *The Age of Reason*, as well as the *Letter to the Hon. Thomas Erskine*, *Essay on the Origin of Free-Masonry*, and *Reply to the Bishop of Llandaff*. It also contains the Eaton-titled third part of *the Age of Reason*, although Carlile is quick to point out that it was "not intended by Paine to have borne that title."(ii)
[230] Carlile was only sentenced to a three year jail term, but he actually remained in prison for six years (until 1825) because he refused to accept the financial provisions of his sentence.

Who Had Been Thomas Paine's Disciple, originally published in 1802, was brought into print again in 1819. Samuel Drew, who had received praise in 1799 for his *Remarks, on the First Part of a Book, Entitled 'The Age of Reason'* revised and enlarged his book in 1820 for a second edition. In a preface to this second edition, Drew decried the "recent attempts" that had been undertaken to disseminate *The Age of Reason* "among the lower classes of society" by the most recent shill for infidelity, "the person of Mr. Carlile."[231] Richard Watson's *Apology for the Bible*, which had already gained a reputation as *the* definitive refutation of Paine, was again printed in the wake of Carlile's publishing ventures. Watson's work remained the standard defense of Christianity against Painite infidelity, and was published numerous times throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Britain and in the United States (it even appeared in French translation in 1829).[232]

A few authors even wrote some new responses to Paine, such as William Grisenthwaite, who wrote *A Refutation of Every Argument Brought against the Truth of Christianity, and Revealed Religion, by Thomas Paine*.[233] John Bellamy, outraged by Carlile's recently launched newspaper *The Deist*, fired back with his own defense against both Paine and Carlile's brand of irreligion in *The Anti-Deist: Being a Vindication of the Bible, in Answer to the Publication Called the Deist*.[234] And Thomas Broughton, playing off Paine's title, penned *The Age of*

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[231] Samuel Drew, *Remarks, on the First Part of a Book, Entitled "The Age of Reason," addressed to Thomas Paine, its Author. Second Edition Revised, and Considerably Enlarged* (Cornwall: J. H. Drew, 1820), x.
[232] Richard Watson and L. T. Ventouillac, *Apologie ou défense de la Bible : dans une suite de lettres addressées a Thomas Paine, auteur d'un ouvrage intitulé "L'age de la raison," & c Par Richard Watson; ouvrage traduit de l'Anglais, suivi d'un résumé de preuves en faveur du Christianisme et d'un appendice. Dédié avec permission a l'Archevêque de Cantorbery par L.T. Ventouillac*, trans. L. T. Ventouillac (London: C.J.G. et F. Rivington, 1829).
[233] W. Grisenthwaite, *A Refutation of Every Argument Brought Against the Truth of Christianity, and Revealed Religion, By Thomas Paine, in the First Part of His Work, Called 'The Age of Reason.'* ([London]: Printed and Published by H. Neville, 1822).
[234] John Bellamy, *The Anti-Deist: Being a Vindication of the Bible, in Answer to the Publication Called The Deist. Containing Also a Refutation of the Erroneous Opinions held Forth in The Age of Reason. And in a Recent Publication, Entitled, Researches on Ancient Kingdoms* (London: Printed by A.J. Valpy, 1819).

Christian Reason: Being a Refutation of the Theological and Political Principles of Thomas Paine, M. Volney and the Whole Class of Political Naturalists; Whether Atheists or Deists.[235] While a further exploration of this "second wave" of responses to *The Age of Reason* is beyond the scope of this dissertation, they nevertheless show that *The Age of Reason* remained controversial beyond both the initial publication of the work and even Paine's life.[236]

The initial "first wave" of the controversy over the "three" parts of *The Age of Reason* spanned more than fifteen years and included a diverse group of writers, from laymen to High-Church clerics, from unorthodox mystical writers to rationalistic Unitarians, from self-avowed common men to highly trained Biblical scholars. While the arguments, writing styles, and theological orientations of these respondents varied greatly, they could all agree that Deism was a dangerous theological path that should not be taken, and therefore *The Age of Reason* had to be answered. In the next three chapters, I will discuss the ways that Paine's respondents perceived the danger that *The Age of Reason* represented, and the strategies that they used to defuse the perniciousness of Paine's Deism.

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[235] Thomas Broughton, *The Age of Christian Reason: Being a Refutation of the Theological and Political Principles of Thomas Paine, M. Volney and the Whole Class of Political Naturalists; Whether Atheists or Deists* (London: Printed for F.C. And J. Rivington, 1820).

[236] In 1855 the Nashville, TN Methodist minister Thomas Summers charged that the "infidelity which prevails in Great Britain and the United States has resulted, directly or indirectly, more from Mr Paine's writings than from those of all others who have employed their pens against the Bible." Thomas O. Summers, *A Refutation of the Theological Works of Thomas Paine, Not Noticed by Bishop Watson in His 'Apology for the Bible'* (Nashville, Tenn.: Published by E. Stevenson & F.A. Owen, Agents, for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South., 1855), iii. Later in nineteenth century, Theodore Roosevelt called Paine a "filthy little atheist" who "apparently esteemed a bladder of dirty water as the proper weapon with which to assail Christianity." Theodore Roosevelt, *Gouverneur Morris* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1891), 289. *The Age of Reason* was even still drawing responses as late as 1981, when a critique of the work appeared in an evangelical Christian law review. See Joseph P. Gudel, "An Examination & Critique of Thomas Paine's Age of Reason," *Simon Greenleaf Law Review* 1(1981).

3.0 "THE GRAND APOSTACY FROM CHRIST": DEISM, SOCIETY AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

In his 1799 book *The Inspector, or Select Literary Intelligence*, the Church of Ireland parish priest, scientist, and Biblical chronologist William Hales sounded the alarm generally about the danger to the British Isles from a "triple-headed spectre" which he saw as waging the "most tremendous warfare ever conducted by the united powers of INFIDELITY and ANARCHY."[237] With the stakes so high, Hales was not shy about naming each of the heads of this dangerous specter, which he identified as the "three *Philosophizing* Schools in Christendom;--*French* Philosophism, *German* Illuminism, and *English* Unitarianism."[238] Nor was Hales timid in pointing the finger at the British press, which he cast as bearing much of the responsibility for the spread of the dangerous principles through the publishing and dissemination of "bad" books. Hales dealt with each of the three heads of the specter in turn, but he saved some of his most stinging barbs for the French, who had "openly taken the lead in the Grand Apostacy from Christ" and whose "Gallic Infidelity" had been "planned and executed with truly diabolical subtilty" by those "prime missionaries Voltaire and his gang."[239] Lest his readers be lulled into thinking that Voltaire's gang are only Frenchmen, Hales quickly singled

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[237] From William Hales, *The Inspector, or Select Literary Intelligence for the Vulgar A.D. 1798, but Correct A.D. 1801, the First Year of the XIXth Century* (London: Printed for J. White, 1799), 3.
[238] Ibid., xv.
[239] Ibid., 28-9.

out Paine's *The Age of Reason* as stemming from the "grand battery of French Philosophism." While Hales had little good to say about Voltaire, whom he took as being the leader of the French infidel school, he portrayed Paine as being but a pale shadow of his French schoolmasters. Casting aspersions on Paine's education and his literary ability, Hales called Paine the "most illiterate but not least mischievous of the French school," and he characterized *The Age of Reason* as being completely derivative and unoriginal. Indeed, *The Age of Reason* was little more than Paine "[a]ping his master" Voltaire.[240]

Hales' characterization of Paine is common throughout the responses to *The Age of Reason*. As many of the respondents to *The Age of Reason* were fond of pointing out, Paine was but the most recent (and often the least skillful) example of a century-long intellectual tradition that has sought, unsuccessfully, to undermine the very foundations of revealed religion. Paine was dismissed outright as the tail-end of a vanquished and declining "philosophizing" Deist tradition, and his respondents derided *The Age of Reason* as little more than the death-rattle of a theological army whose attacks had only made Christian theology stronger. Paine's theology was characterized as derivative and unoriginal, with *The Age of Reason* verging on the plagiaristic. There is even a good bit of frustration, bordering on exasperation, that Paine's Deistic arguments even need refutation, especially since his re-hashed arguments had already been adequately rebutted so many times before by "men of the first characters, for learning and piety."[241] The forces of Christianity had already been successful in repulsing the Deist onslaught,

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[240] Ibid., 23, 172. Along with Paine, Hales also sees the English satirist Peter Pindar (John Wolcot) as part of the French school of infidelity.

[241] Delaware Waggoner [David Nelson?], *An Investigation of that False, Fabulous and Blasphemous Misrepresentation of Truth, Set Forth by Thomas Paine*, 2. There is often a healthy dose of expressed humility by the respondents to *The Age of Reason* who see their own refutations of Deism as being somehow inferior to those intellectual giants (such as John Locke) who have already adequately and sufficiently defended the faith.

and Paine's most current attack on the redoubtable bulwarks of Christianity was evidence of his foolhardiness and pig-headed arrogance.

Certainly Paine's respondents were engaged in a clear rhetorical strategy that sought to undercut the very basis or legitimacy of Paine's writings and the arguments that he employed against the Bible, Christianity and revealed religion. Despite their initial disdainful dismissal of Paine's hackneyed attacks, his respondents do engage with the finer points of the arguments in *The Age of Reason*, for to leave them unchallenged would be to give Paine (and Deism) the last word. Some respondents do so better than others, which is to be expected, owing to the wide variety of people who responded to *The Age of Reason*--from eminent scholars and High-Church Bishops, to those who proudly proclaim their status as laymen or common men without the benefits of formal theological training. Whatever the lack of merit in Paine's arguments, all of the respondents were highly attuned to the dangers that his Deism posed not just for the individuals who might be foolish enough to accept *The Age of Reason's* Deism, but also the threat to society itself. Theologically speaking, Christianity had little or nothing to fear from Paine or his Deistic cohort. The same, however, could not be said for individual morality and social stability.

In this chapter I will argue that Paine's respondents were as much concerned with the social and political implications of Deism as they were about the merits of Paine's Deistic attacks on revealed religion, the Bible and Christianity. As the respondents defended the validity of divine revelation as a source for religious truth, they linked Paine to his intellectual forbearers as a way of discrediting what they saw as his stale and hackneyed arguments. I argue, however, that they also linked him to Deism to emphasize the dire effect that it has on society as a whole. The bloody progress of the French Revolution became the example *par excellence* of what can

happen when an entire country abandons its Christian underpinnings for Deism (or outright atheism). Yet there is a good deal of variety among the respondents in their interpretation of the progress of the French Revolution, and their responses to *The Age of Reason* served as a discursive battleground over the connection between republican politics and religious infidelity. As I will show, some of Paine's respondents saw *The Age of Reason* as the iron-clad proof that republicanism and Deism were inherently and fundamentally linked, and Paine became the pernicious centerpiece uniting religious infidelity, radical republicanism, and the French Revolution. Other respondents rejected this conclusion by arguing that republicanism did not entail Deism, and that Christianity is fundamental to a republican political system.

I will show how the social and political implications of Deism anchored much of the rhetoric in the responses to *The Age of Reason*. To refute *The Age of Reason* meant more than just dealing with Paine's arguments; it meant showing what Deism entailed. This involved "placing" Paine in his Deistic tradition as well as giving concrete examples of the social destructiveness of Deism. But it also spurred discussion about the link between radicalism in religion and radicalism in politics.

3.1 THE DEISTIC GENEOLOGY OF *THE AGE OF REASON*

The Age of Reason was neither the first book nor the last to raise the alarm against religious infidelity. The threat of the ever-increasing appeal of Deism had been a common trope throughout the eighteenth century and inspired numerous sermons, pamphlets and books all

intended to counter the creeping poison of perceived infidelity.[242] Emerging in the late seventeenth century and continuing throughout the eighteenth century, Deists such as Lord Herbert of Cherbury, John Toland, Thomas Chubb, Matthew Tindal, Thomas Woolston, Peter Annet and David Hume represented a British Deist tradition that by mid-century was bolstered by an emerging French infidel tradition represented by Pierre Bayle, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Denis Diderot, Claude Adrien Helvetius, Baron D'Holbach, and the arch-infidel of them all, Voltaire.[243] Reactions, replies and sermons against Deism were numerous, but in the case of John Toland, it even involved prosecution, with his work *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696) being publicly burned in Dublin by the hangman.[244]

By the time *The Age of Reason* appeared, its opponents were able to draw on a century-long Christian apologetic tradition that not only sought to discredit Deism, but also tried to show that Christian belief was rational and valid. John Locke stands as one of the most frequently venerated and referred to figures in the responses to *The Age of Reason*, owing generally to Locke's status as one of the most able philosophers of the previous century and specifically to his defense of Christianity in his work *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695). Isaac Newton is similarly offered as an exemplary figure who was not only *the* preeminent rational scientist of his age, but who also fervently maintained his faith in the Christian religion.[245] The English Unitarian minister John Estlin, for example, in his 1796 refutation of *The Age of Reason* looks to

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[242] For more on early Deism and anti-Deism, see John Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule and Religion: The Age of Enlightenment in England, 1660-1750*. (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976) and James A. Herrick, *Radical Rhetoric of the English Deists: The Discourse of Skepticism, 1680-1750* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997).

[243] See Bernard N. Schilling, *Conservative England and the Case Against Voltaire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950).

[244] See Robert Sullivan, *John Tolland and the Deist Controversy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

[245] That Locke and Newton became, by the 1790s, paragons of Christian apologetics is in some tension with how their own contemporaries viewed them. As Redwood shows in his *Reason, Ridicule and Religion*, both Locke and Newton were repeatedly accused by their contemporary opponents as promulgating opinions that were either Deistic or which pointed the way towards Deism.

Newton and Locke as among two of the "best and wisest men of past ages" in whose "memory science will ever cherish with grateful fondness" and who did not reject revealed religion nor Christianity.[246] The American Donald Fraser, in his compilation of eminent historical figures who maintained their belief in the Christian system, went so far as to chide that Paine should "feel a little abashed!" when up against such great masters of rationality as Locke and Newton.[247]

Along with Locke and Newton, the respondents to *The Age of Reason* drew on other popular anti-Deistic writers, such as Charles Leslie and John Leland, to show that the Deism that Paine espoused had already been satisfactorily confuted.[248] As an additional counterweight against such a rogues gallery of infidels and Deists, the more well-read of Paine's respondents offered up a variety of other Christian apologists, such as Joseph Addison, George Lyttelton, Samuel Clarke, Thomas Sherlock, Soame Jenyns, and William Paley, to name a few.[249] Such a

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[246] John Prior Estlin, *Evidences of Revealed Religion, and Particularly Christianity, Stated, with Reference to a Pamphlet Called The Age of Reason; in a Discourse Delivered at the Chapel in Lewin's-Mead, Bristol, December 25, 1795. And with Omissions, in Essex Street, London, January 17, 1796* (Bristol (England): Printed by N. Biggs, 1796), 9.

[247] Fraser, *A Collection of Select Biography: or, The Bulwark of Truth: Being a Sketch of the Lives and Testimonies of Many Eminent Laymen, in Different Countries, who have Professed their Belief in, and Attachment to the Christian Religion --Whether Distinguished as Statesmen, Patriots, Philosophers, &c. --To Which Are Prefixed Two Letters to Thomas Paine, Containing Some Important Queries and Remarks Relative to the Probable Tendency of his Age of Reason*: 38.

[248] Charles Leslie's 1697 anti-Deistic work *A Short and Easie Method with the Deists* was re-printed numerous times throughout the eighteenth century, and came to be one of the more well-known and well-respected defenses of Christianity. A number of Paine's respondents refer favorably to Leslie's work, such as George Miller who quotes extensively from Leslie, and Uzal Ogden who includes extracts from Leslie in an appendix to his *Antidote to Deism*. Andrew Fuller suggests that his readers could do worse than to read John Leland's "well-written" *View of the Principle Deistical Writers* (1754) which offered a "consise and able" refutation of the "dark insinuation, low wit, profane ridicule, and gross abuse" of such infidels as Shaftesbury, Tindal, Morgan, Bolingbroke, Voltaire, Hume, and Gibbon. Andrew Fuller, *The Gospel its Own Witness: or the Holy Nature, and Divine Harmony of the Christian Religion, Contrasted with the Immorality and Absurdity of Deism* (Clipstone [England]: Printed by J.W. Morris; Sold by Button; Gardiner; Ogle; and Williams, London; Ogle, Edinburgh and Glasgow; James, Bristol; and Brightly, Bungay, 1799), 1-2.

[249] Addison (1672-1719) was known for his 1691 *Evidences of the Christian Religion*; Lyttelton (1709-1773) for his 1747 *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul*.; Clarke (1675-1729) for his *Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God* (which compiled two previous essays on the evidences of Christianity). Thomas Sherlock (1678-1761) was the bishop of London who penned *The Use and Interest of Prophecy* (1725) and *Tryal of the Witnsses* (1729) against the Deists Anthony Collins and Thomas Woolston. Soame Jenyns (1704-1787)

pantheon of notable and venerated Christian writers have, in the view of one of Paine's respondents, provided "masterly apologies" for Christianity that have "compleately overturned" the fallacious reasoning of their Deist adversaries.[250]

Paine's respondents gain a number of rhetorical advantages by referencing both the "group of champions in the cause of infidelity" and the cadre of Christian apologists.[251] In the first place, a number of the respondents betray a pedagogical motivation in which the author seeks to give their readers access to the larger discussion over Deism. The Church of Ireland cleric Daniel M'Neille, for example, notes in his *Dogmatism Exposed* that many "persons will read Mr. Paine's book, who probably have never heard of those illustrious writers, who have vindicated the truth of Christianity from the sophistry of pretended philosophers."[252] Hoping to remedy this ignorance, M'Neille refers his readers to the works of John Leland, Thomas Sherlock, Gilbert West, George Lyttelton and Richard Watson.[253] The New Jersey minister Uzal Ogden went further by including extensive footnotes into his two volume *Antidotes to Deism,* which he published in part for young people who have not been adequately educated in the "principle arguments demonstrating the authenticity of the sacred writings."[254] Indeed, Ogden's

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wrote *View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion* (1776) and Williams Paley, a contemporary of Paine, was held in esteem for his *A View of the Evidences of Christianity*. William Hales, a Church of Ireland minister who responded to Paine gave his "unconditional recommendation of Clarke, Jenyns, and Paley, as correct elementary standard books" in the defence of Christianity against Deism. Hales, *The Inspector, or Select Literary Intelligence for the Vulgar A.D. 1798, but Correct A.D. 1801, the First Year of the XIXth Century*: xiv.

[250] Churchman, *Christianity the Only True Theology*, 4.

[251] Ebenezer Bradford, *Mr. Thomas Paine's Trial; Being an Examination of his Age of Reason. To Which is Added, Two Addresses, the First to the Deists, and the Second to the Youths of America. With Some Brief Remarks on Gilbert Wakefield's Examination of Said Age of Reason. Dedicated to George Washington, President of the United States of America. By the Author of the Dialogue Between Philagathus and Pamela* (Boston: Printed at Boston, by Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer T. Andrews, Faust's Statue, no. 45, Newbury-Street, 1795), 19.

[252] M'Neille, *Dogmatism Exposed, and Sophistry Detected: or, a Confutation of Paine's "Age of Reason,"* 18.

[253] M'Neille is here referring to Richard Watson's 1777 *Apology for Christianity* which was written against Gibbon, and not his reply to *The Age of Reason*, which would not be published for another two years.

[254] Uzal Ogden, *Antidote to Deism. The Deist Unmasked; or An Ample Refutation of All the Objections of Thomas Paine, Against the Christian Religion; as Contained in a Pamphlet, Intitled, The Age of Reason; Addressed to the Citizens of these States. By the Reverend Uzal Ogden, Rector of Trinity Church, at Newark, in the State of New-*

work is as much a primer in anti-Deistic apologetics as it is a specific refutation of *The Age of Reason*. In my next chapter I will explore more fully these issues of Paine's readership and the pedagogical motivations behind a number of the responses to *The Age of Reason.*

By referencing Paine's Deistic genealogy, the respondents are able to claim an intellectual credibility for their own works. By enumerating the key historical players in the controversy over Deism, an author signals to the reader that they know what they are talking about and that they are not neophytes to either Christian apologetics or the century-long battle against Deism. English schoolmaster Thomas Meek, for example, notes with some pride that Christian apologetics is a subject that he has "studied for eight or nine years" and he shows his mastery of the subject by frequently contrasting Paine with "every champion of infidelity who ever went before."[255]

Yet Paine's respondents also foreground their familiarity with the history of Deism as a way of undercutting Paine's famously strident claim in the first part of *The Age of Reason* that "My own mind is my own church." Paine's respondents hoped to show instead that his own mind was, in fact, indebted to many others. William Jackson, for example, charges that *The Age of Reason* contains "scarcely any thing of novelty," since "Hobbes, Spinoza, Bayle, Voltaire, Toland, Tindal, Collins, Morgan, Mandeville, Chubb, have, in their several ways, anticipated everything to be found in *The Age of Reason,*" and have done so with "with more point, raillery, and acuteness."[256] A few respondents even go so far as to claim that Paine is little more than a

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Jersey. To Which is Prefixed, Remarks on Boulanger's Christianity Unveiled. And to The Deist Unmasked, is Annexed A short Method with the Deists. By the Reverend Charles Leslie, 2 vols. (Newark: Printed by John Woods, 1795).

[255] Meek, *Sophistry Detected*, 44, 5.

[256] Jackson, *Observations in Answer to Mr. Thomas Paine's "Age of Reason,"* 52. If we were to add to Jackson's list a few more names, such as Hume, Diderot, D'Holbach, Bolingbroke, Woolston, Shaftsburgy and Frederick II (King of Prussia), we would get a pretty fair representation of the "usual suspects" (both foreign and domestic) of Deism, unbelief and infidelity, who show up repeatedly in the responses to *The Age of Reason.*

plagiarizer. The pseudonymous True Briton charges that *The Age of Reason*'s hackneyed ideas are sufficient to "dispute...[the] author's claim to originality of conception," and for "other proofs of plagiarism I refer you to Lord Bolingbroke's, Lord Shaftesbury's, Tindall's, and Toland's Works."[257] A pseudonymous Scottish author slyly suggested that perhaps *The Age of Reason* would be more aptly named "The Age *of Plagiarism*."[258]

While Paine's respondents did not generally hold his Deistic forbearers in very high esteem, they occasionally deemed them more intellectually coherent than anything found in *The Age of Reason*. Along with pointing out the extreme derivativeness of *The Age of Reason*, a number of respondents negatively contrasted Paine with his infidel predecessors. The Maryland Lutheran minister G.W. Snyder, for example, begins the *Age of Reason Unreasonable* by cataloging the "great champions" of Deism who, while failing in their attempt to "overthrow all revealed religion," should nevertheless receive some credit for producing some of "strongest objections against the religion of Jews and Christians." Snyder then contrasts these Deistic champions to the "inferior tribe of deists" who are but poor disciples of the former group and who can only delight in "quibbles, ridicules and jests." Paine, Snyder charges, belongs to this inferior tribe, and *The Age of Reason* is "nothing but a jumble of sentences, which the author borrowed from most of the above cited deistical writers."[259] In fact, *The Age of Reason* is so paltry a performance that Paine's eminent predecessors "would have been ashamed of" the

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[257] True Briton, *A Letter to the Analytical Reviewers: Being an Examination of Their Account of "The Age of Reason"…to Which is Added an Address to the People of England. By a True Briton…and a Graduate of an English University* (Southampton1794), 44-5.

[258] Lover of Truth, *Revelation, the Best Foundation for Morals: Being, an Investigation of the True & Fabulous in the Age of Reason, and the French Philosophy by a Lover of Truth* (Edinburgh: Printed for J. and J. M'cliesh, New Town, 1798), 4.

[259] G.W. Snyder, *The Age of Reason Unreasonable; or, The Folly of Rejecting Revealed Religion. In a Series of Letters to a Friend. By G.W. Snyder, A.M.* (Philadelphia: Published by William Cobbett, Opposite Christ Church, 1798), 31-32. The champions of Deism that Snyder names are: "Lord Cherbury, Mr. Hobbs, Charles Blunt, Toland, the Earl of Shaftbury, Mr. Collins, Woolston, Tindal, Morgan; Chubb, Lord Bolingbroke; Mr. Hume and Gibbon—in France: Mons. Baile, Rousseau and Voltaire"

book.[260] That Paine is an embarrassment to his own intellectual tradition is a point emphasized by one American reviewer who charges that upon reading *The Age of Reason*, even an "ingenious Deist would blush to see his cause so miserably handled."[261]

In addition to implying that Paine is an unoriginal hack, his respondents tie *The Age of Reason* to its intellectual predecessors as a way to foreground their frustration with Paine's ignorance. If Paine had any real grasp of the previous century's battles over Deism, he would certainly have known that Christianity had already carried the day. When the pseudonymous country carpenter Will Chip assures his readers that Paine has "not advanced a single syllable that has not been said forty times before, and which has not been confuted over and over again a hundred years ago," he is expressing a frustration that is common to many of the respondents.[262] For not only is *The Age of Reason* highly derivative, but the Deistical arguments that Paine puts forth have been repeatedly refuted over the course of the previous century. By offering such "stale" or newly "vamped up" arguments, Paine displays his ignorance of the defeats that former Deists have met in the face of triumphant Christian apologists. [263] He is also showing his presumptive arrogance for thinking that he is offering something new. Daniel M'Neille, for example, nicely sums up the opinion of many of Paine's respondents when he remarks that Paine has "done little else than repeat the stale objections of the Deistical writers" and he scolds Paine

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[260] Ibid., 157.
[261] "Observations on Several Paragraphs in Mr. Paine's 'Age of Reason'." *Mercury* 5:22 (March 20, 1795).
[262] Will Chip, [pseud.], *A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith: With a Few Plain Remarks on The Age of Reason. In a Letter from Will Chip, Carpenter, in Somersetshire, to T. Pain, Staymaker, in Paris* (London F&C Rivington, 1794), 11.
[263] Respondents such as Thomas Taylor, Elias Boudinot, and William Wait employ the metaphor that *The Age of Reason* is like an old piece of threadbare clothing that has, through Paine's use of ridicule and blasphemous language, been newly "vamped up" and made to appear new and appealing. Wait, for example, calls Paine an "infatuated unbeliever" who has merely offered "newly vamped the stale objections [against Christianity] which have been frequently and forcibly answered." William Wait, *The Last Days of a Person Who Had Been Thomas Paine's Disciple*, 3rd ed. (Bristol [England]: Printed for and sold by J. Lansdown, 1802), 11.

for "rak[ing] up the dying embers of a few objections which I suppose no person but himself would have considered as containing one spark that was capable of being revived."[264]

In part, this rhetoric of Paine's embarrassing unoriginality and ignorance is a strategy to invalidate *The Age of Reason* from any sort of serious consideration. Paine is not, his respondents argue, making any real contribution to religious knowledge, but is merely doing a poor job of repeating what has already been said. They also imply that he has shown his own educational deficiencies by not realizing his own intellectual genealogy. By bringing up Paine's ignorance and unoriginality, the respondents are able to showcase their familiarity with previous attacks upon Christianity, and thereby signal to their readers their own legitimacy to deal with Paine and his Deism. Had Paine not been such an uneducated hack, he would have certainly known that his arguments were not just derivative, but that they had already been sufficiently and repeatedly confuted by previous Christian apologists. Therefore, *The Age of Reason* adds nothing new to serious discussion and scarcely merits consideration as a book worth reading. I will return to this issue in Chapter 6, where I will show how the respondents foreground Paine's ignorance and unoriginality as a way to disqualify *The Age of Reason* from legitimate consideration in what theorist Jürgen Habermas has termed the *bourgeois public sphere*.

[264] M'Neille, *Dogmatism Exposed, and Sophistry Detected*, 5.

3.2 *THE AGE OF REASON* AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Christianity, Paine's respondents charge, clearly has nothing to fear from *The Age of Reason*, not the least owing to its author's seeming ignorance of previous Deist defeats (and Christian victories). As Virginia Presbyterian minister Moses Hoge affirms, despite the numerous Deistic attacks, Christianity's "bulwarks still breathe defiance to the fierce and numerous troops of new assailants...and her foundations stand firm as a rock against which the angry billows beat."[265] Paine's respondents characterized the work as eminently derivative, with perhaps its only novelty being that it was more blasphemous and arrogantly strident than that of any of its Deistic forbearers. If the work was so derivative, its author so unworthy of serious consideration, and scarcely offering any real threat to Christianity, then why did Paine's respondents feel compelled to respond to it? Most respondents would have certainly agreed that Christianity must be repeatedly and ardently defended, even against the most trite attacks against it. But within the responses are telling indications as to why *The Age of Reason* was perceived as a dangerous book that needed to be refuted, and these have less to do with the arguments Paine employed in *The Age of Reason* than the context of the work. Indeed, as one of the more eloquent opponents of Paine would remind his readers, it is the case that "times and circumstances often give importance to books beyond their own intrinsic merit."[266]

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[265] Moses Hoge, "The Sophist Unmasked in a Series of Letters, Addressed to Thomas Paine, Author of a Book Entitled, The Age of Reason," in *Christian Panoply; Containing An Apology for the Bible; in a Series of Letters, Addressed to Thomas Paine, Author of a Book Entitled The Age of Reason, Part the Second. By R. Watson, D.D. F.R.S. Lord Bishop of Landaff, and Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge: An Address to Scoffers at Religion. By the Same Author: and a Brief View of the Historical Evidences of Christianity. By William Paley, M.A. Arch Deacon of Carlysle*, ed. Moses Hoge (Shepherd's-Town [Va.]: Printed by P. Rootes & C. Blagrove, 1797), 352.

[266] Lover of Truth, *Revelation, the Best Foundation for Morals*, 90.

The French Revolution plays a central role in the way that the respondents reacted to *The Age of Reason,* and it is one of the largest bugaboos throughout the responses to the work, setting the tone for much of the alarmism of the response. Many of Paine's respondents lay the blame for the bloody societal chaos of the French Revolution squarely at the feet of French Deism, which rejected the Christian faith and its excellent morality. Once the self-restraint and humility of Christian morality had been undermined, it was but one small step to complete social breakdown, as evinced in the French Revolution. The French, they argue, were reaping the bitter harvest sown by Deism. As William O'Connor succinctly put it in his *Candid Remarks*: in France the "pernicious principles of their Deistical writers" have "destroyed all harmony and order, filling the multitude with gloomy, Sceptical and irreverent notions of the Deity." The end result being that they have "prepared the mind for all that anarchy, bloodshed and confusion which followed their emancipation, and still prevails."[267] This is precisely what has occurred in the streets of Paris, and the concomitant fear that such preparations for anarchy and bloodshed could continue on apace in the streets of London, Dublin, Boston, Philadelphia or New York is certainly on the minds of many who replied to *The Age of Reason.* In this section I will argue that Paine's respondents used the French Revolution as the empirical proof of Deism's inherent moral bankruptcy. I will show how Paine's respondents interpreted the worst abuses of the French Revolution as being the direct result of Deism's deleterious effects on society, a point that they were only too happy to highlight as a means of raising the alarm against the book. I will show how Paine's respondents frequently bring up his residence (and incarceration) in France as a way of making explicit this connection between the Deism of *The Age of Reason* and the French Revolution.

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[267] William O'Connor, *Candid Remarks, on Pain's Age of Reason* (Cork: printed by Robert Dobbyn, 1795), 13.

Drawing on a century-long anti-Deist intellectual tradition, Paine's respondents used common assumptions about Deism and Deists to implicate both Paine and the French Revolution. In the first place, they emphasized that Deism is a negative theology with a skeptical core that is only able to tear down rather than build up. Any positive theological assertions that a Deist might make they have stolen from Christianity, a view nicely summed up by Richard Watson's aspersion that there "is nothing in Deism but what is in Christianity; but there is much in Christianity which is not in Deism."[268] The pseudonymous Irenaeus expressed the same sentiment a bit more colorfully by suggesting that Deists "borrow all [their] ideas from the doctrines of Christianity, and having first plundered the Bible, are ready to burn it."[269] Not only was Deism a negative theology that affirms nothing and only delights in tearing down established systems, but it was also a hollow religious stance that provided little comfort to its adherents. This was especially true not only because of Deism's theological skepticism, but also because Deists supposedly denied any sort of afterlife, leaving its adherents bereft of any sort of hope for a future life beyond the grave. On this point it is clear that Paine's opponents are really talking past him in order to score points against Deism more generally, since Paine explicitly states in *The Age of Reason* that he does indeed believe in a future state of rewards and punishments after death. Yet Paine's respondents either discount his claims to believe in an afterlife or they ignore his pronouncement in order to raise the alarm more generally about Deistic vacuity.[270] The American Unitarian preacher Elhanan Winchester is not uncommon in his characterization of Deism as being "not capable of giving…satisfaction, comfort, peace, joy,

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[268] Richard Watson, *An Apology for the Bible*, 161.
[269] *Connecticut Courant*, January 19, 1795.
[270] It may also be a function of a more general tendency to equate Deism with Atheism. While some of Paine's opponents do understand the distinction between Deism and Atheism, others either unwittingly gloss over any differences or purposefully equate the two.

and assurance to its possessors." Although they may not see themselves as doing so, Deists would "rob us of our hope, joy, comfort, and assurance," and what is given in return is only "darkness, doubt, uncertainty, fear, anxiety, faint hopes, and despair." As point of proof, Winchester tells the story of an acquaintance who was for a "number of years, a zealous Deist, and he belonged to a club of the same stamp; but he never could find, that Deism could either give him power over his vices, or inward peace and satisfaction of mind."[271] Happily, this man would eventually return to Christianity (even becoming Christian minister), which afforded him all the positive attributes that Deism lacked.

That Deists deny an afterlife is not only a "cold and uncomfortable doctrine" which allows for only "dark and dreary" prospects, but it opens up the charge that Deism can offer little in the way of impelling humanity to virtuous or moral action.[272] Without a state of future rewards or punishments, Paine's respondents argue, there can be little if any motivation to lead a moral life. Again, although Paine is explicit in his affirmation of just such a future day of judgment, his opponents nevertheless charge that Deism lacks any valid morality, and thereby most Deists revel in immorality.[273] Their persistent skepticism has led them not only into dangerous notions of the divine, but has also led them to question the validity of morality itself. In freeing themselves from the supposedly oppressive doctrines of Christianity, Deists have also

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[271] Elhanan Winchester, *Ten Letters Addressed to Mr. Paine, in Answer to his Pamphlet, Entitled The Age of Reason. Containing Some Clear and Satisfying Evidences of the Truth of Divine Revelation; and Especially of the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus. By Elhanan Winchester* (Boston: Printed and Sold by John W. Folsom, no. 30, Union-Street, 1794), 103.

[272] Padman, *A Layman's Protest Against the Profane Blasphemy False Charges, and Illiberal Invective of Thomas Paine*, 136.

[273] Deists had to frequently and vehemently fight against this charge of immorality. One of the more common ways was to praise the morality of Jesus while subsequently co-opting it by claiming that Jesus was really just a rational moral teacher, a sort of proto-Deist. In his defense of *The Age of Reason*, American Deist Elihu Palmer admits that regarding the "morality which Christ preached, infidels, or the disbelievers in revelation, acknowledge its purity." Yet Palmer then fires at his pious opponents that it is precisely these so-called infidels who are usually more scrupulous in following Jesus' moral dictates "than those who make so great pretensions to piety"(Palmer, 52).

freed themselves from any kind of moral restraint. In his response to *The Age of Reason,* Elhanan Winchester blackened all Deists with the same brush. While he hoped that Paine might serve as the exception to the rule, Winchester relates that "I never yet knew a professed Deist a moral man" and he characterized them all as "being generally guilty of profanity, drunkenness, passion, pride, uncleanness, or some other scandalous vice."[274] The Cornish Methodist preacher and shoemaker Samuel Drew was a bit more charitable by admitting that he would not categorically state that "every Deist in theory must be immoral in practice; because I frequently observe the contrary." Yet Drew did make the more theoretical point that "morality cannot arise from principles of infidelity."[275] Underscoring the hollowness of Deist doctrine is the related charge that the only real reason that anyone would become a Deist is to justify their own immoral behavior, a point hammered home by the Lutheran G.W. Snyder, who charged that Deists reject Christianity so that "they might have the greater scope of living unrestrained by any religious principles, and saunter away their lives in the undisturbed repose of all sensual pleasures."[276]

While Deist immorality forms a common trope in the responses to *The Age of Reason*, Paine's respondents generalize from the personal to the social.[277] Many, if not most of the respondent to *The Age of Reason* took for granted that Christianity formed a "vital support to the

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[274] Winchester, *Ten Letters Addressed to Mr. Paine*, 101.
[275] Samuel Drew, *Remarks, on the First Part of a Book, Entitled "The Age of Reason," Addressed to Thomas Paine, its Author* (St. Austell: Printed at the Office of E. Hennah, 1799), v-vi.
[276] Snyder, *The Age of Reason Unreasonable*, 31. A tongue-in-cheek letter to the *Connecticut Courant* by "F. Crupper" makes a similar point that the licentious are attracted to Deism so as to justify their bad behavior. The fancifully named Crupper (a term which referred to a horse's rear-end) identifies himself as a proud member of "The Irreligious Society," and notes that *The Age of Reason* appealed to him because it taught him that there "be no hell." Such a tenet is of ultimate convenience and comfort to Crupper and his fellow members of the Irreligious Society, especially "when we had cheated, or lied, or defrauded, or got drunk, or committed any sin whatever." *Connecticut Courant*, February 2, 1795.
[277] Elihu Palmer specifically counters the pervasive view that Deists are categorically immoral. Palmer not only asserts that Deists are as honest members of society as any other sect, but he tasks the "opponents of deism" to "prove that its doctrines tend to destroy the peace and happiness of society." Palmer, *The Examiners Examined: Being a Defence of The Age of Reason*: 83.

government and the social order" and that it was "its primary moral underpinning."[278] Paine's respondents spend a good deal of time offering logical and historical proofs that Deism undermines the peace and happiness of society. Christianity is the glue that binds society together, and much of the outrage against Paine lies in his attempt to overturn this assumption, thereby inviting societal upheaval akin to the worst abuses of the French Revolution.[279] The English Baptist minister Andrew Fuller, one of the more strident critics of Deism, makes the contrast between Deism and Christianity the most stark. Portraying Deism as a system that "proposes the love of ourselves instead of the love of God," Fuller leads his reader to the conclusion that Deists and other "modern unbelievers" have "no standard of morals, except it be their own inclination."[280] Deist morality is anything that can justify their questionable behavior "as conveniency requires."[281] The effects of unbelief on the personal and the societal levels are predictable, and Fuller contrasts the Deists (who are "generally speaking, addicted to the grossest vices") with pious Christians who are the "most sober, upright, and useful members of the community."[282] While Christianity is a "source of happiness to individuals and society," Deism leaves humanity and society "without hope."[283] To do away with Christianity, to strip it and its morality from humanity is an attack on the fabric of society.

While Fuller focuses on the self-evident benefits that Christianity brings to the individual and to society, others argue that Deism removes any motivation for virtuous or moral behavior

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[278] Claeys, *Thomas Paine : Social and Political Thought*: 185.
[279] While Paine may have been trying to overthrow the view that Christianity formed the moral basis of society, he would in no way have seen himself as rejecting the moral necessity of religion as being the basis of society. He just did not think that that the Christian system, which was based on falsehoods, was really up to the task and he sought to supplant Christianity with the truly moral system of Deism. Remember that part of the reason Paine wrote *The Age of Reason* was partly as a reaction to what he saw as the danger posed by French atheists who were rejecting religion completely.
[280] Fuller, *The Gospel its Own Witness* 39.
[281] Ibid., 54.
[282] Ibid., 96.
[283] Ibid., 153.

because it completely does away with the notion of a God that will judge humanity on its actions. Moses Hoge charges Deists with unwisely trying to remove the "dread of an invisible avenger" who watches over our behavior. Such fear of an invisible avenger is not only crucial for the "firmest foundations of civil government," but is essential for civilization itself. For without a fear of God, society would most likely slip back into the "the barbarism of [our] ancestors."[284] William Wyche echoes Hoge by offering as a general maxim that "Man no longer dependent on his Master, will prey upon his fellow creatures" leading to an anarchic breakdown of the social order. Wyche even takes it as a sort of historical proof that "the doctrine of deism tends to destroy the peace and happiness of society has frequently been demonstrated."[285] While Wyche remains rather vague about the specifics of how and when this has been demonstrated, other respondents to *The Age of Reason* have one particular and very contemporary instance in mind: the French Revolution. Recourse to the shocking example of the French Revolution and its Deist underpinnings becomes the most frequent means by which Paine's respondents prove that a society that has become unmoored from Christianity will end up in anarchic bloodshed. Indeed, the French Revolution becomes *the* concrete historical example of the clear and present danger of religious infidelity. Whereas previous apologists may have only had a speculative and hypothetical sense of the societal implications of Deism, Paine's respondents had a real and contemporary example of the dangers of Deistic attacks against the Christian system. As the English exile William Cobbett wrote from Philadelphia in his 1796 book *The Bloody Buoy*, the

[284] Hoge, "The Sophist Unmasked in a Series of Letters, Addressed to Thomas Paine, Author of a Book Entitled, The Age of Reason," 330.
[285] Wyche, *An Examination of The Examiners Examined*, 41.

French Revolution serves as the "striking and experimental proof of the horrible effects of anarchy and infidelity"[286]

As a way to "prove" the more general claim that infidelity begets societal chaos, a number of responders to *The Age of Reason* invoke France and the horrors of the Revolution as the primary example of the dangers of rejecting Christianity and the perniciousness of Paine's Deism. In a scathing critique of *The Age of Reason* (and of the *Analytical Review* for its seemingly too favorable review of the book), the pseudonymous True Briton shows that he understands exactly the implications of Paine and his Deism, finding in Paine an attack on the very nature of British society, which had the King and the Church as twin pillars of society.[287] In *Rights of Man* Paine had attempted to topple the first of these pillars; now in *The Age of Reason* he was attacking the second. It comes as no surprise to the True Briton that Paine would pen a Deistic tract like *The Age of Reason*, since it is only "natural to expect that the same man who approved the diabolical attempt to make the lowest classes of the community dissatisfied with the administration of civil government, would also approve the impious effort to excite the popular murmur against the ecclesiastical establishment."[288] What other responders to *The Age of Reason* may have left as an unstated assumption, the True Briton is forthright in outlining that "*pure religion*" is the "source of good morals" and from which "a state derives its stability." The negative corollary, then assumes that "every state may ascribe its declension and ruin—either

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[286] William Cobbett, *The Bloody Buoy Thrown Out as a Warning to the Political Pilots of America: or, A Faithful Relation of a Multitude of Acts of Horrid Barbarity, Such as the Eye Never Witnessed, the Tongue Never Expressed, or the Imagination Conceived, Until the Commencement of the French Revolution. To Which is Added an Instructive Essay, Tracing These Dreadful Effects to Their Real Causes.* (Philadelphia: Printed for Benjamin Davies no. 68. High-Street, 1796), ix.

[287] Despite the vehemence of the True Briton's castigation of the *Analytical Review*, its review of *The Age of Reason* was not really all that favorable. The liberal-minded reviewer admits to reviewing it not out of any sense of inherent quality of the book but rather because Paine's notoriety was sure to make the work popular. *Analytical Review* 19 (1794): 159-65.

[288] True Briton, *A Letter to the Analytical Reviewers*, 17.

from the neglect, or corruption of religion."[289] For proof of these maxims the True Briton looks to the French, a nation that has "utterly renounced all belief in revelation," and may therefore serve to "teach us this awful lesson; government without religion is but an instrument in the hands of lawless men, whereby they may commit the most systematic wickedness with impunity, and exercise the most savage despotism with security."[290]

Other respondents are equally alarmed that Deism has been the primary cause of the anarchic unraveling of French society and they excoriate Paine for attempting to propagate such deleterious doctrines. The pseudonymous Protestant Lay-Dissenter, for example, charges that *The Age of Reason* seeks to incite "indiscriminate contempt of all established authority, to dissolve the Bonds of Society; and precipitate mankind from a state of knowledge, civilization, peace and quietness, to a state of Ignorance, Brutishness, War and Ferocity." Such has already come to pass in a "deplorable instance of such consequences, manifested in a neighboring country, which may be supposed to have arisen from such principles and such opinions as Mr. Paine holds, or affects to hold, and to impose on the world." [291]

Many of Paine's respondents were not shy about cataloging the worst abuses of the French as a means of forecasting to the world what would happen if infidelity were to flourish.[292] G.W. Snyder, for example, stingingly tasks Paine to "look about a few moments at his present home [France]: the broom of moral atheism has not yet swept off the gore that flowed from the establishment of the new religion…what else but assassinations, treacheries and cruelties, will

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[289] Ibid., 3.
[290] Ibid., 69.
[291] Protestant Lay-Dissenter, *Remarks on a Pamphlet Entitled the "Age of Reason,"* 79-80.
[292] In her recent book *The Reign of Terror in America,* Rachel Hope Cleves points out how extensive and explicit conservative writers were in descriptively cataloging the worst abuses of the French Revolution. She writes that "descriptions of bloodshed were almost always used to demonstrate the revolution's failures." While Cleves' book focuses primarily on American anti-Jacobin rhetoric, her characterization of the gothic descriptions of horror and bloodshed certainly holds for British writers as well. Rachel Hope Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America : Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2.

the history of the French revolution exhibit."[293] Irish minister John Anketell similarly wonders how Paine, who in *The Age of Reason* says that he "detests everything that is cruel," can reconcile it with himself to have served in the French Convention, since its proceedings have been "marked by unheard of inhumanity."[294] Anketell then goes on to itemize a few of the terrible things that the French have done in "rancorous rage," including having "destroyed the order of nobility, butchered their clergy in cold blood and with a truly diabolical degree of fury, confiscated and seized upon private property." Even more shocking still, the French have, "with unparalleled impiety and audacity denied the SUPREME BEING who created them!"[295]

Paine's respondents paint a bleak and bloody picture of a future in which Deism has supplanted Christianity, and they hope that the example of the French experiment with infidelity is sufficient enough to discourage anyone from taking *The Age of Reason* to heart. Some of the respondents, such as the English bank clerk John Padman, have faith that the "bloody and inhuman massacres" of the French will "afford a lesson of instruction" and will be a beacon to "assist us to escape the rocks of irreligion and impiety upon which they have so fatally been shipwrecked."[296] The American philanthropist Elias Boudinot casts his warning against *The Age of Reason* in eschatological terms by arguing that both the spread of infidelity and the French Revolution were predicted in the Scriptures as signs of the immanent approach of the Second

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[293] Snyder, *The Age of Reason Unreasonable*, 112.
[294] John Anketell, *Strictures Upon Paine's Age of Reason : Into Which are Incorporated a Few Observations Upon a Belfast Edition of Remarks upon Paine's Pamphlet. By a Person Subscribing Himself A Citizen of the World By The Rev. John Anketell, A.B. Curate of Donaghendry, Co. Tyrone, Ireland* (Dublin: Printed for the Author, by William Porter, 1796), vii.
[295] Ibid., viii.
[296] Padman, *A Layman's Protest Against the Profane Blasphemy False Charges, and Illiberal Invective of Thomas Paine*, 192-3, 225.

Coming of Christ.[297] Anyone familiar with the Scriptures (especially the Book of Galatians) should not be surprised that a nation that has tried to "do without religion" would soon find itself awash in adultery, fornication, lasciviousness, idolatry, hatred, wrath, strife, assassinations, and heresies. For Boudinot, this dire situation in France is but the most self-evident sign of the truth of Biblical end-times prophecy, and it should thereby serve to "convince an astonished world what would be their portion, if once they should be given up by God to believe a lie, and to cast off all the fear and reverence of his sacred majesty."[298]

Other respondents were a bit more fearful that the horrible example of France would fail to dissuade their fellow countrymen from following along similar lines, and they pinned their hopes on divine guidance. For example, the Unitarian minister James Wardrop prays to God that "this country may escape such awful visitations as those with which he has found necessary, by the hands of wicked men, to afflict a neighbouring nation, who were still farther sunk than we are, in infidelity and superstition: a nation whose blood has flowed in every street, and discoloured every stream: a nation who have become so very abandoned as that, to an appalled world, they proclaim themselves Atheists!"[299]

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[297] The 1790s saw an upswing in eschatological writings with the French Revolution playing a central part as an evident sign of the end times. See Chapter 6 of Ruth Bloch, *Visionary Republic : Millennial Themes in American Thought 1756-1800* (New York Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[298] Elias Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation, or, The Age of Reason Shewn to be an Age of Infidelity* (Philadelphia: Asbury Dickins, 1801), 131-2. By claiming that the rising tide of infidelity and the French Revolution were predicted in the Bible, Boudinot is also countering the central thrust of *The Age of Reason* by re-affirming the validity of revelation as an accurate source of religious and temporal knowledge.

[299] [James Wardrop], *A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of Alexander Christie, Esq. Of Townfield, Late Chief Magistrate of Montrose, Containing Some Observations on the Progress of Religious Knowledge in Scotland, and on Mr. Paine's "Age of Reason." By a Layman.* (Glasgow: Sold at the Unitarian Chapel, at the Printing-office of J. Mennons, and at the Shops of the Booksellers, 1795), 7.

3.3 RADICAL REPUBLICANS AND RELIGIOUS INFIDELS

By drawing on the tropes that Deism is a beacon only to the immoral, that its vacuous tenets are incapable of inspiring moral behavior in humanity, and that it will ultimately lead to social breakdown, the respondents to *The Age of Reason* were able to subsequently point to France as the empirically verifiable and necessary proof. Christianity and the excellent morality that it teaches form the bedrock of a stable society. To do away with Christianity and replace it with Deism will lead to complete societal collapse, akin to what has happened in revolutionary France.

While the majority of respondents used the French Revolution as proof of the destructive effects of Deism on individual morality and societal cohesion, Paine's political radicalism was never far from anyone's mind, and the responses to *The Age of Reason* served as a rhetorical battleground over the link between radical infidelity and radical republicanism. For some respondents, Paine's politics and his religion were inherently and logically connected and it therefore came as little surprise that Paine would follow-up *Rights of Man* with a book like *The Age of Reason*. Indeed, there is even a sense that Paine is part of a larger international conspiracy of radical republican Deists who are hell-bent on overturning the political and religious landscape of Europe, much as they had already done in France. *The Age of Reason*, penned by a notorious political radical, is yet one more proof that republican politics and religious infidelity are part and parcel of the same revolutionary project.

Yet not all of the detractors of Paine's religious writings were willing to posit such a connection between his republicanism and Deism, and we see many who try to distance themselves from Paine's religious writings while remaining admirers of his politics. For these respondents, Deism was certainly the underlying cause of the abuses of the French Revolution,

but this does not entail that republicanism and Deism are equivalent. This is especially true in the American response to *The Age of Reason*, which takes a republican system of government for granted and which cannot wholly repudiate the author of *Common Sense*. Yet it is also the case in a number of British responses penned by those sympathetic to Paine's politics, who felt that the Deistic bridge was one that they did not need to cross. What is ultimately at stake in the rhetoric of the French Revolution's Deistic causes is the connection between republican political ideals and an infidel Deist religious program. The controversy over *The Age of Reason* became a suitable pretext for some political theorizing about the link between republican ideology and Deism. In this section I will focus on the ways that British respondents frame the discussion over the connection between republican politics and religious infidelity. In my next section I will focus on the ways American respondents saw Deism in relation to republicanism.

The suspicion that the French Revolution was caused by a conspiracy of religious infidels had been growing since the very early days of the Revolution. In his study of British clerical response to the French Revolution, Robert Hole has argued that the "sermon was a natural medium in which to discuss the French Revolution," and he points to a 1789 sermon by Suffolk curate William Jones as one of the first instances that interpreted the revolutionary events in France in an infidel light.[300] Jones' sermon was perhaps one of the earliest formulations of the link between infidelity and the French Revolution, which gained its most well-known champion in Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. The intense hostility that Burke felt towards the French Revolution is well known and has been amply treated. Burke, who held an

[300] The sermon that Jones preached was published as *Popular Commotions Considered as Signs of the Approaching End of the World.* (London: Printed for G. G. J. and J. Robinson, Pater-Noster-Row, 1789). This sermon is discussed in Robert Hole, "English Sermons and Tracts as Media of Debate on the French Revolution 1789-99," in *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, ed. Mark Philip (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 19.

organic view of society and social progress, cast the French Revolution, its principles and its implications, in large-scale terms that challenged the very foundations of moral, religious, social and political stability of Britain in particular, but also European civilization in general. For Burke, only by destroying the principles of the French Revolution could European civilization be saved. Looking to the causes of the French Revolution, Burke alludes to a "cabal, calling itself philosophic," composed of men who are "commonly call[ed] atheists and infidels" as having been the "true actuating spirit" of the French Revolution.[301] Such a cabal, made up principally of literary men, had "formed something like a regular plan for the destruction of the Christian Religion."[302]

Yet the contention that the French Revolution stemmed from a full-fledged conspiracy of both political and religious radicals found its full voice in 1797, when John Robison published *Proofs of a Conspiracy Against All the Religions and Governments of Europe,* and the Abbé Augustine Barruel's *Memoirs, Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* was translated into English. From Edinburgh, where he was a professor of natural philosophy, John Robison looked across the British Channel and saw a world on fire, a conflagration of radical politics and religious infidelity that had already consumed the French and was spreading throughout the continent. As

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[301] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the proceedings in certain societies in London relative to that event. In a letter intended to have been sent to a gentleman in Paris. By the Right Honourable Edmund Burke.* (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, In Pall-Mall, 1790), 132.

[302] Ibid., 165. Burke's interpretation of the French Revolution certainly did not go uncontested. Some of his opponents denied that infidelity had any relevance at all to the French Revolution, or charged Burke with grossly exaggerating the extent of French infidelity. James Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae*, which stands alongside with Paine's *Rights of Man* as one of the more cogent defenses of the French Revolution, is wholly dismissive of Burke's view. For Mackintosh, the Revolution was a political revolution and therefore the literary cabal that Burke alludes to should be considered "not as Atheists, or Theists, but as political reasoners." Even if men like Rousseau and Voltaire were atheists (which Mackintosh doubts), their speculative and abstract theology "does not belong to the Revolution," and Mackintosh calls Burke's anti-Christian conspiracy "one of the most extravagant chimeras that ever entered the human imagination." James Mackintosh, *Vindiciae Gallicae. Defence of the French Revolution and its English admirers, against the accusations of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke; including some strictures on the late productions of Mons. de Calonne. By James Mackintosh, of Lincoln's Inn, Esquire.* (London: Printed for G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1791), 139-41.

he looked around his homeland, he was alarmed to see that the fires that were consuming the Continent were beginning to burn in Britain. As a means to put his fellow-Britons on the alert, Robison wrote *Proofs of a Conspiracy,* which promoted the idea that the current woes of Europe were not due to some unforeseen circumstances or uncontrollable forces, but were actually part of an international, continent-spanning, fifty year conspiracy to overthrow all religion and all government. In his book, Robison provides the evidence that this conspiracy was conceived in Germany by a clandestine group calling itself the Order of the Illuminati, which used Masonic lodges spread its agenda of "abolish[ing] all religion, overturn[ing] every government, and mak[ing] the world a general plunder and a wreck."[303] In the first three quarters of his work, Robison traces the origins, the leadership, and the dispersal of the Illuminati from Germany throughout the continent, especially into France. The final chapter of Robison's book looks to the French "philosophers" such as Mirabeau, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot who "intended to root out all religion and ordinary morality," thereby laying the necessary groundwork for the French Revolution, which served as the culmination of the Illuminati's efforts and would be the base from which to push forward a radical agenda throughout Europe.[304] Robison's tract therefore was a warning to the world, but specifically to the "free-born Briton" to "reject at once, and without any farther examination, a plan so big with mischief, so disgraceful to its underling

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[303] John Robison, *Proofs of a Conspiracy Against All the Religions and Governments of Europe, Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies. Collected from Good Authorities, by John Robison, A.M. Professor of Natural Philosophy, and Secretary to the Royal Society of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Printed for William Creech; - and T. Cadell, junior, and W. Davies, London, 1797), 12. Having been a proud Mason, Robison writes with great disappointment and indignation that such a noble and worthy institution such as the Masons, when transplanted to the Continent, was corrupted and used as a breeding ground for the promulgation of the Illuminati conspiracy. Robison is quick to point out, however, that Illuminism "took its first rise among the Free Masons, but it is totally different from Free Masonry."(15)

[304] Ibid., 375.

adherents, and so uncertain in its issue."[305] With the continent already so infected with Illuminism, Britain is therefore the last bastion against the conspiracy.

In the same year that Robison published *Proofs of a Conspiracy*, the first two volumes of the memoirs of the exiled French Jesuit, Abbé Augustine Barruel, appeared in translation in Britain as *Memoirs, Illustrating the History of Jacobinism*.[306] Barruel's *Memoirs*, which has been called "one of the founding documents of the right-wing interpretation of the French Revolution," quickly spread throughout Britain, the Continent and the United States.[307] Much like Robison (who saw in Barruel's work a further confirmation of his own thesis), Barruel argued that the French Revolution was brought about by a long-ranging conspiracy of those who wanted to subvert both Christianity and monarchical governments. Also like Robison, Barruel saw the French Revolution as only the first step of a larger Jacobin conspiracy that had "the whole universe [as] its aim."[308] For Barruel, the French Revolution was the result of a "triple conspiracy" that sought the "the overthrow of the altar, the ruin of the throne, and the dissolution of all civil society," and he chides those who remain "obstinately blind to the causes of the French Revolution."[309] The first crucial causal piece in the conspiracy was the complete overthrow of Christianity (which Barruel terms the "Anti-Christian Conspiracy"), which was led specifically and intentionally by men such as Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert and Frederick II (King of Prussia), who were "leagued in the most inveterate hatred against Christianity."[310] Once the authority of Christianity was subverted by the writings and activities of these men, the

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[305] Ibid., 13.
[306] Abbé Barruel, *Memoirs, illustrating the history of Jacobinism. A translation from the French of the Abbé Barruel* (London: Printed for the author, by T. Burton and Co., and sold by E. Booker, 1797).
[307] Amos Hofman, "Opinion, Illusion, and the Illusion of Opinion: Barruel's Theory of Conspiracy," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 27:1, no. Autumn (1993): 28.
[308] Barruel, *Memoirs, illustrating the history of Jacobinism. A translation from the French of the Abbé Barruel*: xvi.
[309] Ibid., xii, xxii.
[310] Ibid., 1.

"Anti-Monarchical" and "Anti-Social" parts of the conspiracy would (and did) easily follow, leading to the French Revolution and all of its horrors which were "foreseen and resolved on."[311]

Robison and Barruel gave perhaps the most cogent, forceful and conspiratorially-laden arguments tying political and religious radicalism together, and their works quickly found adherents and detractors in Britain and the United States.[312] Their arguments found a wide popularity not only because of the extensive documentary "proofs" that both men offered but also because they were able to weave together a number of different interpretive strands regarding the status of religion in France, the link between republican radicalism and religious infidelity, and the necessity of Christianity.[313] As Gregory Claeys has noted, their interpretations were especially appealing because they tapped into the "assumption that religious belief was the key to all other forms of subordination" and that no government could subsist if the religious underpinnings of society were subverted.[314] What Barruel and Robison did was to highlight the breadth and cohesiveness of a long-range conspiracy that cast the French Revolution through an inextricable linking of an infidel hostility to Christianity and a republican hatred of monarchy.

Yet part of what gave their works credibility was based partly on the groundwork already laid out in the controversy surrounding the publication and reception of *The Age of Reason*. Paine had already come to symbolize the radical republican wing of the British reform

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[311] Ibid., xiv.
[312] Owing partly to the efforts of Massachusetts Congregationalist minister Jedidiah Morse (who I will discuss in my next section), Robison's work was much more popular than Barruel's in the United States, where it helped to ignite the Illuminati controversy. In his history of the Illuminati controversy in the United States, Vernon Stauffer opines that by the time Barruel's work appeared, Morse's (and Robison's) thesis had mostly run its course and the "flatness of the reception accorded Barruel's work served to quiet the public mind in New England on the subject of Illuminism." Stauffer, *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati*: 311.
[313] The popularity of Robison's and Barruel's works may also be partly due to how the leading review journals of the time gave them "as much publicity as possible in order to alert the public to the dangers of this burgeoning conspiracy." Seamus Deane, *The French Revolution and Enlightenment in England 1789-1832* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 32.
[314] Gregory Claeys, *The French Revolution Debate in Britain : The Origins of Modern Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 154-55.

movements, not only through the international reputation he had garnered by his by-now twenty year old pamphlet *Common Sense*, but more recently through widespread and intense controversy over *Rights of Man* that played out in pamphlets, in courtrooms, and in the riotous actions of loyalist mobs. It certainly did not help Paine's reputation that in the face of an indictment for treason he had fled to France (with whom Britain was now engaged in a global war) and that he had served as a representative in the French National Convention.[315] With the publication of *The Age of Reason*, Paine became the embodiment of conservative anxieties in a biographical and philosophical nexus--republicanism, infidelity, France. When Robison warned his readers that the Order of the Illuminati had not been contained in France but that "the enemy is working among us," it would have come as little surprise that he offered *The Age of Reason* as one of the primary examples of the "contrivance of this dangerous Association" on British shores.[316]

In the opening of the first part of *The Age of Reason*, Paine did little to abuse his critics of such notions, writing enthusiastically about how he "saw the exceeding probability that a revolution in the system of government would be followed by a revolution in the system of religion."[317] While Paine was referring here to the American Revolution, he seemingly posited a sort of universal maxim of positive religious change, wherein a change in government could

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[315] Paine's connection to revolutionary France forms a frequent touchstone in many of the responses. Some respondents, such as Thomas Taylor, refer disdainfully to Paine's cowardly flight from England to escape prosecution for *Rights of Man*. Many others took a good bit of delight in the irony that Paine, while attempting to escape English justice, found himself thrown in the Luxembourg, a prisoner of the very people who supposedly revered him. John Malham, for example, gloats that while Paine had to flee England for France "to escape punishment due to his crimes," Robespierre had nevertheless "committed this *Son of Liberty* to a prison." John Malham, *A Word for the Bible* (London: Allen and West, 1796), 7.

[316] Robison, *Proofs of a Conspiracy*, 478. Robison is critical not only of Paine, but also of the British literati, who have been entirely too gentle in their treatment of *The Age of Reason*. Robison chastises the British critical press for their "affected liberality," and rather than presenting *The Age of Reason* as "fair field for discussion," they should highlight perniciousness and be willing to "expose the futility and rudeness of this indelicate writer."(481)

[317] Thomas Paine, part one of *The Age of Reason*, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 1: 465.

usher in a new and better religious sentiment. To a certain degree, Paine optimistically applied this maxim to the French Revolution, even while he worried about the progress the Revolution was taking. A number of Paine's adversaries may have agreed with him on principle, yet they would have disagreed as to the trajectory. Whereas Paine saw the spread of republicanism as the hoped-for prerequisite for the true religion of Deism to flourish, Paine's adversaries were not quite so optimistic. Looking to France, they saw the spread of republicanism as unleashing powerful and ominous religious undercurrents that were out to completely eradicate any semblance of Christianity, thereby resulting in an infidelity that would dissolve the moral bonds that held society together. Indeed, Paine himself expressed similar misgivings about what he saw as the dangers of the French running "headlong into atheism" and he penned the first part of *The Age of Reason* partly as a means of combating French atheistic attacks on religion and the religious.[318]

As I have already shown, Paine's respondents frequently point out that the Deism of a book like *The Age of Reason* has drastic societal consequences, as exemplified and proven by the bloody upheavals of the French Revolution. Yet the publication of *The Age of Reason* served as a rhetorical battlefield over the link between republican radicalism and religious infidelity. What is borne out strongly in the rhetoric of the Irish, Scottish and English replies to *The Age of Reason* is an increasingly alarmed view that religious infidelity had become a new arrow in the radical republican quiver. As the pseudonymous True Briton points out, with the publication of *The Age of Reason*, Paine "has now attempted to convey his poison through a different channel, for which he has found a vehicle in our ecclesiastical establishment."[319]

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[318] Paine to Samuel Adams, January 1, 1803, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 2:1436.
[319] True Briton, *A Letter to the Analytical Reviewers*, 53.

Not only was *The Age of Reason* the most clear evidence that British radicals were moving in an infidel direction, but even more alarming was that their infidelity was inspiring radical groups and organizations. Whereas Deism may have, during the course of the previous century, been the avocation of some isolated writers, many feared that Deism was increasingly becoming a part of organized radical societies. For example, the Baptist minister Robert Hall in a 1799 sermon preached at the Cambridge Baptist meeting was explicit in linking infidelity to political radicalism. Reflecting more generally on the progress of religious infidelity, Hall noted that one of the particularly dangerous hallmarks of present day infidelity was that it had forthrightly sought to "diffuse the principles of Infidelity among the common people." Previous infidel writers such as "Hume, Bolingbroke and Gibbon" wrote specifically for the "more polished classes of the community" and would have been shocked to find their "refined speculations debased by an attempt to enlist disciples from among the populace." For Hall, the infidelity of yesterday was something of a rarity and was a symptom of "literary vanity" that rendered it relatively self-contained. The infidelity of today, however, had become widespread, and is "now adopted as the organ of political convulsion." Indeed, Hall saw the goal of the current crop of infidels as the complete overturning of society, and their industriousness in spreading their poison comes out of the realization that the "total subversion and overthrow of society demands the concurrence of millions."[320] Hall's analysis of modern infidelity was shared and bolstered by William Hamilton Reid, whose *The Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies in This Metropolis* (1800) emphasized how *The Age of Reason* pushed societies like the London Corresponding Society (LCS) to link their political principles to an infidel cause. Reid had been

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[320] Robert Hall, *Modern infidelity considered with respect to its influence on society: in a sermon, preached at the Baptist meeting, Cambridge* (Cambridge: Printed by M. Watson; Angel-Inn-Yard. and sold by J. Deighton, and O. Gregory: by J. James, Bristol; W. Button, Paternoster-Row, T. Conder, Bucklersbury, and W. H. Lunn, Oxford-Street, London, 1800), 68-69.

a member of the LCS until he became disheartened by what he saw as the infidel agenda that it began to promote, and he wrote his book partly as an exposé of the infidelity of radical societies and partly as a triumphalist polemic about the ultimate undoing of these societies over the question of infidelity. While Reid admits that the membership of the LCS was diverse enough that it could never become solely an infidel society, its "inclination for deism" was such that many members tried to "force their anti-religious opinions upon their co-associates," leading to internal factionalization and the ultimate dissolution of the LCS.[321] Despite the internal schisms over Deism and infidelity, Reid nevertheless points to the LCS as the primary means by which infidelity was promoted throughout Britain, and he singles out *The Age of Reason* as one of the main vehicles that the LCS used to spread infidelity. [322] So taken was the LCS with *The Age of Reason* that the work was "ridiculously termed its *New Holy Bible*" and the mere possession of the work was "deemed a collateral proof of the civism of the possessor."[323] While Reid (happily) sees the factionalization brought on by infidelity as one of the causes of the eventual decline of radical societies, he casts the appearance of *The Age of Reason* as something of a watershed moment for organized infidelity, and he charts the lasting implications it would have on British society. Prior to *The Age of Reason* being "adopted by the political societies in this

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[321] William Hamilton Reid, *The Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies in this Metropolis: Including, the Origin of Modern Deism and Atheism; the Genius and Conduct of Those Associations; their Lecture-rooms, Field-meetings, and Deputations; from the Publication of Paine's Age of Reason Till the Present Period* (London: Printed for J. Hatchard, T. Burton, Printer, 1800), 3,9.

[322] A competing view to Reid's of the infidelity of the LCS was given by Francis Place, the "radical tailor of Charing Cross." Place, who had played a key role in publishing an affordable edition of *The Age of Reason,* freely admits that he was an atheist and that "nearly all the leading members [of the LCS] were either Deists or Atheists." Contrary to Reid's characterization of the LCS, however, Place stresses that infidelity was not an official part of the LCS and he affirms that within the ranks of the LCS there were "a number of very religious people," and he stresses that religious toleration was the operating norm of the LCS. Furthermore, Place makes the stronger claim that it was a standing rule that in the LCS's "divisions and in the committees, that no discussion or dispute on any subject connected with religion should be permitted and none were permitted." While not part of official LCS business, Place does acknowledge that in "private—religion was a frequent subject of conversation." Place, *The Autobiography of Francis Place (1771-1854), Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Mary Thale*: 197-8.

[323] Reid, *The Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies in this Metropolis,* 5.

metropolis, Deism, to say nothing of Atheism, was rather the affair of a few isolated individuals." This had changed, for once the British radical societies became tinged with irreligion and began to promote it, infidelity had become "the concern of a considerable part of the community."[324]

Modern British scholars have debated the actual degree to which radical organizations like the LCS promoted an infidel agenda, and have taken Reid's characterization of the LCS to be an overstatement used for polemical purposes.[325] Regardless of whether religious infidelity was indeed an integral part of the LCS which proved its downfall, the reaction to works like *The Age of Reason* highlights the perception that radical republicanism was being led (or pushed) into adopting a radical religious skepticism that rejected traditional religious authority along with traditional political authority. Reid argued that within the LCS there emerged an intolerant infidel bloc that argued that in order to be a good republican also entailed rejecting revealed religion, that the "idea of a *Deist* and a good *Democrat* seemed to have been universally compounded, [and] very few had the courage to oppose the general current."[326] Reid hints that *within* societies like the LCS there was a conflation of republicanism and infidelity, which ultimately led to their dissolution.

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[324] Ibid., 34.

[325] See, for example, E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*; Franklin Prochaska "Thomas Paine's the Age of Reason Revisited." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 33:4, no. Oct.-Dec (1972): 561-76;, and Michael J. Williams "The 1790s: The Impact of Infidelity" *Bulletin of the Thomas Paine Society* 5:3, no. Spring (1976): 21-30. There is some evidence that *The Age of Reason* did precipitate some real divisions within British radicalism, between those who were indeed willing to follow Paine into rejecting revealed religion, and those who thought that *The Age of Reason* had crossed a line that it should not have. One of the more well-studied radical groups, the London Corresponding Society (LCS) almost certainly saw some internal conflict due to an increasingly vocal infidel faction, which was inspired not only by *Rights of Man*, but also by *The Age of Reason*. See, for example, Mary Thale, ed. *Selections from the papers of the London Corresponding Society, 1792-1799* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 306-08.; and Michael T. Davis, ed. *The London Corresponding Society publications, 1792-1799* (Brookfied, Vt.: Pickering & Chatto, 2001), v. 2, 176-77.

[326] Reid, *The Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies in this Metropolis*, 8.

There is good evidence in the published reactions to *The Age of Reason* that religious infidelity had become a divisive issue among radicals and reformers. A number of respondents who expressed their admiration for Paine's political writings used their responses to *The Age of Reason* to dispute any inherent connection between republicanism and religious infidelity. Conservative respondents, however, argued that republican politics and religious infidelity sprung from the same source and therefore went hand in hand. The pseudonymous "Churchman," in his 1794 tract *Christianity the Only True Theology,* is one of the first to fully articulate how Paine's religious writings emerge out of his political sensibilities, not merely because Paine implies this connection, but because the Churchman sees republicanism and religious infidelity as inherently linked by their common erroneous assumptions about human nature.[327] For the Churchman, Paine is but the most current malefactor in a long line of those who have unsuccessfully attacked Christianity. Tracing Paine's career, the Churchman refers disparagingly to Paine's "daring spirit of innovation" with which he has entranced the world with his "song of the Syren." Happily, Paine's republican siren-song went unheeded and although his "attempts are baffled," the publication of *The Age of Reason* shows that "his spirit is not broken."[328] The same perverted love of innovation that has impelled Paine to try to overthrow the crowns of Europe has also led him to rebel against Christianity itself, and the Churchman opines that he has "found Mr. Paine's religious creed perfectly consistent with his political opinions."[329] By putting *The Age of Reason* in its proper Deistic context and viewing Paine through a long historical lens, the Churchman makes some larger claims about what it is that

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[327] Although no copyright date appears for this work, and it has been estimated that it was published in 1795, I believe that it was published in 1794, due to the fact that the *New Annual Review* 15 (1795): 178 lists it in its "Domestic Literature" section for 1794 along with some of the other responses to *The Age of Reason* for that year.
[328] Churchman, *Christianity the Only True Theology*, 5.
[329] Ibid., 10.

Paine really represents. It comes as no surprise to the Churchman that Paine is an expounder of Deism, since he sees Paine's politics and his religion as coming from the same source. For the Churchman, "Republicanism and Deism, have the most intimate alliance in principle, and have seldom long been separated in practice," especially since both share the same "false idea of the uniformity and perfection of the human character." In terms of republicanism, this manifests itself as the supposition that "every man is wise enough to be his own legislator," while in Deism it supposes a "universal capacity in man" to discover God in nature rather than through scriptural revelation. Both systems are united in that they assume too much about the capacity of humanity, and for the Churchman it is perfectly natural to suppose that while republicanism and Deism are united in principal, they are also united in actuality, and Paine serves as the exemplification of the inherent union of republicanism and Deism. However, the Churchman looks to the French Revolution as the real proof for his case. The Churchman looks to a conspiracy of French "Economists and Encyclopedists" whose main goal was to "propagate the principles of skepticism and political licentiousness" in France to bring about a "revolution in Church and state." In similar language with which he describes Paine, the Churchman describes how the writings of "spiritual innovation and political discontent" were widely circulated until "the revolutionary signal was given" thereby igniting the French Revolution. The first target of the "lawless banditti" was the monarchy, which was weakened, but did not immediately fall. The Church establishment and its assets were the second object upon which the "sacrilegious hands of hired assassins" fell. [330] Yet since there was still a King in France who was a protector of Christianity, the debasement of religion could not proceed completely unchecked. This was soon to change, since the "democratical rage is unsatiable [sic]" and the "tigers of the republic roared

[330] Ibid., 8-9.

for the blood of their Sovereign," leading to the execution of the King. In poetic language, the Churchman describes how Christianity itself "hung her drooping head, and mourned" over the death of the "dying protector of her rights." With the King out of the way, sacrilege was given a free hand, and Christianity's "temples are prophaned…her worship neglected" until only "Deism is recognized by the Republic."[331] For the Churchman, like many other respondents, the French Revolution offers an empirical proof that republicanism and infidelity are allied not only in their principles, but also in their goals of a complete upturning of society.

After its full-on attack against Paine, republicanism, Deism, and the French Revolution, *Christianity the Only True Theology* quickly settles into what is a relatively standard refutation of the major points that Paine argues in *The Age of Reason*. Yet the Churchman ends his work with a warning that *The Age of Reason* is part of a larger republican/infidel movement that is in no way confined to France, but that must be fought on his side of the English Channel. The Churchman closes his refutation of *The Age of Reason* with an invocation for divine protection for "our government and religion from the rude attack of every impious assailant, to confound every hostile purpose that may be formed against our Church and King, and to banish from our land every thing which can hurt or destroy that glorious fabric of happiness which his own arm hath reared."[332]

The Churchman was not alone in his conflation of religious infidelity and political radicalism. Whereas his work was written with an erudite tone and content, the author of *A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith* (1794) took a different tack countering the appeal of *The Age of Reason* for common readers. In Chapter 4 I will deal more fully with the issue of intended audiences, but it should be noted here that a number of Paine's respondents were eager

[331] Ibid., 10.
[332] Ibid., 73.

that *The Age of Reason* should be refuted for a common readership, and *A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith* is one of the best examples of such work.[333] The conceit of this work is that the humble carpenter Will Chip gives Paine a healthy dose of good country advice about the dangers of presumptuously rising above his station to discuss matters of religion. Written in a folksy style, Chip admonishes Paine for trying to disturb the tranquility and peacefulness of society, which has been so adequately maintained by everyone knowing their rightful place. Paine, the erstwhile staymaker, has arrogantly ventured beyond his station by so freely opining on religious topics, and in doing so, seeks to ruin the *status quo* that has made "our village a little paradise upon earth."[334]

But for Chip, the danger of *The Age of Reason* goes beyond just Paine's arrogance in holding forth on religious matters, and it is here that the French Revolution really rears its ugly head. Throughout the text, Chip repeatedly hammers home the point that Paine has been thrown in the Luxembourg prison in France, a fitting end to the degraded life that Paine had led up to that time. Repeating scurrilous details from a recently published hostile biography of Paine, Chip sees it as no real wonder then that even "your friends, the French, have, for some reason or other, found it necessary to throw you into jail." Such a person, Chip concludes, is not the kind of person who can be a "guide to Truth, to Virtue, and to Religion." [335] Increasingly throughout the text, Chip links Paine's incarceration to the broader theme of the near-anarchic situation in France. In what is perhaps one of the most explicit early renderings of the connection between Deist principles and a republican system of government, Chip calls Paine a "mountebank in

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[333] In Chapter 4 I also deal more extensively with *A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith* and how it was a follow-up to Hannah More's chapbook *Village Politics* (also penned under the pseudonym Will Chip).
[334] Chip, *A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith*, 20.
[335] Ibid., 6. The 1791 biography of Paine *The Life of Thomas Paine* (London: Stockdale) by Jonathan Oldys was actually written by George Chalmers who was in the pay of the Pitt government to denigrate Paine during the *Rights of Man* controversy.

religion" who wants Englishmen to exchange their religion "for the religion of France; and if we take its religion, we must take its government too; for they are so closely linked together, that it is impossible to separate them from each other." In defense of a deferential *status quo*, Chip emphasizes that "Republicanism and infidelity (our vicar tells me) are sworn friends, both here and in France."[336] Paine's brand of religion, Chip warns, "has been tried in France, and the effects it has produced there, do not greatly tempt one to receive it here." Chip even goes so far as to personally implicate Paine's republicanism and Deism for the "plunder, rapine, exile, murder, ruin, and desolation, which have been produced by *The Rights of Man*, and *The Age of Reason*."[337]

Yet not every British respondent was disdainful of Paine's political writings, and many of those who sympathized with Paine's political views while disagreeing strongly with his religious ones were often at pains to try to sever the republicanism/infidelity link. Whereas Will Chip and the Churchman (and later on Barruel and Robison) argued for the inherent connection between radical politics and radical religion, other respondents to *The Age of Reason* actually disputed this connection. *The Age of Reason* and its replies thereby served as a venue for a debate over the nature of republicanism and its potential connections to infidelity. Baptist minister Andrew Fuller in his *The Gospel Its Own Witness* takes a philosophical approach by arguing that "there may be nothing more friendly to infidelity in the nature of one political system than another." Yet Fuller's attitude is not born out of any admiration for republican principles, but rather out of his Baptist heritage, which casts a cold eye on any admixture of politics and religion. In classic Baptist fashion, Fuller warns that political disputes are unbecoming of professing Christians, and any attachments to such a "worldly object, if it become the principal thing which occupies our

[336] Ibid., 21.
[337] Ibid., 23-4.

thoughts and affections, will weaken our attachment to religion." While unwilling to make the logical link between republicanism and infidelity, he nevertheless addresses himself to those who "think favourably of the political principles of infidels," warning that it might lead them to be "insensibly drawn away to think lightly of religion." [338]

While Fuller's argument is less about republicanism than it is about the danger of all politics to religion, William O'Connor makes the stronger argument that the connection between infidelity and republicanism is a spurious one. Writing from Cork in 1795, O'Connor makes the comparison between the American Revolution and the French Revolution to show, in part, that the French Revolution should not be taken as the *sine qua non* of republicanism. O'Connor admits that he has "been an admirer of what was right in Tom Pain when tending to Freedom, yet to his thoughts on Religion…I think them wrong."[339] In stark contrast to a writer like the Churchman who sees Paine's "religious creed perfectly consistent with his political opinions," O'Connor even goes so far as to say that some of the principles that Paine expresses in *The Age of Reason* are actually "inconsistent with his boasted doctrine of equality."[340] O'Connor shows no love for French Deists who have "destroyed all harmony and order," and who have, through their religious skepticism, prepared the way for "all that anarchy, bloodshed and confusion" of the French Revolution. Yet for O'Connor this does not imply that republicanism necessarily degenerates into an immoral and bloodthirsty Deist state. For O'Connor, it is not the notions of liberty, freedom, or equality that are at fault, but Deism itself, which pushes a warped "notion of Freedom beyond the bounds of reason" and which degenerates into licentiousness and

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[338] Andrew Fuller, *The Gospel its Own Witness: or the Holy Nature, and Divine Harmony of the Christian Religion, Contrasted with the Immorality and Absurdity of Deism* (Clipstone [England]: Printed by J.W. Morris; Sold by Button; Gardiner; Ogle; and Williams, London; Ogle, Edinburgh and Glasgow; James, Bristol; and Brightly, Bungay, 1799), ix-x.
[339] O'Connor, *Candid Remarks, on Pain's Age of Reason*: 5.
[340] Ibid., 9.

immorality. As a counterbalance to the outrages of the French Revolution, O'Connor paints a picture of a United States that is able to reconcile its political freedoms with its religious ones. Whereas Paine implies in *The Age of Reason* that Christianity (and all revealed religion) is inimical to human freedom, O'Connor is quick to argue that "religion is no enemy to Liberty" and he is happy to point out that this "may be deduced from the present flourishing state of America, where freedom exists in her greatest purity…where every man has toleration to worship in whatever mode of religious adoration most congenial to his own conscience." Unlike the blood-soaked French, American republicans have not abandoned their Christianity and therefore they have maintained social stability and their freedom. As O'Connor notes, through "this short parallel between American and French Liberty, the purity of Christianity is seen to triumph over Deism."[341]

The Irishman William Jackson also sought to drive a wedge between any perceived connection between republicanism and infidelity. Jackson, who was both an "Irish Protestant minister and Jacobin" saw no contradiction between his political and religious principles.[342] Indeed, he penned his avowedly Christian *Observations in Answer to Mr. Thomas Paine's 'Age of Reason* (1795) from his prison cell in Dublin where he was awaiting trial for treasonous activities with the United Irishmen (he died before the verdict was delivered).[343] In his refutation of *The Age of Reason,* Jackson relates that he was a fond admirer of Paine and his political views, and the two had been well acquainted. According to Jackson, in Paris they discussed Paine's proposal for a book on religious matters (which would become *The Age of Reason*).

[341] Ibid., 12-14.
[342] Claeys, *Thomas Paine : Social and Political Thought*: 189.
[343] During his trial, Jackson reportedly began "frothing at the mouth" and he soon "dropped down and expired." The suspicion was that earlier in the day in his prison cell he took poison, which waslater confirmed in an autopsy by the "Surgeons Adrien and Hume." In Jackson's pocket was his newly finished reply to *The Age of Reason*, as well as a prayer that he had composed and that he planned to say at his execution. For an account of Jackson's death, see *Gentleman's Magazine* LXV, (1795): 443.

Unimpressed with the project, however, Jackson tried to warn Paine that "you are a man of too good an understanding to write on any subject you are not thoroughly acquainted with."[344] Unfortunately Paine did not heed Jackson's advice and he continued working on the book that Jackson describes as "so much of ignorance and misrepresentation on a subject of infinite importance to mankind." Jackson disappointedly admits that he is at a loss in dealing with *The Age of Reason*, since he holds Paine in the highest regard as "a naturally illumined man" and believes that when the "present and future generations shall be swept by the hand of time among the mouldering ruins of ancient world, the name of Mr. Paine will live in celebrity."[345] While it certainly irked him to go against the man he so admired, Jackson's devotion to the truth of the Scriptures is such that he found himself unable to hold back in his censure of Paine. With a profound sense of disappointment, Jackson pithily calls Paine the "most striking example, that an uneducated mind, like uncultivated soil, however rich by nature, will be more productive of weeds than flowers."[346]

While Fuller, O'Connor and Jackson strongly negate the republicanism-equals-infidelity equation, a number of other responders to *The Age of Reason* implicitly challenged this connection by making the sharp distinction between Paine's politics (which were lauded) and his religious beliefs (which were condemned). For these responders the sting of *The Age of Reason* lay in taking radicalism in a direction that it should not have gone. Gregory Claeys has argued that for reform minded Dissenters who had been pushing for an increased political franchise in Britain, "Paine's theological views now made it still more difficult to support his politics."[347] While this may be true on a more general level, this is not generally borne out in the responses to

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[344] Jackson, *Observations in Answer to Mr. Thomas Paine's "Age of Reason,"* 5.
[345] Ibid., 5, 29.
[346] Ibid., 29, 30.
[347] Claeys, *Thomas Paine : Social and Political Thought*: 188-9.

The Age of Reason. Although in writing *The Age of Reason* Paine may have gone in a direction that many were unwilling to follow, it is notable that those who were reform-minded or radicals do not repudiate Paine's politics and still generally held Paine in high regard. The Suffolk radical Thomas Bentley, for example, is severely disappointment with *The Age of Reason*. Forecasting the sense of betrayal that pervades his entire work, Bentley quotes *Psalm* 55 on the title page:

> It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have kept myself from him: but it was thou, a patriot, mine equal, my guide and my friend![348]

Bentley praises Paine as a "a candid free-thinker, or searcher after truth" and he extols his previous writings for their "many sound arguments, excellent sentiments, and important truth." Admitting that *The Age of Reason* does have some solid truths, Bentley nevertheless finds that the "evil greatly outweighs the good, so that it may justly be called bad," and he chastises that Paine "ought to have known his subject better" before writing so dogmatically on a topic of so much import. [349] Whereas authors like the country carpenter Will Chip and the Churchman make the implicit connection between Paine's political and religious beliefs, Bentley actually argues the opposite—that Paine's religious beliefs are somehow out of kilter with his political beliefs. Like William O'Connor, Bentley chides that Paine's own political principles as a "professed republican…an equality-man…should induce him to be more favorable to the doctrine of revelation."[350] Similar to a few other responders to *The Age of Reason*, Bentley points to revelation as being ultimately an egalitarian means of understanding both the nature and

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[348] Thomas Bentley, *Reason and Revelation : or, a Brief Answer to Thomas Paine's Late Work Entitled The Age of Reason* ([London?][1794?]).
[349] Ibid., 6, 2.
[350] Ibid., 21.

morality of God.[351] Through the prophets and the apostles, Bentley charges that revelation can "shew us a way to God" that is open even to the "poorest and most unlearned men." Bentley implies that Deism--with its zealous promotion of a natural religion that relies on science to understand God-- is an elitist stance that goes against the egalitarianism inherent in Paine's political writings. If, as Paine has argued, the Bible is to be discarded and we have "no other way of coming at God than by Science…poor men have little chance!"[352]

Much of the British response to *The Age of Reason* is grappling not only with the dangers of Deism, but with the link between radical republican politics and an infidel religious program that has been proven by both Paine and the French Revolution. The majority of the British responders to Paine saw Deism as a danger to morality and society, but the more conservative critics took the extra step of arguing that republicanism implies Deism and vice versa. Authors like Jackson, Bentley and O'Connor were at pains to sever this connection—to stress that one can be a good republican while still being a good Christian. Indeed, one occasionally gets the sense that Christianity may be a necessary condition for a strong and stable republicanism to flourish, something that the French, in their foolhardy embracing of Deism, seemed not to have understood. More conservative authors such as Will Chip, the True Briton, William Hamilton Reid, John Robison, the Abbé Barruel, and the Churchman would certainly dispute this contention, and for them, the sad state of affairs in France proved the inherent compatibility and affinity of Deism and republicanism.

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[351] Others who make a similar argument, but often with more pedantic overtones, include James Purvis, Whitley Stokes, and James Bourk. Bourk, for example, expresses a conservatively paternalistic that holds revelation to be "of utility to the mass of mankind, who are not sufficiently capable of the attention necessary to follow a chain of arguments—the testimony of God himself is a much shorter way, and better adapted to the understanding of the ignorant, who come to know most things by authority," James Bourk, *An Answer to a Late Pamphlet* (Cork: Printed by Joseph Haly, [1798]), 20.

[352] Bentley, *Reason and Revelation*, 21-22.

3.4 AMERICAN RESPONSES, AMERICAN REPUBLICANISM

The American reaction to *The Age of Reason* hits upon some similar themes as the British response, although there are certainly some important differences which should be fleshed out. Whereas the more conservative British respondents could easily disdain Paine for both his republicanism and his Deism, the Americans had to dissemble a bit more and could certainly not argue for the inherent and logical link between Deism and republicanism. In Chapter 5 I will explore more fully the deep-seated and underlying American ambivalence towards Paine which lauded him for his political reputation while subsequently castigating him for his religious opinions. Most of the American respondents, either implicitly or explicitly, accepted that republicanism was the preferred political system and that Deism was in no way an inherent part of it. As in the British response, perceptions and interpretations of the French Revolution served as a rhetorical proving ground for the connection between republicanism and religious infidelity. Yet American responders to *The Age of Reason* drew some very clear distinctions about the French as a valued sister-republic and the role that religion plays in maintaining stability of civil society. The American respondents who referred to the French Revolution do so in guarded terms, offering initial praise for its republican aspirations as a "positive reflection of their own [American] political progress."[353] France, as a nascent sister-republic was to be lauded, and as the pseudonymous True Baptist, an unbowed supporter of the French Revolution charged: "if the principles held forth in our constitution, are condemnatory of the old monarchy of France; then to condemn their revolution, is so far to condemn our own, and more especially our

[353] Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America*, 61.

constitution."[354] Yet any positive words about France's republican aspirations were quickly qualified by a subsequent rebuke about the abject violence that had plagued that country, and Deism was quickly brought in to explain the degenerating situation in France. For the American respondents, there was a keen awareness that any sort of argument that even implied that to be a good republican entails being a Deist was a fallacious one. This is not to say that that all of the Americans had the same notion of what constitutes "true" republican ideology, and there is a good deal of political sniping in the responses to *The Age of Reason* which is tied into the partisan ideological battles of the Early Republic. American respondents took for granted (or explicitly argued) that a representative republic is the preferred form of government.[355]

Not every American who weighed-in during the controversy over *The Age of Reason* was hesitant about linking republicanism to Deism. Where the British conservatives sought to link republicanism to Deism in order to disparage both, American Deists, for whom *The Age of Reason* was a touchstone work, argued for a positive link. Paine himself implies such a connection in the opening pages of the first part of *The Age of Reason* when he argues that a change in politics would usher in a change in religious sentiments, although he does not completely flesh this out. The Virginia Deist John Fowler in his defense of *The Age of Reason* makes explicit such a connection. While his 1797 *The Truth of the Bible Fairly Put to the Test* is a pretty standard Deistic attack on Christianity and revealed religion, Fowler attaches Deism to the republican horse, arguing that because Christianity is so "repugnant to truth, reason, and

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[354] True Baptist, *The Age of Inquiry, or, Reason and Revelation, in Harmony with Each Other, Operating Against all Tyranny and Infidelity: Intended as a Clue to the Present Political Controversy in the United States : to Which is Added, Some Remarks Upon the Report of the Committee of the Legislature of Connecticut Upon the Baptist Petition, Presented at their Session of May, 1802* (Hartford [Conn]: Printed for the Author, 1804), 62.

[355] Rachel Hope Cleves has noted that even the most die-hard conservative Federalists "never wavered from an essential commitment to republican government" and despite all of their dire predictions about the problems facing the country, they sought "republican solutions to their anxieties." Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America : Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery* 37.

common sense" that it can only flourish in "kingly and despotic governments" where it is forced upon the populace. As such, not only is Christianity unable to meet with the "approbation of republicans," but it can not long "thrive in a republican soil," and Fowler predicts that "if any one religion should become common and universal, it will be that of Deism."[356] That is, of course, if the examples of the republican revolutions of the United States and France can serve as an exemplary catalyst for the rest of the world to throw off the yoke of monarchical oppression and to show that "there is a natural aversion and inconsistency between freedom and the belief of revelation and religious bigotry."[357] Clearly frustrated by the those who have laid all of the abuses of the French Revolution at the altar of Deism, Fowler even acts as an apologist for the French by claiming that the "severities which took place in consequence of the revolution in France were many of them indispensibly [sic] necessary" to recover all of the liberties and freedoms that had been stripped from the French and which had been justified in Christian terms. Indeed, Fowler expresses his "most ardent wishes" that "such revolutions may go forward and prevail throughout the world."[358]

Fowler was not alone in his republican Deism. In his seminal work on American Deist societies, Adolph Koch has shown how these societies, through their activities and publications, sought to link republican virtue and the virtues of republicanism with the tenets of Deism. Koch's work traces the rhetorical battles over "how republicanism in politics became identified with republicanism in religion," with Deists arguing that to be a good republican meant rejecting the oppressive tyranny of a superstitious Christian system for the rational clarity of Deism.[359] In

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[356] Fowler, *The Truth of the Bible Fairly Put to the Test, by Confronting the Evidences of its Own Facts*: 158, 37, 50.
[357] Ibid., 16.
[358] Ibid., 38.
[359] Koch, *Republican Religion: The American Revolution and the Cult of Reason*: xv. The eminent historian of American religion Martin Marty has argued that although Deism's heyday was in the 1790s, it never gained enough

part, Koch argues that American Deism declined at the turn of the nineteenth century when, in the face of a rising tide of Christian evangelicalism, Deists lost the rhetorical battle over what "republicanism in religion" meant.[360] While Deists championed the idea that Christianity and republicanism were incompatible, their opponents argued that they were necessary for each other. This debate certainly played out in the controversy over *The Age of Reason*, and the American respondents portrayed the United States as a republic that drew its strength from its deep Christian roots. Samuel Stilwell, for example, expresses his puzzlement as to why Paine is attempting to bring about a "revolution in the system of religion in America." For Stilwell, the United States enjoys a "happy government" primarily because the laws of the land are not only consistent with "our present system of religion" but are founded on "good reason and the moral law, and precepts contained in the Bible."[361]

Other American respondents emphasize the crucial effect that the country's Christian character has on maintaining a stable republican government by contrasting the United States with the French. Expressing a common view that portrayed the United States as an inspiring example of republicanism that could be modeled in France, New Jersey cleric Uzal Ogden argues that the French were "principally indebted" to the "patriots of America" for their desire for a republican system of government. While the example presented by the United States may have been the initial impetus for the French, they soon began to dangerously chart their own

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traction to be considered any real threat to the Christian polity. For Marty, much of the anti-Deistic rhetoric was primarily used as a missionizing tactic by the clergy, serving to rally the Christian faithful against the perceived threat of home-grown infidels. See Martin Marty, *The Infidel: Freethought and American Religion* (New York: Meridian Books, 1961).

[360] Benjamin E. Park's recent Master's thesis from the University of Edinburgh explores more fully the ways in which American responses to *The Age of Reason* are trying to define a sense of national identity, specifically as it relates to the normative function of defining what "republican religion" would mean in the United States. See Benjamin E. Park, "Contesting Reason, Constricting Boundaries: Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* and the Formation of American Identities in the 1790s" (Masters Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2010).

[361] Samuel Stilwell, *A Guide to Reason, or, An Examination of Thomas Paine's Age of Reason : and Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (New York: Printed by John Buel for the Author, 1794), 7-8.

course by taking revolutionary ideas down avenues that Americans dared not tread. Ogden notes with some pride that no American patriot became "so infatuated with revolutional [sic] ideas" that they even imagined that in order to "wage war against tyranny, he must, therefore, wage war against his God."[362] The American example, Ogden crows, has fittingly shown that in a republic where the "the Christian religion is sincerely embraced" there is the "tendency to cause those entrusted with the powers of government, to act with probity; and the people to be peaceful in their demeanor; conscientious in all their actions, and diligent in the discharge of the duties of their several stations."[363] Yet as Ogden points out, the French have not heeded this example, and by rejecting Christianity and attempting to overthrow God, the "revolution of France is disgraced," and they find that on a daily basis they are "imbruing their hands in each others' blood."[364]

In *A Letter to Thomas Paine*, the pseudonymous "American Citizen" compares the stark differences between the French and American revolutions and the resulting republicanism of these two countries. Like most of the Americans who initially had high hopes for the French Revolution, the American Citizen admits to "rejoicing" at the French Revolution, but quickly reveals his "superlative detestation" of the "Atheistical and murderous principle of the most distinguished men, who conducted the French revolution."[365] As a contrast, the American Citizen praises his fellow Americans for their "strict attachment to the Christian religion." Indeed, in the American colonies, Deism was such an anomaly that anyone who called himself a

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[362] Ogden, *Antidote to Deism*, vol 2: 278-9.
[363] Ibid., vol 1: 36.
[364] Ibid., vol 2, 279.
[365] American Citizen, *A Letter to Thomas Paine, in Answer to his Scurrilous Epistle Addressed to Our Late Worthy President Washington: and Containing Comments and Observations on his Life, Political and Deistical Writings, &c. &c. Intended as an Alarm to the Good People of These States, from Being Led Astray by the Sophistical Reasonings of Mr. Paine. By an American Citizen, in Whose Heart the Amor Patriae Holds the Highest Place* (New York: Printed for the Author by John Bull, no. 115, Cherry-Street, 1797), 3.

Deist was "so rare that he was esteemed a monster in nature." Unhappily, such a situation is not the case with the French, and the American Citizen laments that France could have had a happy and stable republic if only they had a "like attachment [to Christianity] during her revolution." Had the French, like the Americans, maintained their commitment to Christianity, then the French "scaffolds would not in that case have streamed with torrents of innocent blood," nor would the other horrors of the French Revolution taken place (and the American Citizen provides a gruesome catalog of some of these horrors). Adding a dig at Paine himself, the American Citizen even notes that had the French maintained their Christian character, then Paine would "not have been imprisoned in the Luxemburg," to be spared the guillotine only by the "respect which even the Parisian savages had for America." [366]

Both Ogden and the American Citizen engage in these comparisons between America and France to highlight the religious gap between the two nations and to argue that the major reason for the stark differences arise not from republicanism but from an infidel rejection of Christianity.[367] Just as the French model of infidel republicanism should serve as a negative example that must be avoided, Ogden and the American Citizen re-claim the United States as the shining exemplum of Christian republicanism. As the American Citizen makes explicit, if the "world is to form an opinion of republicanism by what has been acted in France" then any hopes for world-wide republicanism would certainly be dashed. If, however, the world were to "judge from what has been acted in America since their revolution, their judgment must inevitably

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[366] Ibid., 10-11.

[367] In *The Reign of Terror in America,* Rachel Hope Cleves has rightly pointed out that much American conservative rhetoric interpreted the horrific violence of the French Revolution as the essential difference between it and the American Revolution. While the enumeration of French barbarities is certainly evident in the responses to *The Age of Reason,* Paine's American respondents give much greater comparative emphasis to contrasting the piousness of the American people to the infidelity of the French.

preponderate in favour of a Republican government."[368] The darkness in France is in no way a reflection on the American "city on a hill."

Although authors like Ogden and the American Citizen promote the United States as a positive example of the republican necessity of a solidly Christian populace, they nevertheless express a corollary concern that the vaunted Christian American republic is foolishly heading down the same path that the French have taken. And Paine bears a good deal of the blame for this. It is with no small sense of frustration that the American Citizen chastises his fellow countrymen, and especially the "clergy and moral people in this country in general" who obstinately refuse to acknowledge that "infidelity is an essential article incorporated into French politics" and that the French seek to completely overthrow the Christian religion.[369] The American Citizen's *A Letter to Thomas Paine* therefore is a wakeup call for his countrymen to be vigilant against seeking to emulate the French. He warns them too against the writings of a man like Paine, who has spent so much time in France that he has become so "impregnated with the seeds of insanity" that he has "vomited them forth, with all their loathsome qualities, on this once happy shore."[370] Just like the French, Paine seems determined to subvert Christianity in order to "make the happy people of this country as wretched" as himself.[371] Yet despite his apparent frustration with his fellow countrymen, the American Citizen has some optimism that Americans will put little stock in *The Age of Reason,* and Paine betrays his ignorance both of religion and of the character of American people by trying to foist it upon them. The American Citizen wonders how Paine, in his unbridled arrogance, ever supposed that he could "convert a nation of enlightened Christians, and make them change their Bible, the word of eternal life, for the

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[368] American Citizen, *A Letter to Thomas Paine*, 18.
[369] Ibid., 23.
[370] Ibid., 22.
[371] Ibid., 11.

scurrilous nonsense of your Age of Reason." Upbraiding Paine for his presumptuousness, the American Citizen hypothesizes that even had the people of America been "disposed to change their Religion" it would certainly not be for such paltry fare as *The Age of Reason*. When it comes to matters of religion, Americans have "little need of your assistance."[372]

So too does Ogden evince a similar interweaving of optimism in the faithfulness of the American people and an alarmism over encroaching foreign infidelity. Singling out Paine as the most popular "champion" of the French infidel school, Ogden nevertheless argues that Paine has been "succeeded by other deistical writers from France," and he points to Boulanger (whose *Christianity Unveiled* had just recently been published) as a "second GOLIATH" from France who has come to raise "his impious voice to revile and blaspheme."[373] Ogden then refers rather cryptically to a forthcoming "*third* champion of infidelity, from France, who shall obtrude himself upon us."[374] Although Ogden sets up his unholy triumvirate as the most dangerous foreign infidel threat to pious America, he ultimately argues that their efforts really have little chance in swaying the American people. Like the biblical Goliath, these three champions of infidelity will ultimately fall when confronted by the steadfast piety of the American people. Ogden notes that Paine and Boulanger have offered little more than unoriginal objections to Christianity, and rather than preparing the minds of Americans to accept the forthcoming "third champion of infidelity," Americans have judged Paine's and Boulanger's writings to be "*extremely disgustful.*" The soon-expected third champion of French infidelity is basically wasting his time in the United States, since his efforts will find an unsympathetic ear among the

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[372] Ibid., 3.
[373] Boulanger's *Christianity Unveiled* was published in the United States in 1795 (New York: Columbian Press, translated by W.M. Johnson), but it was not actually written by Nicolas Antoine Boulanger. The notorious French atheist Baron D'Holbach wrote the work in Boulanger's name.
[374] I suspect that Ogden's "third champion of infidelity" is most likely the French author Constantin-Francois Volney who had come to the United States in 1795 and whose book *Ruins: or a Survey of the Revolutions of Empires* was seen as promulgating an atheistic materialism.

majority of Americans. With a sense of pride in his fellow countrymen, Ogden lets the third champion of Deism know that Americans

> *keep the Bible*, and are *acquainted* with it; that, on *them*, deistical misrepresentations of scripture cannot be *imposed*; that *by them*, *deistical* assertions cannot be received as divine *revelation*; and that such is their knowledge of Christianity; that so highly do they esteem it...they will not exchange [it] for a *system* of INFIDELITY, of *vice* and *folly* from FRANCE.[375]

These American responses to *The Age of Reason* veer between alarmism and a countervailing faith in the faithfulness of fellow Americans. On the one hand Paine's respondents engage in a jeremiad that French-inspired Deism is sweeping the country, that it is being led by Paine, and that it must be resisted both by continued refutation of Deistic principles and by the promotion of the reasonableness of Christianity. On the other hand, they express the countervailing complacency that America is a nation of Bible-believing Christians whose religious beliefs are founded upon reasoned conviction and will not be easily swayed by Deism. While such rhetorical tensions are not always well resolved in the works of these American respondents, most are able to agree that *The Age of Reason* is playing a crucial part in spreading infidelity throughout the United States and that a rejection of Christianity could quickly put the country on the same disastrous course as the French.

These themes and tensions would find an even more drastic expression by Massachusetts congregational minister Jedidiah Morse who was the chief whistle-blower of the Illuminati conspiracy in the United States. Throughout the 1790s Morse was one of the most vehement American clerical critics of the French Revolution and through his sermons and writings he evinced a great deal of anxiety about the spread of French principles, especially in the United

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[375] Ogden, *Antidote to* Deism, vol 1: v-vi, xiii-xiv.

States. In a 1794 letter to his fellow Yale-graduate and Federalist politician Oliver Wolcott, Morse expressed his hope that the pious habits and principles of his fellow New Englanders may "prove a security against" the religious and political "mental epidemic" that was spreading across the world. Watching the progress of the French Revolution, with its political upheavals and its religious radicalism, Morse feared that what was unfolding across the European continent could soon jump across the Atlantic. Although Wolcott shared Morse's deep suspicion of the French Revolution, Morse justifies his concern by writing that in the United States there are "too many among us who are already deeply affected with the contagious disease both in their politics & religion," and as a case in point he looks not only to *The Age of Reason*, but also to the "vile answer to it by Wakefield" which are already "helping to spread the disease this way."[376] While Paine and Wakefield may have been vectors in the spread of the French "disease," Morse would later claim that they were only a part of a much larger and sinister conspiracy. In 1798 Morse got his hands on a copy of Robison's *Proofs of a Conspiracy*, which not only confirmed his views, but widened his perspective of the intentionality behind the dangerous spread of French principles.[377] With the animus against France heating up, President John Adams called for a fast day for the protection of the country from the "dangers that threaten it," and Morse took this opportunity to preach a sermon that crystallized his own disdain for the French as well as to alert the country to the concerted plans that had been hatched to subvert the religion and government of the United States. In his sermon, preached on the ninth of May and then quickly put into print, Morse assumes the role of a "faithful watchman" who gives to his fellow countrymen

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[376] J. Morse to O. Wolcott, 1794. In Morse, *The Federalist Party in Massachusetts to the Year 1800*: 105.
[377] Robison's book was not uncritically accepted in the United States, and as Vernon Stauffer notes, when it initially appeared in 1797, it was met with some "excited warm, even violent opposition." Stauffer, *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati*: 258.

"warning of your present danger."[378] In contrast to the traditional piety of the American people, Morse exhorts against the "astonishing increase of irreligion" recently overcoming the public mind. Such an astonishing increase in American infidelity, however, is not some random occurrence but is due to an intentional plot which has been "unveiled." Drawing heavily on Robison's work, Morse points out the primary danger as stemming from the "Illuminati," a cabal of irreligious political radicals who are "hostile to true liberty and religion," and who have enacted a secret plan to subvert the United States (as they have already done in France). While his sermon is wide-ranging and points to various means by which the Illuminati have gained ground in the United States, Morse notes that there is "little doubt that the 'Age of Reason' and the other works of that unprincipled author" have proceeded from the "fountain head of *Illumination*." That *The Age of Reason* has been so "industriously and extensively" circulated throughout the country serves as proof that the book was written specifically to include the United States as a target of the Illuminati's "demoralizing plan" to overthrow the religion and government of the country. [379]

Morse's fast day sermon drew its share of condemnation and skepticism, forcing Morse to back-up his claims about the Illuminati threat to the country. Yet Morse's sermon gained a wide popularity, leading other clerics and politicians to weigh-in on the controversy and the supposed conspiracy, such that by "midsummer, references to the Illuminati abounded."[380] By November of 1798 Morse felt as though he had had gathered enough evidence about a domestic Illuminati plot to preach (and publish) another sermon, which further stoked the controversy over

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[378] Jedidiah Morse, *A Sermon, Delivered at the New North Church in Boston, in the Morning, and in the Afternoon at Charlestown, May 9th, 1798 : Being the Day Recommended by John Adams, President of the United States of America, for Solemn Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer.* (Boston: Printed by Samuel Hall, 1798), 25.
[379] Ibid., 17-18, 20, 24.
[380] Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America : Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery* 91.

the Illuminati's diabolical radicalism. In his annual Thanksgiving sermon Morse once again singled out *The Age of Reason* as a primary vehicle of the Illuminati. Morse saw little else but conspiracy behind the fact that fifteen thousand copies of Paine's "infamous book" had been printed in France and were then shipped to the United States to be "disposed of by sale at a cheap rate, or given away." Bad enough that a foreign edition had polluted American shores, but worse yet is that "numerous editions of the same work (shame on our country!) have been printed here." The negative result of the foreign and domestic promulgation of *The Age of Reason* (as well as other books "of the same craft and tendency") is most clearly seen in the "evident spread of infidel and atheistical principles, and the consequent deterioration of morals." For Morse, these pernicious results are proof that Paine and other "apostles of Illuminism have not been unsuccessful in their labours."[381]

While Morse and other American respondents certainly hyperbolize *The Age of Reason* as a most horrid and dangerous book, it is clear that Paine alone is not single-handedly to blame for the spread of Deism in the United States. The French, with their decades-long history of Deism were blamed for introducing ungodliness among a pious American populace, and the French Revolution stands as the contemporary example of Deism run amok with disastrous results. [382] Following Robison's lead, Morse ties Paine to a much larger international conspiracy of political and religious radicalism, of which the French Revolution was but the first step. But

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[381] Jedidiah Morse, *A Sermon, Preached at Charlestown, November 29, 1798: 68-9.*

[382] Not everyone who responded to *The Age of Reason* blamed the French for introducing Deism to America. Ebenezer Bradford, for example, argues that before the American Revolution Deism was "a stranger to this happy clime." This was to change during the American Revolution, owing to the arrival of certain "bold foreigners" whose activities were "exactly calculated to propagate Deism, among the gay, the heedless, and the less informed parts of our armies." While one might assume that he is referring to the French allies, Bradford instead points the finger at the British, singling out General Charles Lee (a British-born Major General in the Continental Army who got a reputation for being an infidel) as but one of Revolutionary-era British-imports who had strengthened the "American camp of Deism." For Bradford, the time since the outbreak of the Revolution has been one of Deism ascendant, such that "never were, before this period, so many in America, who openly advocated the deistical cause." Bradford, *Mr. Thomas Paine's Trial*: 62.

as Morse and other respondents intimate, it takes organization and collusion to adequately propagate infidelity, a point that is often driven-home for partisan political purposes. Driving much of the rhetoric about Deism is the political climate of the 1790s which saw increasingly heated rhetoric and polemical battles between Federalists and their opponents, specifically over issues such as support for the French Revolution. While there may have been an optimistic confidence that as a general group Americans would not be swayed by Deism, some of the respondents point to certain segments of the populace who have indeed fallen into the Deistic trap set by *The Age of Reason*. In my next chapter I will deal in more depth the segments of the population who were seen to be most vulnerable to "Tom Paine's deistic trash and treason."[383] It does stand to note here that some of the responders to Paine not only have a clear idea as to who has been embracing Deism, but more importantly, who is actively seeking to promote it and from where they drew their inspiration. It is on these points that the American political partisanship of the 1790s raises its head and becomes a part of the discursive arena about the relationship between republicanism and religion.

The most frequent target of overt political finger-pointing is against the so-called Democratic-Republican societies, which had their heyday in the middle of the 1790s as the first "organized popular political dissent in the new republic."[384] Formed primarily as corresponding societies and composed of a large cross section of American "farmers, artisans, mechanics, and common laborers, as well as professionals, middling politicians, and landed elites," these societies were strongly pro-French, were imbued with strongly egalitarian principles of inclusive

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[383] "On Reading Thomas Paine's Age of Reason," *Gentleman's Magazine* 65:1, no. July (1795).

[384] Matthew Schoenbachler, "Republicanism in the Age of Democratic Revolution: The Democratic-Republican Societies of the 1790s," *Journal of the Early Republic* 18:2, no. Summer (1998): 238-9. Eugene Link's *Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800*. (New York, Columbia University Press, 1942) remains the only full-length monograph on these societies, and he estimates that forty of these societies existed throughout the United States. See also Philip Foner's introduction to the collection of primary source documents in, Philip S. Foner, ed. *The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976).

democracy, and were highly critical as to what they saw as the dangerous policies of a centralized government.[385] As such, the Democratic-Republican societies became frequent targets of Federalist ire, who characterized them as radically anarchic, traitorously illegal, and the chief promulgators of religious infidelity.[386]

The American Citizen's *A Letter to Thomas Paine* is one of the more overtly political tracts to come out against *The Age of Reason*, since in addition to lambasting Paine's Deism, the work takes Paine to task for his 1796 *Letter to George Washington* (in which Paine attacks not only the policies of the Washington administration, but also the character of Washington himself). As I noted earlier in this section, the American Citizen contrasts the French and American republics to show the societal danger entailed by religious infidelity. To drive this point home, the American Citizen specifically mentions the Democratic-Republican societies which have, for some perverse reason, formed themselves along the same lines as the radical infidel French Jacobins.[387] Despite the "dreadful example set by the popular societies of France" (with the "Jacobin societies" singled out), similar clubs were "immediately established in this country," causing the American Citizen to wonder at the "grossly mistaken notion" that has "induced many shallow-headed people to think that the only way to support the character of true republicanism, was by imitating all the Frenchified manoeuvres of their revolution." While these

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[385] Schoenbachler, "Republicanism in the Age of Democratic Revolution: The Democratic-Republican Societies of the 1790s," 238.

[386] Scholars have rightly emphasized that these Democratic-Republican societies were by no means dominated by Deists or other religious infidels. Philip Foner cautions that these societies were diverse in that they "had conservatives on religion and devoted Deists as members." Foner, ed. *The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800,* 13. Similarly, Eugene Link notes that "it is not accurate to make a blanket statement that the clubs were 'atheistic' or even dominantly deistic. Rather, republicanism and equalitarianism appealed to many who were firm bulwarks of one or another of the various denominations… these and others were conservatives in religion and radicals in politics." Link, *Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800,* 119.

[387] Rachel Hope Cleves notes that the epithets of "American Jacobins" or "Jacobinism" were frequently used by American conservatives throughout the 1790s (and beyond) as a means to "suppress democratic challenges to political, cultural and religious hierarchies." See Rachel Hope Cleves, "'Jacobins in this Country': The United States, Great Britain, and Trans-Atlantic Anti-Jacobinism," *Early American Studies* 8:2, no. Spring (2010): 414.

American Jacobin societies may be operating under the mistaken notion that Americans "could not be a free people without imitating the horrors of French anarchy," the American Citizen is only too happy to report that in France such societies have been suppressed, with the result that their American counterparts have been disgraced, thereby preventing "a flood of misery" in the United States.[388] Nevertheless, the American Citizen re-iterates his plea: "O! Americans, beware of Jacobin politics, and Jacobin religion."[389]

The link between the Democratic-Republican societies, French infidelity and *The Age of Reason* is made even more explicit in Federalist mouthpieces such as the *Connecticut Courant* and the *American Minerva*. In his introductory remarks to a series of articles that discuss *The Age of Reason*, the editor of the *Connecticut Courant* throws down the challenge to those who are weak minded enough to be persuaded by *The Age of Reason*, and who have too readily latched on to the "distracted notion of the French, respecting liberty" to defend their unwarranted faith in Paine and the French. Surely it is plainly obvious that the principles avowed by the French (and by implication, Paine) have led to an "an alienation of the mind from all the ties of religion, and a denial of the nature, attributes, and existence of a God." In an oblique dig at Catholicism, the *Connecticut Courant* refers to the French as a previously "superstitiously religious nation" that has been caught up in a "phrenzy of freedom" leading them to "reject not only the forms, but the substance of religion." The lesson from the French is that they have gone too far in their quest for liberty, which has led them down the path of rejecting God himself. In an alarmist mode the editor warns that such "wild, and libertine principles" of the French have been exported and the "same mad licentiousness" that has affected the French has "gained considerable ground here." Yet rather than implicate a republican form of government *per se*,

[388] American Citizen. *A Letter to Thomas Paine*: 17.
[389] Ibid., 9.

the editor notes that a particular faction within the United States is pursuing the same disastrous course as the French. Raising the specter of mob-violence, the editor finds a French-inspired "spirit of infidelity" taking root in the United States, especially among the "lower classes of the people." The libertine French have not only freed themselves from "all human control," but they have taken the subsequent step of attempting to "scale the ramparts of heaven, and dethrone the Almighty Jehovah." In a sentiment dripping with partisan rancor and directed at the Democratic-Republican societies, the editor notes that "Our own Democrats would do just so, *if they dare*."[390]

Noah Webster's Federalist newspaper the *American Minerva* used its review of *The Age of Reason* to hurl a similar barb at these popular political societies. As historian Seth Cotlar has pointed out, beginning in the middle of the decade, the "Federalist press eagerly exploited French news about the violent potential of popular political clubs" as a way of calling for the abolition of such associations. On nearly a daily basis, the *American Minerva* hammered home the message that the "salvation of the American political system lay in rejecting the French example."[391] Commenting upon a passage in *The Age of Reason* where Paine bases his rejection of the Bible because he "detests everything that is cruel," the *American Minerva* mockingly asks Paine to reflect on the situation in France. If Paine is such an enemy to "ancient cruelty, we could wish to know how his own imprisonment and the proceedings of the revolutionary tribunal, sit upon his mind." With a reference to Paine's political writings, the reviewer wonders whether *The Age of Reason* "is destined to overthrow America" in terms of religion just as *Common Sense* "contributed to overthrow the English government in this country." While the

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[390] *Connecticut Courant*, January 19, 1795.
[391] Seth Cotlar, "Reading the Foreign News, Imagining an American Public Sphere: Radical and Conservative Visions of 'the Public' in Mid-1790s Newspapers," in *Periodical Literature in Eighteenth-Century America*, ed. Mark L. Kamrath and Sharon M. Harris (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 323-4.

reviewer admits that he "shall not predict" the ultimate effects that a book like *The Age of Reason* may have, he nevertheless states with certainty that the "tendency of such books, when industriously circulated by *certain democrats* [my italics] is to level Jesus Christ, as well as the monarchies of the earth." Despite such worries about the religious and political leveling principles of such "democrats," the reviewer maintains his trust that the "body of people in America have too much good sense to be deceived, and that they will not exchange good laws, freedom, and pure religion, for the principles of anarchy, and infidelity."[392]

While Federalists tried to tie infidelity to the popular Democratic-Republican societies, their political opponents used their responses to *The Age of Reason* to dispute this link. In his defense of *The Age of Reason*, Paine's Deistic supporter Elihu Palmer would take the *American Minerva* to task for its "base insinuation" that sought to link political and religious opinions, as if one was endemic of the other. The *American Minerva* operates under the false assumption that Democrats are the "only people in the world who had any thing to do with *The Age of Reason*; as tho' they were all infidels and anarchists." Palmer, who was himself a member of the Democratic Society of Pennsylvania, challenges any "man of character" to be so foolish as to "hazard this assertion" that religious opinions are any "criterion by which to determine political sentiments." How then can the *American Minerva* be so brazen as to imply that "infidelity or deism [is] a sure sign of a democrat."[393] Although Palmer's hostility to Christianity is such that he himself implies a certain affinity between Deism and republicanism, he is not willing to posit any sort of inherent connection between one's religious and political views, a function perhaps of Palmer's own experience with the more conservative religious member of the Democratic Society of Pennsylvania. Indeed, Palmer was highly suspicious and critical of any attempts to

[392] "For the Minerva." *American Minerva* 1:204 (August 4, 1794): 3.
[393] Palmer, *The Examiners Examined: Being a Defence of The Age of Reason*: 73.

enmesh religion and politics, and part of his critique of the *American Minerva* played out on this point.[394] Commenting more generally on the attitude of the politicization of religion, Palmer notes that too often those who disagree with Christian orthodoxy are "immediately declared to be Antifederal, Democratical, Jacobinical, Anarchial." While this is exactly the "kind of abracadabra" that the *American Minerva* is up to, Palmer is optimistic that such scare tactics will have no effect on the "sensible part of the community."[395]

Nearly a decade after Palmer called-out the *American Minerva* for its fear-mongering, the Pennsylvania Presbyterian clergyman John Gemmil used his rebuttal of *The Age of Reason* to score points against the "*federal* Clergymen" who dangerously attempted to intertwine religion and politics not only by their repeated attacks on Paine, but also by intimating that Jeffersonian Republicans (and the sitting President himself) were conspirators in an infidel agenda. Gemmil's article originally appeared in the Republican newspaper *The Aurora* in February 1803, but was widely reprinted in newspapers, and as part of a book titled *Paine Versus Religion, or, Christianity Triumphant.* While Gemmil is highly critical of Paine's religious views, he is equally shocked by Federalist attempts to unite politics and religion. Gemmil argues that the rhetorical flogging that Paine received from the clergy when he returned to the United States may have been couched in religious language, but there was an underlying political agenda at work. Gemmil points out that while Paine's religious infidelity "was the ostensible" cause of clerical ire, Paine's "Republican pen [was] the real ground of their alarm." No real minister of the Gospel could have had any genuine fear of Paine's infidelity, since it is ludicrous for anyone

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[394] Palmer notes with some disappointment that in America "strong religious prejudices have been cultivated in the minds of the people" with the result that those seeking public office have had to be very circumspect in their religious opinions. Yet Palmer is optimistic that this situation is changing, and despite the efforts of "certain illiberal writers," such religious prejudices are "fast wearing away. And the doors to honor and power will soon be open to all sects alike." Ibid., 74.
[395] Ibid.

to believe that the religion of "Jesus can be materially affected by the presence or absence of Mr. Paine." As a Republican, Gemmil characterizes the clerical attacks on Paine as the result of "Federal hypocrisy" which has been vying for the "destruction of our excellent Constitution, and the establishment of a Monarchy on its ruins." As if Gemmil's own political stripes were not already showing, he chides the Federalist clergy for their fallacious attempts to link their political opponents to religious infidelity, and he is specifically indignant about their repeated attacks on President Jefferson. With a healthy dose of professional disdain, Gemmil castigates his fellow clerics for employing their "professional holiness" in the cause of raising the "voice of calumny to stain his [Jefferson's] reputation, to enfeeble his hands, to subject to universal contempt him and the government over which the providence of God has appointed him to preside." [396] While Gemmil's partisan fury is most pointedly directed at his fellow clerics who have used their pulpits to promote Federalist rhetoric, Gemmil does not let Paine of the hook, and he holds Paine and *The Age of Reason* as partly to blame for fanning the flames of Federalist propaganda. Addressing Paine directly, Gemmil expresses his regret that Paine's hostility to Christianity "may render some pious Republicans more easily deceived by these hypocritical Federalists, who cunningly connect the ideas of Republicanism and Infidelity, and affirm that the object of

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[396] John Gemmil et al., *Paine Versus Religion, or, Christianity Triumphant : Containing the Interesting Letters of Sam. Adams, Tho. Paine, and John Gemmil : To Which is Added, Mr. Erskine's Celebrated Speech at the Trial of the Age of Reason* (Baltimore: G. Douglas, Bookseller, 1803), 11-12. The pseudonymous True Baptist levels similar charges against the Federalists for trying to blacken the reputation of Jefferson "with their charges of infidelity." Like Gemmil, the True Baptist tries to pull back the curtain of Federalist pretense, and he charges that the reason Federalists have leveled the charge of infidelity at Jefferson stems from their fear that in a federal government run by a Republican, the coercive state-by-state religious laws, so precious to Federalists, are in danger of being nullified. The True Baptist, however, takes a step that Gemmil does not, when he speculates that even if Jefferson actually was an infidel, this could actually be a positive thing for religion in the United States. The True Baptist writes: "…but allowing Mr. Jefferson to be an infidel, what then? Why, it is an awful thing to have an infidel at the head of public affairs! But why so awful, pray? Which would be most conducive to the general good, to have an infidel at the head of public affairs who cares so little about religion, that he would not disturb it, if he did it no good, but would leave every man to enjoy his own opinion." True Baptist. *The Age of Inquiry*, 76.

Republicans is the extirpation of the Gospel."[397] Paine, it seems, has played right into the hands of the Federalists, who have used the religious issue as a means of disuniting the Republicans along religious lines. As the historian of early American radicalism Alfred Young has noted, *The Age of Reason* was "a god-send" to the Federalists, who used it to blacken Jeffersonian Republicans and Paine with the same infidel brush.[398]

Paine, of course, did not need Gemmil to tell him that the Federalist clergy were using their pulpits to score political points against their adversaries. In his public letter to Samuel Adams (which appeared in the *National Intelligencer*, February 2, 1803), Paine remarked on the hostile reaction that his return to the United States engendered among many of the clergy, who branded him as the howling infidel come to overthrow Christianity and the government of the United States. Referring to such clerical condemnations, Paine realized that this "*war-whoop* of the pulpit" was really serving some ulterior agenda which had "some concealed object." Religion, Paine opined, is "not the cause, but is the stalking horse" of clerical hostility towards him, and they used religion as a means of concealing their real agenda: Federalist policies. Paine writes that "it is not a secret" that Federalist leaders have "been working by various means for several years past to overturn the Federal Constitution based on the representative system," and have enlisted sympathetic clergy to bellow "forth from the pulpit" the necessity of Federalist policies and the denigration of those who opposed them.[399]

None of this rhetoric should come as much of a surprise to anyone familiar with late-eighteenth and early nineteenth century American partisan polemics. Federalists sought to portray their opponents as wholly and dangerously imbued with radical French principles, which

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[397] Gemmil, *Paine Versus Religion*: 14.
[398] Alfred Young, "Common Sense and the Rights of Man in America," in *Science, Mind and Art*, ed. K. Gavroglu, J. Stachel, and M. Wartofsky (Boston: Kluwer Academic, 1995), 428.
[399] Thomas Paine, "Letter to Samuel Adams," in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 2:1436.

roosted in the power of the mob, incubated anarchic notions of liberty and licentiousness, and took flight with Deistic infidel religiosity. The Democratic-Republican societies were seen as hotbeds of Jacobinism—political radicals imbued with Deistic or atheistic infidelity who were "accused of making Tom Paine's 'Age of Reason' their Bible."[400] Jefferson and his Republicans were similarly branded with the infidel label, with Jefferson himself roundly characterized in the Federalist press as the "Virginia Voltaire," the infidel-in-chief of America who would lead the country into a situation reminiscent of the darkest days of the French Revolution. Federalists were subsequently charged with betraying the republican principles of the country by trying to recreate an aristocracy and by too readily comingling religion and politics.

The American responses to *The Age of Reason* provide a window on the political alignments and issues of the day, but in such a way that highlights the battles over defining the appropriate religiosity of a republican society. Much as in the British response, *The Age of Reason* served as a venue for ministers and laymen to grind some political axes while defending Christianity from a hostile Deistic foe. Americans wedded their alarmism of the spread of infidelity to a countervailing faithfulness in the piousness of Americans who would not be easily argued out of their Christianity. The French Revolution becomes the foil by which the American republic is measured and evaluated, and the issue of the religious underpinnings of the two serves to highlight the crucial role that Christianity plays vis-à-vis republicanism. In a poem that he inserted into his reply to Paine, the True Baptist nicely highlights how American respondents to *The Age of Reason* assumed the necessity of a republican political system while opposing any suggestion that to be a good republican entailed a rejection of Christianity. In two competing stanzas, the True Baptist invites his readers to "take up the Bible/ See what is truth, and what is

[400] Frederick M. Sheldon, "Thomas Paine's Second Appearance in the United States," *Atlantic Monthly* 1859, 5.

libel." If they find that the Bible "supports church monarchy/ Or buoys an aristocracy" then Paine's attack on the Bible is valid and "The Age of Reason sure is right." However, if the Bible

> …proves REPUBLICAN,
> The Age of Reason, cannot stand;
> A thousand errors too, must fall,
> And Christians triumph o'er them all;
> The church from bondage, will be free,
> The state enjoy its liberty.[401]

The general thrust of the poem leads the reader to conclude that republicanism is consistent with the Bible and with true Christianity, thereby implying that *The Age of Reason* "cannot stand."

3.5 CONCLUSION

Throughout the American and British responses to *The Age of Reason,* Paine's opponents warned of the danger of the irreligion of *The Age of Reason*. Compelled to refute its arguments, they frequently placed Paine in the context of his Deist lineage, with most concluding that Paine represented the last gasp of a desiccated intellectual heritage. Paine's arguments, they crow, are easily refuted because they are merely re-hashed arguments that have already been adequately rejected by numerous Christian apologists. Yet the alarmism of the responses show that although Christianity had little to fear from Deism, the threat that Deism posed was still very clear and present. For some respondents the problem with Deism was its lack of any moral center-- to be a Deist is to be licentious and immoral, either because one learns to be so or

[401] True Baptist, *The Age of Inquiry*: 9-10.

because one finds in Deism the justification for one's prior lack of moral self-restraint. Either way, Deism leads to the dissolution of any moral obligations or expectations between the self and the rest of humanity. For proof of the danger that Deism presents to civil society, one need look no farther than the torrents of blood staining the streets of revolutionary France. The specter of the horrors of the French Revolution became the lens through which *The Age of Reason* was viewed and served as the empirical proof of the dangers of infidelity. For conservative British responders, the French example showed the dangers of both republicanism and Deism, which were dangerous in and of themselves and which naturally and logically flowed from the same destructive source. Hence, *The Age of Reason* was just one more example of a political radical showing to the world that to be a republican and a Deist was nearly interchangeable. It came as little surprise that the man who attacked the monarchy in *Rights of Man* would next turn his sights on God himself. British reformers and radicals who responded to *The Age of Reason* sought to disprove this connection by distancing themselves from Paine's Deism while nevertheless maintaining their high regard for his political writings. For Britons such as William Jackson, Gilbert Wakefield and Thomas Bentley, and for nearly all of the American responders to *The Age of Reason*, Deism was a path down which they did not need to travel to retain their republican credentials. Indeed, for many of them, not only were Christianity and republicanism compatible, but a stable and successful republican form of government could *only* be predicated on having a solidly Christian populace. The French made a complete blunder in their revolution by extending their attacks on an oppressive monarchical system into an attack on Christianity itself, resulting in the undermining of civil society and leading to the anarchic Reign of Terror. In writing *The Age of Reason*, Paine was trying to do exactly that—to strip away the stabilizing effects that Christianity has on society and to export the worst abuses of the

French Revolution. Republicanism and Deism are not synonymous terms, and on this, most American respondents could agree. Yet the American responses to *The Age of Reason* do show a good bit of partisan axe-grinding and mud-slinging over the danger that Deism represented. For American political conservatives, it was the wrong sort of republicanism that was at issue—the radical "democratic" sort which was too closely aligned with French Jacobinism and its inherent hostility to Christianity. For those Americans aligned more closely to the Jeffersonian end of the political spectrum, the link between religious infidelity and democratic politics was spurious. Although Paine may have been their political champion, his Deism was a choice that they did not need to follow. As one toast from a New York Democratic-Republican society proclaimed in 1797, "Thomas Paine: May his *Rights of Man* be handed down to our latest posterity but may his *Age of Reason* never live to see the rising generation."[402]

[402] Quoted in Young, "Common Sense and the Rights of Man in America," 426.

4.0 "IRRELIGION MADE EASY:" STYLE, AUDIENCE, AND CHEAP EDITIONS OF *THE AGE OF REASON*

By the middle of 1795, Paine was occupied with getting the second part of *The Age of Reason* printed and disseminated. Yet he did so with some caution, since he felt that due partly to his incarceration in the Luxembourg and partly due to his inattention to his financial affairs, he had been unable to have sufficient control over the publication of the first part of *The Age of Reason*. With the completion of the second part of the work, however, Paine hoped to cast a more attentive eye towards its publication, not only so that he might profit by the work, but also so that others might not unscrupulously do so. Yet what remained ingrained in Paine's consciousness was that his work should be available to the widest number of people, and he was highly insistent that his work should be affordable to a large segment of the population. When Paine sent an "authorized" copy of the work to London to the radical printer Daniel Isaac Eaton (who had published numerous editions of the first part of the work), Paine instructed that he should "make a cheap edition of it," even though the work had already been printed without Paine's permission by another printer.[403] Similarly, in a September 1795 letter, Paine informed his American friend and publisher Benjamin Franklin Bache (editor of *The Aurora* and the grandson of Benjamin Franklin) that a shipment of twelve thousand copies of the second part of

[403] Thomas Paine to Daniel Isaac Eaton, 4 December 1795, in Foner, *Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 2:1383. Eaton printed an edition for one shilling and six pence, even though Paine's work had already been surreptitiously printed in by H.D. Symonds and was being offered for one shilling.

The Age of Reason were on their way for him to sell, yet Paine instructs Bache that they should not be sold too dear. With a sense of frustration regarding the American editions of the first part of *The Age of Reason*, Paine reveals to Bache that it had been "sold higher than I expected or intended." Paine's critique was not necessarily leveled at Bache, but he does instruct his friend that the books he has sent are "not to be sold higher than one third of a dollar by the single Copy, and to allow 25 per cent on the wholesale."[404] Conservative critic and journalist William Cobbett, who during his American sojourns as "Peter Porcupine" never missed the chance to take a shot at Paine (or at his political opponent Bache), mentions with derision the shipment of *The Age of Reason* that Paine had sent Bache from France. Accusing Bache of selling *The Age of Reason* "at a price which will hardly pay first cost and expences," Cobbett intimates that Bache is doing so out of a sense of filial piety to his Deist grandfather, Benjamin Franklin. Although Bache is certainly "propagating his grandfather's principles" by offering *The Age of Reason* at a near-loss, Cobbett slyly hopes, for Bache's sake, that "Deism cannot be well said to run in the blood."[405]

Paine's insistence that *The Age of Reason* be widely dispersed through cheap editions was part of his larger project of expanding the public sphere to include those—the lower or middling sorts-- who had traditionally been left out. Throughout his literary career, beginning with the wide popularity of *Common Sense* and later with the two parts of *Rights of Man*, Paine had built his reputation through the availability of his works in cheap formats. The relative cheapness of *The Age of Reason* did not go unnoticed nor unremarked by Paine's opponents, who saw the low price of the work as an alarming indication that Paine's work would not only be

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[404] Thomas Paine to B.F. Bache, September 20, 1795. Castle-Bache microfilm collection, American Philosophical Society Library.
[405] William Cobbett, "Paine's Age of Reason." *Political Censor* 4 (May, 1796): 389.

widely distributed, but that it would fall into the hands of the wrong sorts of people. For example, in a 1798 letter to the British journal the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the pseudonymous author Eusebius notes with an alarmed disdain that it "is a well-attested fact, that no less than 400 copies of Paine's Age of Reason were, on one market-day, distributed, gratis, among the ordinary farmers, servants, and labourers, at York, in a cheap and commodious edition, in order to disseminate its principles, and extend its illuminating influence among the vulgar."[406] With similar alarm, but without the overtly class overtones, the American clergyman Daniel Dana, during a 1799 fast day sermon in which he outlined the conditions necessary for a peaceful and pleasurable society, characterized *The Age of Reason* a major vehicle of infidelity that could derail such a hoped-for society. Dana sounded a "universal alarm" that everyone in society must be on guard against "infidelity and atheism" lest the sorrowful fate of the French befall the United States, and he makes specific example of *The Age of Reason* as being the means by which the "poison of infidelity" had been diffused. It is bad enough that the work was printed in infidel France, but even worse, Paine had "many thousands of copies" sent to the United States "in order to be sold at a cheap rate, or given away, as might best ensure its circulation." That such insidious and vile Painite infidelity has "for several years past, a rapid increase among us" is something that his Dana's congregation "need not be told," since it is already a "a truth generally acknowledged."[407]

Yet it was not only that *The Age of Reason* was being sold cheaply and was being dispersed widely that elicited concern from Paine's opponents. Of related concern had to do with Paine's style of writing, which scholar Olivia Smith has termed an "intellectual vernacular

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[406] Eusebius, *Gentleman's Magazine* 68, no. January (1798): 33-4.
[407] Daniel Dana, *Two Sermons, Delivered April 25, 1799: the Day Recommended by the President of the United States for National Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer. By Daniel Dana, A.M. Pastor of a Church in Newburyport. Published by Desire.* (Newburyport, [Mass.]: Printed by Angier March, 1799), 45.

language" that was specifically geared to be easily accessible to a wide audience.[408] Paine's insistence that his works be made available in cheap editions flows from his common sensibilities that sought to include a variety of readers. Yet it was precisely Paine's "common touch," and the perception that his works were being nearly given away that lay at the heart of the ferocious reaction to both parts of *The Age of Reason*. In this chapter I will show that a major part of the controversy over *The Age of Reason* stemmed from the perception that it was written for, was being sold to, and was being read by ordinary folk. While this may have been alarming at any time for social elites, it was given heightened salience in the context of a transatlantic radicalism emboldened by the French Revolution. Not only is this seen through the rhetoric of those who overtly claim that *The Age of Reason* could only appeal to the "uneducated masses" or the "lower orders," but is also seen in oft-repeated disdain for Paine's writing style, his use of ridicule and low-humor, the weight of his notorious reputation, and the deep concern that *The Age of Reason* was being industriously circulated among the common people through cheap editions. The upshot of this is that when the masses abandon their Christianity for Deism, bloody anarchy is the inevitable result, as proven by the horrors of the French Revolution. This chapter will focus on the different rhetorical strategies that Paine's adversaries used to raise the alarm against *The Age of Reason* as a common man's primer in revolutionary Deism. I also discuss the ways that the respondents similarly hoped to appeal to non-elites. While Paine's adversaries certainly had to deal with *what* he argued in *The Age of Reason*, they were more often concerned with *how* Paine argued, *for whom* he was writing, and the dangerous societal implications this entailed. This chapter argues that not only did the respondents to *The Age of*

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[408] Smith, *The Politics of Language*, 1791-1819, x.

Reason rail against its intended audience, but they also took steps to actively address this audience by countering Paine on his own terms.

4.1 UNTRUSTWORTHY READERS OF *THE AGE OF REASON*

In his annual charge to the clergy of his diocese, the Bishop of London Beilby Porteus in 1794 struck both an indignant and warning tone against the extent to which infidelity and irreligion had seemingly taken hold not only in London, but more generally across English society. While Porteus's sermon is a rallying cry for his clergy against a perceived onslaught of infidelity, in a footnote to the published edition of his sermon, Porteus singles out Paine as one of the central agents of the spread of irreligion, and his harangue provides one of the more succinct views of the perniciousness of *The Age of Reason*. Porteus alludes to how *The Age of Reason* has been "dispersed with incredible zeal and diligence, not only through the metropolis, but through the remotest districts of the kingdom." It therefore becomes Porteus' "indispensable duty" to stress that *The Age of Reason* is the "most dangerous that perhaps ever before insulted the religion of any Christian country." Its danger, however, lies not in the "force of the reasoning, or the weight of the objections to be found in it," for like most other responders to *The Age of Reason*, Porteus finds that *The Age of Reason* is poorly argued and "contains nothing new." Porteus' footnote bears repeating for its marvelous encapsulation of the danger posed by *The Age of Reason*, which stems from its

> manner, from the plainness, the familiarity, and the air of authority and triumph with which it is written… It is *irreligion made easy* to the great bulk of mankind, and rendered intelligible to every capacity. It is a snare laid for those numerous and valuable classes of men, who have hitherto, in a great measure, escaped the contagion of infidelity, and are perhaps scarce acquainted with its name, the mechanic, the manufacturer, the farmer, the

> servant, the labourer. On these (to whom the subject is quite new, and who have neither time nor talents for examining questions of this nature), the bold assertions, the intrepid blasphemies, and coarse buffoonery, which constitute the whole merit and character of this performance, are but too well calculated to impose and to supply the place of reasoning and of proof.[409]

If the more general thrust of his charge to his clergy to defend the kingdom against infidelity was not enough, Porteus concludes his footnote with an additional charge directed specifically with *The Age of Reason* in mind by stressing that it is "highly incumbent on every minister of the gospel" to exert his utmost effort to "shield his flock from a pestilence which may prove fatal to it."[410] Although it is not clear if any of the responses to *The Age of Reason* were directly inspired by Porteus, his contention that the real danger of *The Age of Reason* lies in its audience is one of the central concerns throughout both the British and the American responses to *The Age of Reason*. As I will show, there are some differences in the concerns about Paine's intended audience among the British and the American respondents. Yet they do share a common concern that that Paine's "irreligion made easy" was too easily obtained, too easily understood, and too readily accepted by certain segments of the population. For the British respondents, the primary concern is that Paine's work is dangerous because it reached the lower classes. While this concern about the lower classes is found occasionally in the works of the American respondents, they worried more that *The Age of Reason* appealed to young people.

Beginning in Paine's time, and continuing on to our own, Paine has often been characterized as an unoriginal thinker who wrote in a "vulgar" style which, while appealing to the masses, was of little interest to intellectual historians or literary critics. Beginning in the 1960s, however, Paine's style gained a renewed interest, when James T. Boulton examined the rhetorical structure of Paine's political tracts to show how Paine's style of writing formed a part

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[409] Porteus, *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of London*, 22-4.
[410] Ibid.

of his "critical method."[411] More recently, scholars such as Robert Ferguson, Michael Warner, Trish Loughran, and Edward Larkin have analyzed the implications of Paine's writing style on the public sphere, and how Paine, through his use of language and rhetoric, sought to create an expanded public that was more inclusive of the general population.[412] As Edward Larkin has pointed out, Paine's conception of religious and political truth rests on "simplicity as a fundamental value," wherein no arcane or specialized knowledge is required for understanding.[413] As such, not only were Paine's ideas wrapped up in a hoped-for democratization of the political landscape, but his very means of communication were also bound up with this project to include and enfranchise as many people as possible. Paine's rhetorical stance in *The Age of Reason* is no different than that of his previous political works, and he operates under the presumption that he is merely pointing things out which would (or should) be obvious to anyone who has not been tied-up by ideology, dogma, or self-interested ignorance. In the first part of *The Age of Reason* Paine hammers this point home by referring to his childhood encounter (at seven or eight years old) with the doctrine of "redemption by the death of the Son of God." Paine notes that he "revolted" at the notion that God would demand the death of his own Son as a sort of revenge for humanity's transgressions, and he offers as a general maxim that "any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a child

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[411] James Boulton, "Tom Paine and the Vulgar Style," *Essays in Criticism* 12(1962): 23. Thomas Clark, in a 1978 article does a linguistic-rhetorical-stylistic comparison of *Common Sense* to other pamphlets of the time to provide a quantitative basis for Paine's "vulgar" style. Clark concludes that Paine's common style is marked by the "avoidance of noun modifiers and overly long subordinate clauses and a preference for uninterrupted subject-verb-object sentences, active verbs and forms of 'to be'." See Thomas Clark, "A Note on Tom Paine's "Vulgar" Style," *Communication Quarterly* 26:2, no. Spring (1978): 31.

[412] See Robert A. Ferguson, "The Commonalities of *Common Sense*," *William and Mary Quarterly* 57:3, no. July (2000); Larkin, *Thomas Paine and the Literature of Revolution*; Trish Loughran, *The Republic in Print : Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770-1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Michael Warner, *Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990).

[413] Larkin, *Thomas Paine and the Literature of Revolution*: 10.

cannot be a true system."[414] Even a child, Paine implies, is able to grasp that something is not quite right in the Christian system, and his approach to religion is that of a no-nonsense everyman who is merely pointing out some of the problematic implications inherent in revealed religion generally, and the dubious morality, the absurdities and inconsistencies of the Old and New Testaments specifically. One could say that rhetorically Paine rarely even really argues his points or engages in disputations; instead, he writes as if he is merely pointing out what is plain and true, and that he is merely reminding his readers of their own capacity to have discovered these simple truths themselves. Indeed, Paine's characteristic dismissal of his critics is rooted in his strategy of getting to basic, obvious, and indisputable truths. Paine's opponents may, he says in the second part of *The Age of Reason*, "amuse themselves" by trying to refute him, but their objections are little more than cobwebs that are easily brushed aside.[415] Of course, Paine's opponents did continue to try to refute him, and they challenged him vigorously on the points that he took to be so plainly obvious. They went to great lengths not only to show how wrong Paine was on the specifics of this arguments, but also how his very rhetorical stance is audacious, arrogant, and pig-headedly dogmatic. As Daniel M'Neille writes in his meaningfully titled *Dogmatism Exposed*, Paine has substituted "assertion for argument, and dogmatism for discussion."[416]

While Paine's ideas may not have been all that new, his ability to condense complicated political and religious ideas, and to offer them in easily understandable language was novel, and

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[414] Thomas Paine, first part of *The Age of Reason*, in Foner, ed., *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 1: 497.
[415] Thomas Paine, second part of *The Age of Reason*, in Foner, ed., *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 1: 517.
[416] M'Neille, *Dogmatism Exposed*, 7.

Paine's writings "shattered the traditionally Anglo-American mold for pamphleteering."[417] Indeed, Paine saw his style of writing as bound up with his project of enfranchising the common man, and we get glimpses in his writings that he knew what he was about by repudiating the too-florid language of an exclusionary political elite for a simpler style that used common tropes and metaphors.[418] Alfred F. Young has noted that in *Common Sense* Paine was not only arguing for American independence, but he was also arguing for a broadly enfranchised republicanism through the implicit message of a "warmly egalitarian" writing style that was "addressed to ordinary people in the plainest of language."[419] Bishop Porteus, who so marvelously captures the danger of *The Age of Reason* as laying in Paine's style and intended audience, held a similar opinion of *Rights of Man*, which he also criticized for its "plain, familiar, forcible style very well calculated to captivate common readers."[420]

Paine's rhetorical approach, matched with his style, was bound up with his optimistic view of the capacities and capabilities of the common man, and it was evident both to Paine's adherents and his detractors that he purposefully wrote in simple language that used common tropes and metaphors in order to include the widest possible readership. As Thomas Jefferson later wrote of his revolutionary friend, "No writer has exceeded Paine in the ease and familiarity of style; in perspicuity of expression, happiness of elucidation, and in simple and unassuming

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[417] Ferguson, "The Commonalities of *Common Sense*," 470.
[418] For example, in the concluding section of his first American Crisis letter, written in December of 1776, Paine casts himself as writing in a language that does not "dwell upon the vapors of imagination; I bring reason to your ears, and, in language plain as A,B,C, hold up truth to your eyes." Years later, Paine would note that he purposefully wrote *Rights of Man* "in a style of thinking and expression different to what had been customary in England." See Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 1:56, 348-9.
[419] Young, "Common Sense and the Rights of Man in America," 414.
[420] See Lambeth Palace Library MS 2103, f.35, quoted in Robert Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England, 1760-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 116.

language."[421] R.R. Palmer has aptly characterized Paine's works as "supreme in the literature of blunt directness," and while it may not have come as a complete surprise that Paine wrote pamphlets and tracts that used a simple style, it did come as quite a shock when he began to discuss religious matters in a similarly blunt way.[422] One of the most consistent criticisms hurled at *The Age of Reason* was against its tone, and Paine's respondents frequently took him to task for his use of ridicule and irreverence that verges on blasphemy. For many of the responders, *The Age of Reason* has very little "reason" in it, and Paine's recourse to scoffing irreverence is but the most telling indicator of the slipshod nature of his logic.[423] The Rev. Uzal Ogden, for example, plays-off the title of *The Age of Reason* by charging that the work is essentially "devoid of REASON," and could only be described as being replete with "low wit and invective; sophistry and dogmatism."[424] With a bit of witty surety, the pseudonymous Layman (attributed to the Philadelphian Miers Fisher) claims that some of Paine's arguments are "so futile, so full of bare assertion, and buffoonery" that it barely seems necessary to respond to them since their tone serves as "an answer to themselves, satisfactory enough to every intelligent person."[425]

Other respondents go a step further by arguing that Paine's use of irreverent ridicule shows that he is particularly unqualified to partake in the serious topic of religion, and is thereby

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[421] Thomas Jefferson to Francis Wayles Eppes, January 19, 1821. In Edwin Morris Betts and James Adam Bear, eds., *Family Letters of Thomas Jefferson* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1966), 438.
[422] R.R. Palmer, "Tom Paine Victim of the Rights of Man " *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 66:2, no. April (1942): 165.
[423] Nearly seventy years previously, and in response to the Deists of his own day, the Bishop of London Edmund Gibson posited as a general maxim to his parishioners that whenever they "meet with any Book upon the Subject of Religion, that is written in a ludicrous or unserious manner; take it for granted that it proceeds from a deprav'd Mind, and is written with an irreligious Design." Edmund Gibson, *The Bishop of London's Pastoral Letter to the People of his Diocese; Particularly, to Those of the Two Great Cities of London and Westminster. Occasion'd by Some Late Writings in Favour of Infidelity.* (London: Printed for Sam. Buckley, in Amen-Corner, 1728), 8.
[424] Ogden, *Antidote to Deism*, 18.
[425] Layman [Miers Fisher], *A Reply to the False Reasoning in the "Age of Reason." : To Which are Added, Some Thoughts on Idolatry; on the Devil; and the Origin of Moral Evil; on Educating Young Men for the Gospel Ministry; and On What is "The Word of God." All Which Refer, More or Less, to Opinions Advanced in Thomas Paine's "Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology." By A Layman* (Philadelphia: Henry Tuckniss, 1796), v.

disqualified from the supposedly dispassionate and reasoned discourse of the republic of letters. To write about religion, Paine's respondents assert, one must assume a certain degree of reverence and high-mindedness to go along with a topic of such ultimate importance. *The Age of Reason* shows no such reverence; on the contrary, Paine's tone is nothing short of blasphemous and profane. The British *Critical Review*, for example, characterizes *The Age of Reason* as being conspicuous for its "want of learning" as well as "a degree of profaneness which cannot be acceptable even to unbelievers of a philosophical and dispassionate turn of mind."[426] As such, Paine's use of "ridicule, bombast, and puerility" proves that he has "not the temper of mind fit for a searcher after truth."[427] The Virginian Presbyterian minister Moses Hoge advises that before writing on "so grave a topic" as religion, Paine "certainly ought to have known, that there is absolutely no argument in a scoff, a sneer, a witticism, or the loudest bursts of profane laughter."[428] The foundations of Christianity, therefore, have nothing to fear from any tract undertaken in such spirit and with such irreverent shortcomings. In Chapter 6 I will discuss this issue at more at length to show how Paine's respondents use assumptions about authorial style and tone to disqualify *The Age of Reason* from serious consideration in what Jürgen Habermas has termed the *bourgeois public sphere*.

It should be noted that while nearly all of the responders to *The Age of Reason* make some reference to Paine's irreverence as a way of dismissing his arguments, a few characterize this as the part of Paine's writing style that makes *The Age of Reason* such a dangerous lure to a common audience. Paine's opponents take the irreverence and the scoffing ridicule of *The Age of Reason* as a major reason that the book appeals to common readers, who are overly fond of

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[426] *Critical Review* 16 (1796): 319.
[427] Ibid., 313.
[428] Hoge, "The Sophist Unmasked in a Series of Letters, Addressed to Thomas Paine, Author of a Book Entitled, The Age of Reason," 299.

low wit, blasphemous scurrilities and irreverent mocking. For example, in its review of the first part of *The Age of Reason*, the *English Review* takes a somewhat haughty tone by charging that Paine is out of his depth in writing on a religious topic since he does "not possess learning sufficient to do justice to such a subject." While not directly charging the work with resorting to low wit or ridicule, the reviewer does mention obliquely that the work is written in a "specious manner" and therefore will certainly "make a strong impression on the ignorant, and those whose principles are yet unfixed."[429] With the publication of the second part of *The Age of Reason*, however, the *English Review* strikes a bit of a bolder note by intimating that there is so little new in this sequel that it does not even warrant a full review. The reviewer furthermore makes a point of not reproducing any passages from *The Age of Reason*, since to do so would be to "administer to the *sensus ridiculi* of those who like to laugh at any thing they may think calculated to puzzle the doctor of divinity." The reviewer sees Paine's use of ridicule and profaneness as a deliberate strategy for duping his readership, for "once men are put into a merry mood, they are not very prone to listen to the sober arguments of dispassionate reason."[430]

Similarly, Scottish preacher David Wilson in his *Answer to Payne's Age of Reason* charges that while Paine, instead of disproving the credibility of the Bible, merely relies on his "scoffs and laughter" to appeal only to those "persons who are otherwise grossly ignorant" and who "feel a great degree of pleasure when religion insulted."[431] In doing so, Paine is following in the footstep of a long line of infidels who in "every age, have adopted this plan, and they have

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[429] *English Review* 23(1794): 353.
[430] *English Review* 26 (1795): 455-56.
[431] David Wilson, *Answer to Payne's Age of Reason. With a Short View of the Obedience which Christians are Bound to Yield to the Powers that Be. By David Wilson, V.D.M. Pittenweem* (Perth [Scotland]: Printed by R. Morison Junior. For R. Morison & Son, Perth; John Ogle, Edinburgh; Robert Hutchinson, Glasgow; Edward Leslie, Dundee, and Vernor & Hood, London, 1796), 38-9.

been pretty successful with some."[432] With a similar sense that the path to the hearts of the ignorant is paved with lampoon, the Methodist preacher Thomas Taylor characterizes *The Age of Reason* as "old thread-bare arguments" that have been vamped up in a "ridiculous and buffoon stile" in order to "please the half-thinking witlings of the age, and furnish them matter of foolish laughter over their cups: stifling all serious reflection, and confirming them in infidelity and profanity."[433]

Many of Paine's respondents display a clear and certain concern that *The Age of Reason* is highly dangerous owing not only to its cheap availability, but also in the manner that Paine wrote it. Paine's book is a danger because his intended audience—the lower and middling sorts, the ignorant and uneducated-- are also a potential danger. By writing a poor-man's primer in Deism, written in simple language that is replete with ridicule, sneering irreverence, "low buffoonery" and the "most illiberal invectives," Paine appeals only to the "ignorant and unwary" by inducing them to "join in the laugh at religion, and virtue, and providence, as well as at the word of their Maker."[434] The reviewer in the *Literary Review and Historical Journal*, like so many of Paine's opponents, characterizes *The Age of Reason* as being wholly unoriginal, except perhaps for its "*one* novelty" which is that it is the "first, we believe, on *such* a subject, that was ever *professedly* addressed to the multitude, and calculated to rob them of the great incitements to virtue and good morals, without leaving any thing in their stead."[435] As the *English Review* makes plain, the proximate danger of this is the effect that *The Age of Reason* will have on the lower orders, since "the appetites and passions of the vulgar, uninfluenced by a sense of

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[432] Ibid., 38.
[433] Thomas Taylor, *An Answer to the First Part of The Age of Reason. Printed in 1794. By Thomas Taylor, V.D.M.* (Manchester [England]: Printed at G. Nicholson and Co.'s Office, 1796), 3.
[434] Hoge, "The Sophist Unmasked in a Series of Letters, Addressed to Thomas Paine, Author of a Book Entitled, The Age of Reason," 299, 303.
[435] *Literary Review and Historical Journal* 1(1794): 52.

character and honour, are to be restrained only by religion."[436] Lured by the cheap editions and the cheap shots of *The Age of Reason*, the masses will abandon their faith in Christianity with calamitous societal implications akin to the "deplorable instance of such consequences" that have already come to pass in revolutionary France.[437]

With the stakes so high, with Paine's attack on revealed religion seeking to undermine society itself, certainly the book had to be countered, and those who responded to Paine drew upon a century-long intellectual tradition of anti-Deism to refute Paine's charges against the Bible, Christianity and revealed religion. While all of the responses to *The Age of Reason* give some counter-arguments (of varying degrees of validity and cogency) to Paine's Deistic arguments, many also took steps to engage the audience that they felt was most at risk from *The Age of Reason.*

4.2 "VILLAGE CHRISTIANITY": COUNTERING PAINE THE VULGAR

A 1794 reviewer of *The Age of Reason* in the Tory literary review the *British Critic* could barely restrain the frustration and disgust that he felt for Paine's religious pamphlet. Yet he felt himself in something of a bind in reviewing a work which he considered a "paltry pamphlet" that was a "mere jest against religion," that appealed only to the vulgar, the ignorant, and the weak of mind. On the one hand, literary reviewers, such as those writing for the *British Critic*, saw themselves as doing a real service to their reading publics: to help their readers navigate and evaluate the increasing volume of printed materials circulating throughout the kingdom. Since

[436] *English Review* 26 (1795): 455.
[437] Protestant Lay-Dissenter, *Remarks on a Pamphlet Entitled the "Age of Reason,"* 79-80.

Paine was perhaps one of the most notorious writers in Britain in the 1790s, it would not suffice for the *British Critic* to completely ignore *The Age of Reason*. But on the other hand, the reviewer realizes that controversy is often the surest means of popularizing a work, and his review is written partly to convince his readership that the proper response to *The Age of Reason* is to treat it with contemptible silence, as it is "neither worth answering nor prohibiting." Yet the published replies to *The Age of Reason* had begun to appear, and the reviewer not only finds himself at a loss to even understand why "any men of education would have thought it necessary to answer it," but he also uses his review to critique those who have found it necessary to respond to Paine. In this reviewer's eyes, even though the published refutations of *The Age of Reason* are critical of the work, they are nevertheless "useless" because the vulgar and ignorant people will not read the refutations and will remain swayed by Paine's "impudence" and his "jocularity." In stronger language still, the *British Critic* warns that by replying to *The Age of Reason*, these tracts are only serving to fan the flames of the controversy over the work by "adding something to the fame of the tract," and therefore "they are pernicious."[438]

With similar disdain for Paine and *The Age of Reason*, the pseudonymous "Churchman" in his *Christianity the Only True Theology* categorically affirms that Christianity "has nothing to apprehend from such attacks" as those leveled in the first part of *The Age of Reason*. However, while Christianity remains unaffected by Paine's attacks, the Churchman does not hold out a similar hope for the faith of his fellow Christians. Noting that *The Age of Reason* was being introduced into "vulgar circulation," the Churchman worries that the "faith of the multitude is

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[438] *British Critic* 4 (1794): 438. Philadelphia Quaker Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker (1734-1807) expressed similar misgivings over the utility of responses to *The Age of Reason*. After reading G.M. Snyder's response to the second part of *The Age of Reason*, Drinker noted in her diary (July 3, 1798) that although there was much to be said for responding to the "blasphemies" of Paine's work, "the misfortune is, that all who read his poisoned discourses, do not take the pains to look for the antidote." See Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker, *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, ed. Elaine Forman Crane, vol. 2 (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1991).

unstable, and easily shaken" and he confesses that he "thought of their weakness and it grieved me that they should fall a prey to a deceiver."[439] A concern for the lower orders as evinced in the *British Critic* and the Churchman runs throughout many of the responses to *The Age of Reason.* While the *British Critic* was content to indignantly point out to its readers that *The Age of Reason* represented a danger because of its common appeal, and the Churchman merely admits to his deep worries about the faith of the multitudes being shaken by *The Age of Reason*, other respondents actively sought to counter its appeal for the common man. The most frequent means of countering Paine's influence was also the most obvious—to write a response in language that could, like *The Age of Reason*, be understood by a common audience. Eileen Groth Lyon has argued that while conservatives have had a long history of "seizing upon the tenets of religion" in order to justify the social *status quo*, it was during the 1790s that there was an "unprecedented effort to reach a broad audience."[440] In his book *Making of Victorian Values*, Ben Wilson makes the related point that in the 1790s, the French Revolution created tremendous anxiety about the effects that radicals were having with their "blasphemous, lewd and political propaganda on the minds of the people." As a means of countering these religious and political radicals, conservative printers, publishers, writers and private societies took steps to "monopolize the market by putting forth their prints and songs at a cheaper rate than the radicals."[441] Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts* serve as one of the more well-known examples of a conservative publishing venture designed to counter radicalism for the common man. Yet as the responses to *The Age of Reason* show, cheap editions, while necessary, were not sufficient in and

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[439] Churchman, *Christianity the Only True Theology; or, an Answer to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason. By a Churchman*: 72-3.
[440] Eileen Groth Lyon, *Politicians in the Pulpits: Christian Radicalism in Britain from the Fall of the Bastille to the Disintegration of Chartism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 16.
[441] Ben Wilson, *The Making of Victorian Values: Decency and Dissent in Britain, 1789-1837* (New York: Penguin Press, 2007), 133.

of themselves. What was needed were authors who could write (or thought they could write) for a common audience, to beat Painite Deism in the language of the common man. If *The Age of Reason* was irreligion made easy, then the best response would be Christianity made easy. In the following section, I will focus on those respondents who positioned their works as accessible refutations of *The Age of Reason*. Often these responders speak glowingly of the erudite replies that have already appeared, but criticize them precisely for their scholarly inaccessibility. Others add to their replies to *The Age of Reason* an explicit critique that some of the supposedly common replies are not quite common enough.

One of the earliest replies to *The Age of Reason* that was consciously written to appeal to a lower-class audience was the 1794 *A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith* by the pseudonymous mechanic Will Chip. This was not the first time that Will Chip had tangled with Paine. In 1792 Hannah More, spurred on by what she saw as Paine's insidious political principles encroaching on the too-gullible lower orders who seemingly flocked to *Rights of Man,* penned the short yet popular chapbook *Village Politics* under the guise of the humble country carpenter Will Chip. As historian Chris Evans has noted, "Hannah More, quite as much as Tom Paine, tried to address a plebian reading public in a vernacular vein."[442] More's *Village Politics* takes the form of a dialogue wherein blacksmith Jack Anvil convinces his fellow artisan Tom Hod (a mason) as to the real dangers posed by French republicanism and Paine's *Rights of Man*. After *The Age of Reason* was published, the Bishop of London Beilby Porteus, who had praised *Village Politics,* implored More to write a similar tract that would counter Paine's Deism as effectively as she had countered his republicanism for a common audience. In a letter to More, Porteus urged her to "draw out a very plain summary of the Evidences of Christianity, brought

[442] Chris Evans, *Debating the Revolution : Britain in the 1790s* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 65.

down to the level of Will Chip and Jack Anvil, exactly as you have done in Village Politics to which Village Christianity would be a very becoming companion."[443] Despite Porteus' enthusiasm for such a project to promote a "Village Christianity," More declined to don the mantle of Will Chip again to refute *The Age of Reason*.[444] However, More received the compliment of imitation in that another (unknown) author, no doubt hoping to meet with the same success as *Village Politics*, co-opted the name of Will Chip and wrote *A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith*.[445] Whereas *Village Politics* is written in a dialogue format with Will Chip merely relating what was discussed by two fellow laborers, *A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith* abandons this format to address Paine directly and to refute *The Age of Reason* in the same manner that Chip had defeated that "huge Goliath, *The Rights of Man*."[446] In this work, Will Chip paints a picture of pastoral tranquility where the happiness and peacefulness of English society is maintained by everyone knowing their rightful place, with no one aspiring to do or know more than is rightful, thereby making "our village a little paradise upon earth."[447]

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[443] In William Roberts, ed. *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hannah More* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1834), 424.

[444] Anne Stott, *Hannah More: The First Victorian* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2003), 145-6. Stott writes that More expressed some ambivalence towards seeing Will Chip being usurped by another writer. More writes in November 1794 that while her "dear friends were not deceived" into thinking that she had written *A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith*, she nevertheless prayed that "this book which is good in the main may do good'," quoted in Stott, 145-6. Although More was not the author of the tract, the work is still mistakenly attributed to her in library catalogs

[445]Although More did not directly respond to *The Age of Reason*, she did so in an oblique way in her 1797 moralizing anti-infidel tract *The History of Mr. Fantom, the New Fashioned Philosopher and His Man William*, which tells how a merchant, Mr. Fantom, poisons the mind of his servant William with Godless ideas. While not naming Paine directly, More refers to Mr. Fantom as getting ahold of "a famous little book written by the new philosopher, whose pestilent doctrines found a ready entrance into Mr. Fantom's mind." When Fantom's good-for-nothing servant William is imprisoned for murder, he blames his master and his infidel principles for causing him to be "a drunkard, a thief, and a murderer...from you I learnt the principles which led to those crimes. By the grace of God I should never have fallen into sins desiring of the gallows if I had not often overheard you say there was no hereafter, no judgment, no future reckoning." Hannah More, *Cheap Repository. The History of Mr. Fantom, the New Fashioned Philosopher and his Man William.* ([London]: Sold by J. Marshall, (printer to the Cheap Repository for Religious and Moral Tracts), 1797), 2, 19. For more on this tract, see Patrick Brantlinger, *The Reading Lesson : The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth Century British Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 5-7.

[446] Chip, *A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith*, 3.

[447] Ibid., 20.

Chip takes some pride in the fact that he and his fellow villagers are not wholly ignorant of the basic tenets of the Christian religion, and that they occasionally like to do a bit of preaching themselves. Chip becomes resentful, however, at Paine's presumption in trying to teach about religion, and he rebukes Paine for his prideful audacity. Because Paine had been trained as a staymaker, Chip finds him in no way qualified to speak on matters which are clearly beyond his educational level and his understanding. Chip admits that "there are many things… in the Bible which I do not understand" but the difficult parts "*have* been explained to me, by our worthy vicar," who has been well educated on theological matters. As a defender of the *status quo* of his quaint village, Chip is quick to drag Paine down by asserting that however "highly you may think of your own capacity," theological speculation is "too high for *me*, and for *you* too."[448] As one tradesman to another, Chip admits that he does not understand "what relationship there is between making stays and making creed."[449] Paine's arrogant pride is a threat to social stability because it challenges the place that is set for everyone in society. Staymakers should keep to making corsets; let the vicars ponder the mind of God.

By using a tradesman, who speaks the language of the common man, as a mouthpiece for the social *status quo, A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith* completely undermines Paine's legitimacy to speak on religious matters. Yet *A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith* is notable for its lack of engagement with the actual arguments that Paine offers in *The Age of Reason*. No doubt this is exactly what the author of the tract intended, since *A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith* is framed not as a point-by-point theological refutation of Paine, but rather as a rebuke to those, such as Paine, who shoot higher than their education and class will allow. Indeed, the idealized yet rigid social hierarchy championed in the text precludes any

[448] Ibid., 10-11.
[449] Ibid., 6.

sort of high-minded theological grappling with *The Age of Reason*, since as the text implies, the common people would not understand this in the first place.

While *A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith* cannot accommodate, within the logic of its own composition, to a refutation of the actual arguments of *The Age of Reason*, most of the other replies to the work do make some sort of attempt to invalidate Paine's arguments. In the wake of the publication of the second part of *The Age of Reason*, the English cleric and erstwhile schoolmaster John Malham despairs about the prevalence of infidelity among his fellow British subjects. Despite his certainty that the principles of infidels have already been so ably and convincingly refuted, Malham is left with the problem of how to account for the spread of such discredited infidelity. Malham, who calls *The Age of Reason* a "phalanx of infidelity," recognizes that much of the spread of infidelity lies in the manner with which Paine is able to connect with his readers by using the language of the common man. Compounding the problem for Malham is the dearth of works that adequately counter infidels on the same level.[450] The problem for Malham is not that infidelity has been left unchallenged, but that it has been done on so erudite a level that it has left the common British subject nearly "without any assistance against the poisonous and pernicious sentiments and opinions that are disseminated through the United Kingdom at this period with unceasing activity." With a bit of missionary zeal, Malham offers his *A Word for the Bible* precisely as a common man's antidote against infidelity. Of what practical use, Malham wonders, are the works of eminent scholars to the "lower or even the middle classes of mankind, who have neither the means to purchase, nor leisure to peruse and

[450] John Malham, *A Word for the Bible; Being a Serious Reply to the Declarations and Assertions of the Speculative Deists and Practical Atheists of Modern Times; Particularly in the Age of Reason, Part the Second, By Thomas Paine* (London: Allen and West, 1796), 15.

attentively consider and examine the powerful and convincing argument they afford."[451] Because the majority of the people have been provided with no effective remedy against infidelity, it has spread like a "gangrene" throughout society. Malham's dissatisfaction with the style and complex arguments of other writers drives his *A Word for the Bible*. Characterizing himself as a "a plain man," Malham informs his readers that they must "not expect a parade of learning, or an ostentatious display of talents as a florid or elegant writer." Instead of "splendid diction or flowery periods," Malham offers something more "useful or beneficial," and he attempts to meet *The Age of Reason* on its own level by appealing to a similar reading public. [452]

Malham's work was not generally well received by British review periodicals, which saw the work as being hastily thrown together (Malham had admitted that it had only taken him a mere three weeks to complete), slipshod in its argumentation, and superficial both in its defense of the Bible and in its refutation of *The Age of Reason*. And despite Malham's best hopes that his work would serve as a common man's defense against infidelity, his work was dismissed as giving neither "fresh spirit" to the friends of Christianity, nor "any alarm to the enemies of revealed religion."[453] Yet Malham was not alone in pointing out the need for a book that could adequately refute *The Age of Reason* (and infidelity more generally) for a common readership. The British review journal *Critical Review* had been actively calling for a common man's refutation of *The Age of Reason*. In its review of the second part of *The Age of Reason,* the reviewer expressed his "utmost contempt" for the work, such that he found it not even worthy of being reviewed. However, the reviewer realized that Paine's work cannot be so summarily dismissed, primarily because it was likely "to make an impression on the illiterate." The reviewer

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[451] Ibid., vi-vii.
[452] Ibid., 2.
[453] *British Critic* 8 (October 1796): 426. See also *Critical Review* 17 (1796): 472.

calls for someone to take up the task of writing a reply to Paine that will not only be "satisfactory to the learned" but that "shall be written in a popular style." [454] Unfortunately the hopes of this reviewer were not immediately met. The very next review appearing after *The Age of Reason* is a review for Gilbert Wakefield's *A Reply to Thomas Paine's Second Part of the Age of Reason*. The (presumably) same reviewer is highly critical of Wakefield's work because, among other faults, it is "not sufficiently popular." Paine, the reviewer points out, "applies himself entirely to the common sense of the people,--avoids all appearance of learning,--and rejects entirely every thing which looks like deep erudition." In contrast, Wakefield "interlards his periods continually with Latin quotation, which are not only foreign to the purpose, but, for the nature of the thing itself, create a suspicion in the persons to whom the Age of Reason is addressed, that the answerer wishes to over-rule them by the superiority of his learning."[455] Paine plays the simpleton and appeals to the masses; Wakefield attempts to impress the masses but only alienates them, and therefore his reply to Paine is basically useless for the purpose of reaching a common audience.

While the *Critical Review* dismisses Wakefield's *Reply* as unsatisfactory, later in the year it would find Richard Watson's *An Apology for the Bible* to be the kind of refutation of Paine that could appeal to both the learned and the common man.[456] Continuing to take swipes at *The*

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[454] *Critical Review* 16 (1796): 319.
[455] Ibid., 319-25. Paine himself fires a similar barb at Wakefield by referring to his fondness for quoting in Greek and Latin. Playing the fool, Paine mocks: "Greek and Latin are rather foolishly thrown away, I think, on a man like me, who, you are pleased to say, is '*the greatest ignoramus in nature*'." See Paine to Gilbert Wakefield, November 19, 1795, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 2:1382. Thomas Dutton, who wrote one of the few British defenses of *The Age of Reason*, similarly mocks Wakefield for his use of classical languages as little more than a ploy to "impress the common class of readers with a stupendous idea of the Author's learning." But among "men of sense," Wakefield's work has an "air of pedantry." Dutton, *A Vindication of The Age of Reason*, 11.
[456] The *Critical Review* also found Anglican minister and biblical scholar Thomas Scott's *A Vindication of the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures* (New-York: Re-printed by G. Forman, 1797) to be somewhat sufficient to the purpose of answering Paine in a "in a plain popular manner." Scott himself notes in the preface to his work that "it will probably be admitted that a cheap, but sufficient, answer to a book, which circulates widely among the lower orders, was still wanting" (i) and he thereby offers his own work, reasonably priced, as just such an answer to Paine.

Age of Reason, the *Critical Review* lauds Watson's work as the long hoped-for common man's defence of Christianity. No reader of *The Age of Reason* (says the *Critical Review*) who is "competent to judge of its contents, is in any danger of suffering from it." Rather, it is the "general mass of readers" who are most likely to be taken-in by Paine, and therefore Watson's *An Apology for the Bible* is "happily suited to the comprehension of those whom the lucubrations of Thomas Paine were most likely to affect, while it is equally calculated to afford pleasure to the most learned and enlightened reader."[457]

In his own work, Watson shows an absolute certainty that Paine wrote *The Age of Reason* particularly to appeal to the lower orders, and Watson purposely eschews his usual erudite style for one that could be more easily understood. To fight fire with fire, Watson proclaims that "I shall, designedly, write this and the following letters in a popular manner; hoping that thereby they may stand a chance of being perused by that class of readers, for whom your [Paine's] work seems to be particularly calculated, and who are the most likely to be injured by it."[458] When Watson's *Apology* first found its way into print, however, it appeared as a lengthy three-hundred-and-eighty-five page tome that cost four shillings, nearly four times the cost of Paine's tract. Watson (and his publisher, no doubt) soon realized that even though he had attempted to write for the a popular audience, the four shilling price could be a deterrent for some of those who most needed his tract as a counterweight against Paine's Deism, and the fourth edition of the work was offered as a "common edition" of one hundred twenty pages that sold for one

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Yet for the *Critical Review*, Scott's work, though praiseworthy for its common style, was marred by its too frequent plunges "into the depths of mysticism" and in its too frequent "inaccuracies which give too much advantage to the adversary." *Critical Review* 20 (1797): 106-7.

[457] *Critical Review* 17 (1796):84.

[458] Watson, *An Apology for the Bible,* 8.

shilling.[459] In a preface to this fourth edition, Watson notes his "great pleasure" in seeing such a cheap edition published, especially since he realizes that "deistical writings of Mr. Paine are circulated, with great and pernicious industry, amongst the unlearned part of the community, especially in large manufacturing towns."[460]

That Watson's *Apology* was priced too high was also a concern in the United States. Mason Locke Weems, the indefatigable itinerant bookseller known as "Parson Weems," wrote to Philadelphia publisher Matthew Carey noting that while Watson's *Apology* is "much in demand…the extravagant price ask'd for it must retard its sale." Weems therefore urges Carey to immediately print an "edition of 2,000 Copies" which would be set at a low price. By printing such a cheap edition, Weems assures Carey that the work would not only sell briskly and make both men a fine profit, but that Carey would also be "doing a great service to the interests of Religion."[461]

Watson's *Apology* would become one of the most well-respected and reprinted of the responses to *The Age of Reason*, with praise for the work appearing throughout the periodical literature as well as in other subsequent responses to *The Age of Reason*. The *British Critic*, like the *Critical Review*, gave an equally praising review of Watson's *Apology*, not only for the forcefulness of its arguments, but also for the "easy and popular style" in which it was written.

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[459] The phrase "common edition" is taken from the journal *The Monthly Mirror*, July 1796, 161.
[460] Richard Watson, *An Apology for the Bible in a Series of Letters, Addressed to Thomas Paine...Fourth Edition.* (London: Printed for T. Evans, in Paternoster-Row 1796).
[461] Although none too pleased with *The Age of Reason*, Weems was a shrewd enough businessman to know that he could make some money on Paine's book. A Weems contemporary, William Meade (1789-1862) relates a time when he came across Weems plying his bookselling trade in the "portico of a tavern." Mead admits to being somewhat taken aback to see Weems selling *The Age of Reason*, and he confronts Weems by asking him if it were "possible that he could sell such a book." In reply, Weems "immediately took out the Bishop of Llandaff's answer, and said 'Behold the antidote. The bane and the antidote are both before you.'" See William Meade, *Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1861), Vol. 2, 235. Mason L. Weems, *Mason Locke Weems, his Works and Ways. In Three Volumes*, ed. Paul Leicester Ford and Emily Ellsworth Skeel, 3 vols. (New York1929), 2:297.

In writing his book, Watson has "wisely…abstained from pouring into it much of that learning which the stores of his mind would readily have supplied."[462] Americans were similarly impressed with Watson's *Apology,* and his work was reprinted numerous times in a variety of formats in the United States. Moses Hoge, the Virginia minister who saw Paine's use of ridicule as the lure by which infidelity was being spread amongst the ignorant and profligate members of society, included Watson's *Apology* as the centerpiece of his *Christian Panoply*, a compilation of works that defended the faith against its Deistic foes.[463] The North Carolina Presbyterian pastor James Wallis held Watson's work in such high esteem that he thought that his own response to *The Age of Reason* had been superseded by Watson's. The only reason Wallis deemed his own book *The Bible Defended* as being necessary was because there was not a "sufficient number of copies of the Bishop's *Apology* in circulation."[464] Former Governor of Virginia Patrick Henry was supposedly so impressed with Watson's *Apology* that he consigned the manuscript of his own reply to *The Age of Reason* to the flames.[465]

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[462] *British Critic* 7 (1796): 649.

[463] Moses Hoge, *Christian Panoply; Containing An Apology for the Bible; in a Series of Letters, Addressed to Thomas Paine, Author of a Book Entitled The Age of Reason, Part the Second. By R. Watson, D.D. F.R.S. Lord Bishop of Landaff, and Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge: An Address to Scoffers at Religion. By the Same Author: and a Brief View of the Historical Evidences of Christianity. By William Paley, M.A. Arch Deacon of Carlysle* (Shepherd's-Town [Va.]: Printed by P. Rootes & C. Blagrove., 1797).

[464] James Wallis, *The Bible Defended; Being an Investigation of the Misrepresentations and Falsehoods of Thomas Paine's Age of Reason, Part the Second: Wherein Also, the Evidences of Revealed Religion are Stated, and the Authenticity and Divine Authority of the Several Books of the Bible are Vindicated. By James Wallis, Pastor of the Church in New-Providence, in Mecklenburg County, North-Carolina* (Halifax, N.C.: Printed by Abraham Hodge, 1797), vii.

[465] In a letter to his daughter Betsy, Henry notes with some sadness that the "rising greatness of our country presents to my eye is greatly tarnished by the general prevalence of deism; which with me, is but another name for vice and depravity" and he thereby set about to pen a reply to the Paine, whose "puny efforts" are sorrowful attempts to prop up the "tottering fabric" of Deism. Henry read his manuscript aloud to his family as he was drafting it, leading his grandson Patrick Henry Fontaine to glowingly praise that the treatise was the "most eloquent and unanswerable argument in the defence of the Bible which was ever written." Despite his grandson's praise, Henry felt some misgivings about his reply to Paine, and after reading Watson's *Apology*, Henry felt satisfied that the Bishop had sufficiently and conclusively refuted Paine and he ordered his wife to destroy his manuscript. See Moses Coit Tyler, *Patrick Henry* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898), 395.; and Kevin Hayes, *The Mind of a Patriot* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 105.

Not everyone, however, was satisfied with Watson's *Apology*. Obviously, some of Paine's fellow-Deists, such as Allen MacLeod, Samuel Francis, John Coward, John Fowler, and the "Citizen of New York" were highly critical of Watson, and they published tracts that both supported *The Age of Reason* while at the same time refuted the arguments of the *Apology*.[466] Other writers, who saw themselves as defenders of Christianity, thought that the *Apolog*y had a number of flaws, not the least of which was that it was *not* written in a sufficiently common enough way. The New Jersey philanthropist, and future founding member of the American Bible Society Elias Boudinot, for example, freely admits to his admiration for Watson's work, which he sees as one of the more "learned, able and judicious" replies to Paine. Realizing that his own work, *The Age of Revelation* (1801) was a bit of a Johnny-come-lately on the scene, Boudinot felt the need to justify yet another response to *The Age of Reason* after so many others had already appeared. Referring to his work as little more than a "repetition of reasoning, arguments, and facts, that had been published over and over again," Boudinot signals to his readers not only that Paine has already been frequently and sufficiently thrashed, but that he (Boudinot) is familiar enough with the other responses to see the necessity of his own work. However worthy Watson's *Apology* may have been for Boudinot, its erudition limits its usefulness and Boudinot opines that "I do not think it altogether calculated for young people, and the lower ranks of the community."[467] Boudinot's offers his own work, which was originally written as a series of letters to his daughter, as filing the need that Watson's *Apology* does not meet. Boudinot's view of the limits of Watson's *Apology* is tinged with irony, since Watson saw his own book as being specifically written for a common audience.

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[466] Samuel Francis's *Watson Refuted* (Edinburgh?, 1797) was actually written by a Portuguese immigrant Francisco Solano Constancio; see Alves, "Wondering about Wonders: Paine, Constancio and The Age of Reason, 1794-97 ".
[467] Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation*, xx-xxi.

It is also ironic that an added impetus for Boudinot to revisit, expand upon, and publish his letter to his daughter was that he had recently been informed that "thousands of copies of *The Age of Reason*, had been sold at public auction, in this city [Philadelphia], at a cent and an half each." For Boudinot, the cheapness of this edition of *The Age of Reason* in itself became an additional lure of the book, and he charges that "children, servants, and the lowest people" had been tempted to buy such a book out of the mere "novelty of buying a book at so low a rate."[468] However, when Boudinot's *The Age of Revelation* hit the bookstands, it was offered at one dollar and twenty five cents. While Boudinot had high hopes that his book could serve as a pious counterweight against infidelity among the young, the uneducated, and the lower orders of society, he could scarcely have failed to realize that his own book cost significantly more than the shockingly low price of one and a half cents of *The Age of Reason*. As historian Paul Gutjahr points out, Boudinot's book sold so poorly that it never went beyond the initial printing (of less than two thousand copies), which only served as "further convincing Boudinot that his beloved country was in a severe state of spiritual and moral decay."[469]

While Boudinot only finds fault with the general inaccessibility of Watson's *Apology*, the New Hampshire schoolmaster Daniel Humphreys makes a bit more hay out of Watson's supposedly common style. In *The Bible Needs No Apology: Or Watson's System of Religion* (1796), Humphreys roundly mocks Watson for attempting to adopt a common style. An avowed "Sandemanian" (a Protestant sect with Scottish origins that had a deep-seated hatred for any type of national church or established clergy), Humphreys uses his book to score repeated points both against the Church of England and Watson's lofty position as a bishop. Portraying himself as a

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[468] Ibid., xx.
[469] Paul C. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: a history of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 10-11.

"plain simple man who reverences the scriptures" and as one who writes "with plainness of speech," Humphreys contrasts himself to the "great man" Watson, who is supposedly refuting *The Age of Reason* for a common audience.[470] Although Humphreys has a number of theological bones to pick with Watson, he cannot even get beyond the title of Watson's work without leveling some barbs at the Bishop. In his opening letter to Watson, Humphreys sarcastically attacks him for calling his defense of the Bible an "apology." For Humphreys, Watson and other "deeply learned" men often use words as badges of their own erudition and at times even go so audaciously far as to ascribe to words whatever "sense they themselves may chose to put upon them." Humphreys finds it strange, then, that someone who is "professing to write in a popular manner" would call his book an "Apology for the Bible." Appealing to the more common understanding of "apology," Humphreys notes that Watson's title "grates upon my ear" as an "unworthy way of speaking" about the Bible, since it implies "as tho' it needed to be apologized for." Humphrey's attack on Watson's use of language is a bit disingenuous since he readily admits that he knows that Watson is using the term "apology" in its sense of being a defense. Yet Humphreys asks that if Watson is truly "writing in a popular manner," why he would choose a word that does not conform to the "popular sense or use of the word."[471]

On both sides of the Atlantic, Paine's respondents emphasized that a crucial danger of *The Age of Reason* lay in its common appeal. For some conservative British respondents, however, the popularity of *The Age of Reason* was further proof that an uninformed and ill-

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[470] Daniel Humphreys, *The Bible Needs No Apology: or Watson's System of Religion Refuted; and the Advocate Proved an Unfaithful One, by the Bible Itself: of Which a Short View is Given, and Which Itself Gives, a Short Answer to Paine: in Four Letters, on Watson's Apology for the Bible, and Paine's Age of Reason, Part the Second* (Portsmouth, NH: Printed by Charles Peirce, for Samuel Larkin, at the Portsmouth Bookstore, 1796), 3, 94.
[471] Ibid., 13-14.

educated populace is becoming increasingly literate and has access to reading materials of all sorts. In a pamphlet purportedly written by a "Gentleman" (but possibly written by the radical publisher Daniel Isaac Eaton), we see a biting satire of elite attitudes towards a burgeoning popular readership, especially as they relate to Paine's writings. The opening lines of *The Pernicious Principles of Tom Paine, Exposed in an Address to Labourers and Mechanics* are enough to indicate that it is meant as a satire. The Gentleman addresses himself to those who are the "lowest class of beings that can be called MEN…to you who are the scum of the earth, and unworthy the notice of gentlemen." Yet the Gentleman does take notice that Paine, the "vile miscreant, this emissary of the devil" has misled "a set of ragamuffins, and ignorant illiterate mechanics" into believing that they have equal rights with other men. With a sense of indignation, the Gentleman berates those who possess "no better education than a common country school" for having the "*audacity* to read books of your own chusing." He goes on to instruct those who must be too "profoundly ignorant" not to know that it is "your duty never to touch a book of religion but what is put into your hands by the parson of your parish, nor a book of politics, unless handed you by a justice of the peace." [472]

While this tract is an exaggerated send-up, it does reflect the anxieties engendered by Paine and his perceived appeal to the lower classes. In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Edmund Burke evinced a similar attitude to the "Gentleman" when he referred to the common people as the "swinish multitude," a phrase which would be both ridiculed and co-opted by radicals in their rhetoric against what they saw as the disdainful upper-class elite. John Anketell, a Church of Ireland curate who rails not only against the first part of *The Age of Reason*, but also puts in a few digs against *Rights of Man*, shows the derisive and paternalistic

[472] Gentleman, *The Pernicious Principles of Tom Paine, Exposed in an Address to Labourers and Mechanics, by a Gentleman*, 2nd ed. (London: D.I. Eaton, 1794), 3-4.

attitude of British elites that is mockingly exaggerated in *The Pernicious Principles of Tom Paine*. Anketell, who sees Paine as the "enemy of holy writ, and the avowed patron of sedition," laments that books like *Rights of Man* have been circulated with such avidity by "disaffected" people who have done so in order to disturb the "lower class of people." Radicals like Paine show their presumptuousness by making the lower classes believe that they can "obtrude themselves into the discussion and management of state affairs, to which they are utterly inadequate, and in which they have very little concern."[473] Anketell realizes that the appeal of both *Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason* lies in Paine's writing style, since Paine has a "captivating knack to fascinate the understanding of the vulgar; no wonder, then, that he is such a vast favorite with the populace!"[474] With an eye to preserving the *status quo*, Anketell proscribes that Paine and his ilk would be "infinitely better employed" in teaching the lower classes to "demean themselves soberly and piously towards GOD; to be contented in their humble station in which PROVIDENCE has placed them, to be loyal and submissive subjects under the incomparable form of government to which they belong."[475] Whereas other authors, such as Richard Watson, express their concerns for the lower classes and thereby position their own responses as antidotes to Paine's religious poison, Anketell employs no such tactic. Rather, his work is a rather long-winded treatise with frequent digressions and tangents upon specific points in *The Age of Reason*.[476] This is not to say that Anketell is wholly unconcerned with the fate of the lower classes; but rather than write a reply to Paine for a common audience, Anketell calls upon his readers among the nobility and gentry to appropriate a "small part of their superfluous

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[473] Anketell, *Strictures Upon Paine's Age of Reason*, 189, iii.
[474] Ibid., 44.
[475] Ibid., iii.
[476] At one point late in his work, Anketell realizes that he has most likely "exhausted the patience of my readers with the coldness and prolixity of my remarks." Ibid., 188.

wealth to the purpose of purchasing and distributing among the lower orders of men cheap editions of the Bible" as well as other defenses of Christianity which would "operate more effectually in securing an attachment to loyalty, industry, morality, and subordination, and repressing that turbulent spirit of riot and outrage."[477]

Although he shows a paternalistic disdain for the lower orders, Anketell clearly recognizes that literacy and accessibility to books is increasing, especially among those who do not have the capacity to adequately evaluate what they are reading. The Presbyterian minister Thomas Meek and Anglican minister Vicesimus Knox both evince similar anxieties in their replies to *The Age of Reason.* Whereas other authors sought to refute Paine by mimicking Paine's plain style, Meek unapologetically wrote for a more sophisticated audience. Dissatisfied with the responses to *The Age of Reason* that had already been written (namely by Gilbert Wakefield and Daniel M'Neille), Meek, with a healthy dose of pride, informs his reader that he is well qualified to discuss the truths of revealed religion, "a subject which I have studied for eight or nine years."[478] Despite writing for his educated peers, Meek nevertheless realizes that his own work, much like *The Age of Reason*, will probably be read by those who possess a lesser education than himself. Meek writes that he is "sensible that this little work will fall into the hands of many who are unacquainted with the abstruse parts of learning," and as such he adds footnotes in "such places as I conceive might be difficult to that class of people."[479] So while he

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[477] Ibid., xxi. Anketell recommends cheap editions be published and distributed of "Conybeare's *Defence of Christianity*; Berkley's *Minute Philosopher*; Seckler's *Lectures*, the *Whole Duty of Man*; Paley's Evidence of Christianity."

[478] Meek, *Sophistry Detected*, 44. On Wakefield and M'Neille, Meek writes that he "cannot help thinking that neither of them come up to the precise idea of a reply to a Deist," not the least because Wakefield is a confirmed "reputed Socinian"(47) who is not up to the task of defending proper Christian doctrine. Meek has a higher opinion of M'Neille than he does of Wakefield, but concludes that although M'Neille has written against it, he has really "not answered *The Age of Reason.*"(46)

[479] Ibid., 19.

seemingly cannot bring himself to stoop to a plainer style, he does make some concessions to the fact that his work will be read by those who have not had the benefit of an adequate education.

Anglican minister Vicesimus Knox, in his broad attack on infidelity, ties the increasing prevalence of infidelity throughout society to the availability and distribution of cheap infidel tracts that are perused by a literate yet generally uneducated populace. Weighing heavily on Knox's mind is that infidelity has taken root in France (the most enlightened country in Europe) and that it is being spread in Britain because the majority of the people can now read the cheap tracts (such as *The Age of Reason*) that are promoting infidelity. He notes with some sense of alarm that nearly "every individual in our own country can now read; and manuals of infidelity, replete with plausible arguments, in language level to the lowest classes, are circulated among the people, at a price which places them within reach of the poorest member of the community."[480] Like a number of other responders to *The Age of Reason*, Knox partly blames the dearth of available books that can counteract Paine on the common level. Books defending the Bible and Christianity have been well argued, but Knox thinks that they are "too cold in their manner, too metaphysical or abstruse in their arguments, too little animated with the spirit of piety" and have been directed at the "recluse scholars already persuaded of Christianity" rather than to the "conversion of the infidel and the instruction of the PEOPLE." While these types of works may be celebrated in "academic cloisters," they "seldom reach the people…their very existence is unknown among the haunts of men." [481] Knox proposes his book as just such a work that will reach those people most in need of defence against the spread of infidel ideas. In an introductory narrative, Knox describes how he came to understand the type of book that he

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[480] Vicesimus Knox, *Christian Philosophy: or, an Attempt to Display, by Internal Testimony, the Evidence and Excellence of Revealed Religion. With an Appendix, on Mr. Paine's Pamphlet, On Prayer, on Psalmody, and a Short List of Books for the Use of The Plain or Unlearned Reader* (London: Printed for C. Dilly, 1798), 3.
[481] Ibid., 4.

needed to write. Knox describes his search for an authorial principle that would appeal to the populace—and after attending some common church services in London he discovers that appeals to the "heart" are the best way to teach the people about Christianity. Although Knox tasks himself (and his writing) with emulating the style of a common preacher, he is quick to point out (with an implied critique of enthusiastic evangelicalism), that he is not going to engage in the "ranting in the pulpit, all theatrical tricks, all hypocritical extravagance, all ignorant effrontery." Rather, Knox will infuse his book with the best aspects of the common preacher, by using simple but effective language that appeals to people's heart, spirit and piety, without resorting to the "evil of their manner." [482] While Knox's book is a more general attack on infidelity, he nevertheless singles out *The Age of Reason* as one of the primary inspirations for his *Christian Philosophy*. Knox describes his own work as being "designed to COUNTERACT, among the multitude, the effect of Mr. Paine's Age of Reason, Volney's Ruins, and the general example of French apostacy."[483]

4.3 THE YOUNG AND UNEDUCATED

I should note that it is primarily in the British responses to *The Age of Reason* that we see such an overtly predominant concern that the lower classes are getting their hands on *The Age of Reason*. While there is some similar class-based concern in the American reaction to *The Age of Reason*, the class issue is perhaps slightly less salient for the American responders. American respondents do not speak in the same dialect of class as their British counterparts, preferring

[482] Ibid., xii.
[483] Ibid., x.

instead to refer more obliquely to the "uneducated" or "weak minded" people. Certainly there are moments in the American responses that do sound like their British counterparts. Writing in the Federalist newspaper the *Connecticut Courant*, the anonymous "H" charges that the "fact is, that a spirit of Infidelity is spreading far and wide," and this is especially and most alarmingly so among the "lower classes of the people" who are wholly and dangerously enamored by the "wild, and libertine principles, which the French Revolution has engendered in the world." Of particular blame is Paine, who is among the "greatest promoters of this religious licentiousness, and indeed of almost every other wickedness," and who is spreading the fruits of his "profligate and vicious mind" from France to American shores.[484] Elias Boudinot expresses similar sentiments when he states that part of his motivation for responding to Paine was to counteract the influence of those who targeted "the rising generation, and the lower orders of people, as the chief objects of an attack, for spreading the principles of infidelity."[485] Yet while there is some alarm about the appeal of *The Age of Reason* to the common man, Massachusetts minister Ebenezer Bradford is one of the only American respondents to actually write a response specifically "calculated for the instruction of common people" as a defense of revelation against the "the principal objections of Mr. Paine."[486] Yet unlike Boudinot and the *Connecticut Courant*, Bradford (a determined anti-Federalist) betrays none of the alarmism over the fact that Paine had written *The Age of Reason* for a common audience. Bradford does not castigate Paine for writing for the common man; instead he offers his own book as a counterweight against Paine's.

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[484] "H", *Connecticut Courant*, January 19 (1795): 3.
[485] Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation*, xx. For a more in-depth discussion of Boudinot's refutation of *The Age of Reason,* see the excellent article by Richard H. Popkin, "The *Age of Reason* versus *The Age of Revelation*. Two Critics of Tom Paine: David Levi and Elias Boudinot," in *Deism, Masonry and the Enlightenment: Essays Honoring Alfred Owen Aldridge.*, ed. J.A. Leroy Lemay. (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1987).
[486] Bradford, *Mr. Thomas Paine's Trial*, 6.

While an explicit concern with the lower orders is a bit rarer among the American responses than in the British responses, there is certainly much American rhetoric against those who are uneducated, ignorant or have weak minds. Congregationalist minister Jeremy Belknap is the most explicit in linking ignorance to one's station in society when he refers to a "species of vulgar infidelity" that has its roots in "ill manners" and that is "insinuating itself into the minds of the thoughtless."[487] As such, Belknap sees his *Dissertations on the Character, Death & Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the Evidence of His Gospel* as offering little that is new in the way of argumentation. Instead, he offers his book as a preliminary primer "designed for those who have not leisure or opportunity to look into more voluminous works." For those who do have the intellectual capacity for a more scholarly work, Belknap refers his readers to a few authors who have written "with more learning and energy."[488]

More common in the American response, however, is an educated-man's sneering at those who would be misled by Paine's specious and fallacious arguments. The New York school teacher Donald Fraser is one such who thinks that while *The Age of Reason* appeals only to an uninformed and "unthinking multitude," the work will "never make any proselites [sic] among the Judicious, the virtuous, or thinking part of the community!"[489] The pseudonymous American Citizen makes a similar connection between Paine's own abilities and the audience that is attracted by his writings. Referring more generally to all of Paine's writings and not just *The*

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[487] Jeremy Belknap, *Dissertations on the Character, Death & Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the Evidence of His Gospel: With Remarks on Some Sentiments Advanced in a Book Intitled "The Age of Reason." By Jeremy Belknap, Minister of the Church in Federal-Street, Boston* (Boston: Joseph Belknap, 1795), 8.
[488] Ibid., 4.
[489] Fraser, *A Collection of Select Biography*, 11.

Age of Reason, the American Citizen refers derisively to Paine's "superficial and grub-street genius" which is specifically "calculated to attract the attention of the multitude." [490]

In some cases it may be as much a general rhetorical strategy to discredit Paine's method of argumentation (i.e. that only a dolt could be duped by Paine's specious and fallacious reasoning) as it is a function of obliquely referring to the lower rungs of American society.[491] Take for example Samuel Stilwell's *A Guide to Reason,* one of the earliest American refutations of *The Age of Reason*. In his book, Stillwell takes ignorance and knowledge as the overarching themes with which he hopes to not only refute Paine's arguments, but also to subvert the wide appeal of *The Age of Reason*. Indeed, refuting Paine and subverting the appeal of *The Age of Reason* are really part of the same project for Stilwell. In writing *The Age of Reason*, Paine has only shown just how ignorant and unlearned he really is about the Bible and about Christianity. As such, *The Age of Reason* is the "offspring of ignorance" that can only serve as an "imposition on those who have not the knowledge" of the Scriptures, and Paine's work will only really appeal to those who are as unlearned and ignorant of the Bible as he is.[492] As Stillwell writes: "I believe his Age of Reason was not intended for those who understand the bible [sic] and its authority, but for those who do not."[493]

Such rhetoric about the ignorant and weak minded people certainly has a class aspect to it, and it should perhaps be considered as an American "shorthand" for dealing with class issues in a more oblique manner than using the more class-conscious phrase like the "lower orders" or the "swinish multitude." But in the American response there is an added concern for the young

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[490] American Citizen, *A Letter to Thomas Paine,* 1.
[491] The ignorance, stupidity, or weak-mindedness of those who are swayed by Paine's arguments is a common theme across both the British and American responses to *The Age of Reason,* and is nicely summed up by the anonymous "H" in the *Connecticut Courant* (January 19, 1795) who writes that "Weak indeed must that mind be, which will be persuaded by the *Reason* of Tom Paine."
[492] Stilwell, *A Guide to Reason*, 3.
[493] Ibid., 7.

people of the nation who may be overly swayed by *The Age of Reason*.[494] Age and education, rather than social status *per se*, is a more pertinent concern for a number of the American responders to *The Age of Reason*. Written with a combination of pedantry and paternalism, a number of respondents point out that it is the youth of the America that are particularly vulnerable specifically to Paine's religious writings and infidelity more generally. For example, New York Dutch Reformed minister William Linn's jeremiad *Discourses on the Signs of the Times* dismisses *The Age of Reason* as the "braying of an ass," remarkable only for its boldness and its indecent tone. Wholly contemptuous of *The Age of Reason*, Linn nevertheless concludes that Paine's book "can do no harm except to the young and superficial."[495]

A fear that the younger generation has a certain penchant for Paine's religious writings has much to do with Paine's reputation (discussed more in the next chapter), but it also mirrored the divisiveness of American partisan politics of the mid-to-late 1790s and the related issue of the divided perceptions of the French Revolution in the United States. While Paine himself was already well beyond middle-age when *The Age of Reason* was first published, his adversaries saw his infidel ideas and his connection to the religious and political principles of the French

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[494] A few British respondents have similar worries about the young people of their own countries. The English bank clerk John Padman, for example, does not think that Deism will catch on too quickly in England, owing to the "thousands and ten thousands who have been educated in the religion of their forefathers." Such a proper Christian education will undoubtedly serve as a "barrier against the spread of infidelity to any considerable extent." Yet the youth of the country is the one segment of the population in which Deism may indeed have some impact, and Padman paints the sad portrait of a young man who, despite the best education, nevertheless falls prey to some Deistic pamphlet. In one of the most delightfully poetic and alliterative depictions of the dangers of Deism, Padman describes the youth as running off to some "warehouse of skepticism" where some "sixpenny orator" both praises Paine and "bespatters the Bible with all the beauties of Billingsgate" [N.B.: Billingsgate was a fish market in London notorious for its coarse language]. Padman, *A Layman's Protest Against the Profane Blasphemy False Charges, and Illiberal Invective of Thomas Paine*, 226-9.

[495] William Linn, *Discourses on the Signs of the Times* (New-York: Printed by Thomas Greenleaf, 1794), 162.

Revolution as vacuous novelties that appealed to hotheaded young men who were taken-in by the sheer newness of such dangerously radical ideas.[496]

The Virginia Presbyterian minister James Muir has a sense that Paine's work, and Deism more generally, are appealing to the youth of America, and in his *An Examination of the Principles Contained in the Age of Reason,* Muir diagnoses the prevalence of infidelity partly as a symptom of the American Revolution's shedding-off of political authority, and partly the influence of French principles gone awry. Yet he also lays the blame on a pedagogical component that has been a crucial aspect of the spread of a pernicious infidelity. For Muir, infidelity has become endemic due to the "ignorance in which the youth are brought up, with whom no pains is taken to form them to manly, spiritual, solid principles."[497] Muir does not elaborate on this point, nor does he offer any sort of concrete plan for the reform of education. Instead, his discourse is more in the vein of a jeremiad wherein he points out the problems facing the country and the divine disfavor that may result. God has favored the United States with multiple blessings, but this may cease if the people become unworthy of these blessings. Muir's remedy and recommendation is for "each individual [to] reform, and reformation in the society, be it ever so extensive, will soon be apparent."[498]

Whereas Muir merely points out the deficiencies in the manner that young Americans are being raised without elaborating on it beyond individual repentance, the Episcopal cleric Uzal Ogden's aptly named two volume *Antidote to Deism* does try to give some recommendation for the youth of the country beyond just repentance. Ogden posits the question to his reader whether

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[496] This often stands in tension with the concurrent idea that the Deism of *The Age of Reason* is only a poorly rehashed and hackneyed repetition of arguments that had been suitably refuted and discredited for decades.
[497] James Muir, *An Examination of the Principles Contained in The Age of Reason. In Ten Discourses. By James Muir, D.D. Minister of the Presbyterian Church, Alexandria* (Baltimore: Printed by S. & J. Adams, for the Author; and Sold by Clarke and Keddie, Booksellers, in Market-Street, 1795), 146.
[498] Ibid., 161. In addition to the rise of infidelity, Muir also points to slavery and frontier wars with the Indians as possible causes of an impending divine punishment on the United States.

it "would…not be wisdom, especially in this age of infidelity, to give youth just perceptions, at least, of the positive evidences, by which the truth of divine revelation is maintained?" Ogden realizes that merely studying the scriptures and the basics of Christian doctrine are not enough to stem the flow of infidelity among the young, since even those young people who have been "educated in the principles of Christianity, are sometimes tempted to relinquish it merely through the force of a few specious objections." Rather, Ogden stresses that young Christians should also be well read in the "principle arguments demonstrating the authenticity of the sacred writings."[499] While much of the two volumes of *Antidote to Deism* are taken up with Ogden's own attempts to refute Paine, his extensive use of footnotes, combined with his extended selections of quotations from a variety of sources make Ogden's volumes read like a compendium of Christian apologetics for the novice reader. Ogden's interest in the education of the young in the basis of the Christian faith was certainly not a new one for him. Not only had he offered his 1772 *Theological Preceptor* as just such a compendium and primer in Christianity aimed towards young people, he even quotes from this earlier pedagogically-minded work in his refutation of *The Age of Reason*.

Elias Boudinot, who as we have seen, was one of the few Americans to specifically mention a class aspect into his fears of the appeal of *The Age of Reason*, was even more concerned by the siren song that *The Age of Reason* had for the young and uneducated people of the nation. Boudinot wrote much of his *The Age of Revelation* in the latter part of 1795 to respond to the first part of *The Age of Reason*, and he originally conceived of his work as a private letter to his daughter, warning her of the dangers of religious infidelity. In the preface to his book, Boudinot mentions that he had considered making this private letter available for a

[499] Ogden, *Antidote to Deism*, vol. 2, 303-4.

wider audience by seeing it into print, yet the number of replies to Paine that had already been printed dissuaded him from adding yet one more to their number. Only in 1801 was Boudinot convinced by his conversations with "men of sober principle" to publish his work as an additional brick in the defensive wall against infidelity, especially since "infidels in all corners of the land" had been making a concerted effort and used "every means and subtle artifice to poison the minds of the young and uninstructed."[500] Singling out *The Age of Reason* specifically, Boudinot charges that while the work has "no intrinsic merit" and deserves to be "consigned to perpetual oblivion," the "young and uniformed people, wholly unacquainted with the genuine principles of our holy religion" have been reading it with much avidity and were being duped by the "subtle and dishonest principles."[501] Wagging a finger at Paine, Boudinot confesses that he was "much mortified" to find that in writing *The Age of Reason* Paine had turned his "genius and art, pointed at the youth of America, and her unlearned citizens (for I have no doubt, but that it was originally intended for them)." Justifying the publication of *The Age of Revelation* with an eye to capturing the same readership that Paine has so insidiously captivated, Boudinot hopes his book will be of "real service to the young and unlearned" since it deals with the subject matter in "a light more adapted to their capacities and memories." [502]

Like Boudinot, the Massachusetts minister Ebenezer Bradford also worried about the youth of the country as being particularly susceptible to the lure of infidel books such as *The Age of Reason*. However, whereas Boudinot looked down his nose at the naïve credulity of the youth of America and saw a mass of uneducated people being swayed by the likes of Paine, Bradford sees the spread of infidelity among the young partly as a *result* of education rather than *lack* of it.

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[500] Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation, or, The Age of Reason Shewn to be an Age of Infidelity*: xx, 251.
[501] Ibid., 25-6.
[502] Ibid., xx-xii.

In his 1795 *Mr. Thomas Paine's Trial*, Bradford looks to the future and is alarmed that too many young people have too readily abandoned their faith in the Christian system by being captivated by Deistical writers such as Paine. Bradford's work is divided into three sections: the first being his reply to Paine, the second being an address to Deists and to the youth of America, while the third is a hostile review of Gilbert Wakefield's *Examination of the Age of Reason*.[503] The first part of Bradford's book is a standard refutation of *The Age of Reason*, but Bradford notes that it was with the "Young Men" of the country in mind "that I wrote the foregoing answer to Thomas Paine's Age of Reason."[504] While Bradford's alarm evinces a concern for the young people of America generally, he singles out those who will "fill the most important stations in church and state" and he points especially those who are "students at colleges; young physicians, and attorneys at law." While Elias Boudinot looks condescendingly at the youth of the country, Bradford sees them as the "pride of America," and his optimism is tempered only by his concern about the encroaching infidelity among them. Infidelity has become rife among these young students and professionals, not due to their lack of education, but rather because they are accustomed to discussion and debate on a variety of topics. Combine this with the certain cockiness of the young, who are puffed up with an elevated sense of their "own imaginary importance," and they are led into taking seriously even those trifling arguments that have challenged very underpinnings of the Christian religion. For Bradford, youthful enthusiasm and "vanity" needs be tempered by "reason and judgment of riper years" which is "too frequently

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[503] Bradford's review of Wakefield is particularly biting, and he feels compelled to let Wakefield know that he read his *Examination* "with a degree of chagrin and disappointment, too great for language to express." Bradford treats with particular disdain not only the tone of Wakefield's book—which he calls a "*pompous, bombastic piece* of *raillery*"-- but more especially Bradford sees Wakefield's book as an attack on, rather than a defense of Christianity. Bradford calls Wakefield's book a "most daring attack on the vitals of Christianity itself; and what is truly remarkable, it is done in the moment of his pretended defence of revelation," and he consigns Wakefield to his despised "Socinian and Arian brethren." Bradford, *Mr. Thomas Paine's Trial*, 72, 74, 75.
[504] Ibid., 66.

neglected." While one gets the sense that Bradford sees youthful infidelity as a phase that may pass, it does not stop him from giving his young readers a bit of sage and elder advice that they should not be duped by the "fascinating charms of freethinking and the Age of Reason" and that they should seriously, and without bias, re-consider the arguments in favor of Christianity.[505]

Bradford was not alone in his worry that young college students were particularly susceptible to Deism, infidelity and *The Age of Reason*. Lyman Beecher, who would become one of the most prominent Protestant ministers in the early nineteenth century, alludes to the prevalence of Deism in the halls of higher education. Looking back on his days at Yale in the mid-1790s, where he studied to become a Congregational minister, Beecher describes the college as being in a "most ungodly state," with the college church being "almost extinct." With a sense of disdain, Beecher characterizes the time as the "the day of the infidelity of the Tom Paine school," and of his fellow students he recalls that "most of the class before me were infidels, and called each other Voltaire, Rousseau, D'Alembert, etc., etc." Lest we assume that discussion of Paine's work was confined only to the halls of Yale, Beecher notes that "Boys that dressed flax in the barn, as I used to, read Tom Paine and believed him; I read, and fought him all the way," and Beecher makes particular note that his earliest attempt at producing an original piece of writing was during his sophomore year at Yale when he wrote an "an argument against Tom Paine." During his senior year, Beecher continued his defense of Christianity by writing a "whimsical dialogue against infidelity."[506] We can imagine the devout yet beset Beecher continually striving against his infidel classmates who were so taken with both Paine and French

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[505] Ibid., 69.
[506] Lyman Beecher, *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.* Edited by Charles Beecher. 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1864), vol. 1: 43, 48.

infidelity, and although he affirms that he "never had any propensity to infidelity" he nevertheless admits "I hardly know how I escaped."[507]

The situation at Harvard may not have been all that different than the Yale of Beecher's experience. Massachusetts jurist and legislator Daniel Appleton White recalled in his memoirs that during his years at Harvard there was an "irreligious spirit which prevailed at that period among the students." White set much blame for this on the French Revolution, which had "broken up the foundations of religion and morals" and which was spreading its "disastrous influence" throughout the world via a "flood" of "pernicious books." Harvard students were clearly not immune to being swayed by these books, and in White's telling, his fellow students seemed to avidly embrace their "fatal principles." Attempting to control the situation at Harvard, the college leadership extolled the faculty to combat the growing infidelity by "exhortation and preaching and prayers." [508] Congregationalist minister Nathan Fiske took up this charge, and in a sermon preached at his alma mater in September of 1796, he warned that any Harvard students who may be "prompted by curiosity (I hope they will not by an evil heart of unbelief) to read the bold attacks of Thomas Paine upon the authenticity of that book which Christians esteem sacred" should immediately take up Richard Watson's *Apology for the Bible*, wherein "you will see the Bible defended, and the Christian Religion supported, by a decidedly superiority both of argument and temper."[509] Yet beyond just ministerial exhortations to Harvard students by preachers such as Fiske, the leaders of the college also sought to stem the tide of infidelity

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[507] Beecher gives much credit to the arrival of Timothy Dwight as the newly appointed president of Yale for turning back the infidel tide at Yale. Beecher relates that Dwight met the college infidels straight-on by engaging with them in a disputation over the divine inspiration of the Bible. As Beecher relates: "He [Dwight] heard all they had to say, answered them, and there was an end. He preached incessantly for six months on the subject, and all infidelity skulked and hid its head." Ibid, 43.

[508] Daniel Appleton White and James [ed] Walker, *Memoir of Hon. Daniel Appleton White. Prepared Agreeabley to a Resolution of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: Printed By John Wilson and Son, 1863), 8-9.

[509] Nathan Fiske, *A Sermon Preached at the Dudleian Lecture in the Chapel of Harvard College, September 7, 1796* (Boston: Printed by Manning & Loring, 1796), 15-16.

through the distribution of "good books and pamphlets."[510] Fiske's recommendation of Watson's *Apology* would not have fallen on completely infertile ground at Harvard, since through the "commendable and seasonable generosity of a number of gentlemen in Boston, the Bishop's [Watson's] answer has been distributed among the Students at the University in Cambridge."[511] It seems likely that some of the Deistic-minded Harvard students took Fiske's advice and perused their free copy of Watson's *Apology*, although to the future minister Daniel Appleton White, it was probably of little benefit to stem the tide against a rapacious infidel spirit at Harvard (and in the country more generally). White, who fondly recalls how Watson's *Apology* "was presented…to every [Harvard] student," pessimistically concludes that the "fiery influence" of the "French mania" had so beguiled the "ardent spirits of young men…that reason and argument and persuasion had for some time no power against it."[512]

The American concern with the appeal of Painite infidelity on the youth of the country is bound up with the challenge of maintaining and sustaining a stable republican political system, a challenge that had existed since the beginnings of the new republic, but which would become increasingly salient in the 1790s as the violence in its sister republic in France escalated beyond imagination. While historians have noted that it was in the context of the French Revolution that Americans began to see the full implications of what their own republican style of government meant, this was coupled with the long-standing concern that republics were precarious political entities that were too easily pushed in the direction of mob rule. The violence of the French Revolution did nothing to quell the fears of those who saw only too clearly the dangers inherent in increasing political enfranchisement. Rachel Hope Cleves has argued that many conservative

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[510] White and Walker, *Memoir of Hon. Daniel Appleton White*, 8-9.
[511] Reported by The Neighbor. "Miscellany for Thomas's Massachusetts Spy." *Massachusetts Spy* 25:1255 (1797): 1.
[512] White and Walker, *Memoir of Hon. Daniel Appleton White*, 8-9.

Americans saw the violence of the French Revolution as partly a failure of education. As Cleves shows, conservatives' views on education wedded a deep seated Calvinist pessimism of human depravity with a more optimistic Enlightenment view of the ability to reform humanity. Only through a proper Christian education, with an emphasis on discipline and restraint, could humanity's violent tendencies be suppressed. The French Revolution, with its supposedly inherent hostility to Christianity, hammered home the point that religious infidelity was disastrous for any republican system. If Americans "failed to educate the nation's youth properly, conservatives argued, the dire consequences it would face were clearly represented by the violence in France."[513] To walk the republican tight-rope successfully meant that the younger generation must be properly educated not only in proper republican political ideology, but also in a suitable morality that would resist the centrifugal forces that could tear the country apart, just as it had in France. Just as infidelity was scuttling the French, a number of American responders to *The Age of Reason* worried that Paine's brand of Deism was dangerously influencing the youth of the nation, and they used their responses as a means of drawing attention to the need to give young people a better grounding in the fundamental truths of the Christian religion. Respondents such as Elias Boudinot, Uzal Ogden, and Ebenezer Bradford saw their own responses as giving young people a powerful dose against the poison of Paine's infidelity, not merely to save their own souls, but to save the nation itself.

[513] Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America : Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery* (206)

4.4 PRIMERS OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

Targeting Paine's intended audience--whether it be the lower orders, the masses, the uneducated, or the youth of society-- with works that could be similarly appealing is the most direct means by which Paine's opponents sought to counter the influence of his Deism. Certainly not every author who responded to *The Age of Reason* tried to assume a common style, and a number of authors purposefully refused to follow Paine into a vulgar style and thought that the best way to refute him was to do so in a more refined way by focusing on the logic of Paine's arguments without resorting to low stylistics or cheap attacks.[514] Yet beyond just the strategy of stylistics employed to counter Paine, responders to *The Age of Reason* used other strategies that kept Paine's intended audience in mind. In 1796 a pseudonymous editor who called himself only "A Layman" brought out a small compiled volume composed primarily of selections from longer works that had already been published against *The Age of Reason* (such as Watson's *Apology* and the pseudonymous *Age of Infidelity*). In a short preface to this short work, *A Defence of the Bible*, the compiler/editor makes clear that he picked the selected passages for their accessibility to a general reading audience, and that the modestly priced book (one shilling) was intended that "the poor man who wishes for the assistance of such a work, may, at a trifling expense, be able to procure it…as an antidote against the Infidelity which is now so prevalent."[515] By giving selections and excerpts of the previous replies to Paine, *A Defence of the Bible* can be seen as

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[514] Of course there is a good deal of humorous irony in reading those authors who, in their prefatory remarks claim the high-road of logic and dispassionate refutation of Paine, but then in the actual body of their works engage in some of the most vitriolic and personal attacks against Paine. Gilbert Wakefield is one of the more notable characters to engage Paine in this way, a fact not lost on the Deist journalist and author Allan Macleod, who jibes that while Wakefield may see himself as engaging Paine on a scholarly level, he nevertheless "prefers scurrility to argument; and rather emulates than abhors the coarse invectives" of Paine. Allan MacLeod, *The Bishop of Landaff's "Apology for the Bible" Examined. In a Series of Letters, Addressed to that Excellent Man* (London: Printed for B. Crosby, 1796), 60.

[515] Layman, *A Defence of the Bible*,3.

both a primer to the controversy over *The Age of Reason*, as well as a poor-man's compendium against Painite Deism.

Other publishers and authors had *The Age of Reason* specifically in mind when they took similar routes in providing primers and compendia in Christian apologetics and anti-Deistic arguments. Virginian minister Moses Hoge saw his 1797 *Christian Panoply* as a one-stop shop in anti-Deistic literature that would serve to counteract *The Age of Reason*, which "seems too well calculated to unsettle the faith, and deprave the morals, of no inconsiderable number of your readers."[516] Not only did Hoge include his own anti-Paine essay "The Sophist Unmasked," but the majority of the text of the *Christian Panoply* is made up of William Paley's *Evidences of Christianity,* and Richard Watson's *Apology for the Bible* and "*An Address to Scoffers at Religion."*[517] Hoge, however, felt that his compendium was insufficient in stemming the infidel tide, as he reveals in a 1799 letter that something more must be done to "counteract the very rigorous exertions now making the world in opposition to our holy religion." As proof, Hoge notes that he has been credibly informed that "as many as 100,000 copies of that scurrilous and blasphemous production, *The Age of Reason*" have been distributed throughout the country in the previous year alone.[518]

While Hoge's *Christian Panoply* and the compiled *A Defence of the Bible* are fine examples of collected works that sought to provide Paine's readers with the necessary refutations of *The Age of Reason*, a similarly motivated imperative lies at the heart of some other works that provided their readers with both specific refutations of Deism as well as a foundational

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[516] Hoge, *Christian Panoply*, 251.
[517] The essay that Hoge titles "*An Address to Scoffers at Religion*" is actually taken from *An Apology for Christianity*, Watson's 1776 tract written against Edward Gibbon.
[518] Moses Hoge, 12 August 1799. Quoted in Smylie, "Clerical Perspectives on Deism: Paine's The Age of Reason in Virginia," 219.

knowledge in Christian doctrine. The Protestant Lay-Dissenter's 1795 *Remarks on a Pamphlet Entitled The "Age of Reason"* is one of the best examples of a work that employs a variety of different tactics to not only refute Paine's arguments, but also to counteract the influence of *The Age of Reason*. Like most of the replies to Paine, the Protestant Lay-Dissenter is dismissive of *The Age of Reason,* owing to Paine's use of ridicule to score cheap-shots against the Bible. Indeed, the author recognizes that it is precisely Paine's "talent for ridicule" that has made Paine's Deistic tract so appealing.[519] In Paine's tone and in his style, in his irreverence and ridicule, the Protestant Lay-Dissenter charges Paine with corrupting "many persons of the middling and lower ranks of life."[520] With the example of the French Revolution forefront in his mind, the Protestant Lay-Dissenter views the ultimate goal of *The Age of Reason*, with its attempts at low humor, sarcasm and ridicule, as to "raise a mob against the profession of any Religion at all."[521] There is a certain resignation in the Protestant Lay-Dissenter's work that realizes that the genie is out of the bottle in terms of the increase in literacy and availability of reading material among the lower classes. While the Protestant Lay-Dissenter does show a good deal of anxiety about the implications of this, especially in the context of what he sees as the potential for an English version of French revolutionary mob action, he does not evince the same sneering disdain for the lower orders as some of his co-respondents. Rather than merely rail against the fact that the increase in literacy and accessibility to reading materials has led works like *The Age of Reason* to be so readily received, the Protestant Lay-Dissenter seeks to channel the message that is being received by the lower classes. The Protestant Lay-Dissenter does not overtly claim to be trying to match Paine's writing style, especially since he thinks that Paine's

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[519] Protestant Lay-Dissenter, *Remarks on a Pamphlet Entitled the "Age of Reason," 97.*
[520] Ibid., 110.
[521] Ibid., 85.

style leads him to verge into incoherence. The central axis around which the Protestant Lay-Dissenter's work revolves is the theme of education, and he really wants his readers to understand the arguments of *The Age of Reason* so that a refutation of them is all the more devastating. Paine's writing style is such that his "meaning and arguments cannot be well understood" and the Protestant Lay-Dissenter spends the first part of his tract in outlining and paraphrasing the arguments of *The Age of Reason* so as to make them clearer than Paine himself was able to.[522] Although he does not attempt to mimic Paine's writing style, the Protestant Lay-Dissenter's educational project is central in that he casts his R*emarks on a Pamphlet Entitled The 'Age of Reason'* as a sort of primer in Christian apologetics, intended to assist in the education of the "bulk of the people, who cannot be supposed to have much time for reading…[who have] had Mr. Paine's very artful attack on Revelation industriously circulated among them."[523] Since it is a given that the people are reading, then they must be provided with the correct type of reading materials that would head-off violent insurrection sparked by a rejection of Christianity. What is needed is a re-direction of reading habits along Christian lines, and while the Protestant Lay-Dissenter offers his tract as a primer of Christian apologetics, he includes an appendix of other books written by both "laymen as well as priests" that should be "consulted by those who wish for true information" about the veracity of the Christian faith.[524] Yet the Protestant Lay-Dissenter's own pedagogical vision for his work is wedded to a greater call for Christian education among the common people. Indeed, with an implied criticism of the British clergy who should be taking the lead on such matters, this self-proclaimed layman submits for "serious consideration" to the clergy whether a "method may not be derived for the regular, public

[522] Ibid., 6.
[523] Ibid., 104.
[524] Ibid., 94.

congregational instruction, of the people, in the evidences internal and external, of the truth and excellency of the Christian religion?"[525]

The Protestant Lay-Dissenter was not alone in using his response to *The Age of Reason* as both a primer of Christian doctrine and as a call for more rigorous, institutionalized and widespread instruction in the tenets of the Christian religion as a means to battle infidelity. As has already been shown, the New Jersey Episcopal minister Uzal Ogden saw the education of the young people of America central to his ministry, and his two-volume *Antidote to Deism*, with its extensive and expansive footnotes and cross references was a compendium of Christian doctrine and anti-Deist apologetics. If he did not feel confident that his six hundred page treatise had sufficiently refuted Paine and his fellow Deists, Ogden subsequently included two appendices, one of which was selections from Charles Leslie's popular *Short and Easy Method with Deists*, which Ogden touted as successfully dissuading people from their "deistical fallacies and zeal."[526] The other appendix is a compilation of deathbed "concessions and recantations" of Deists who have renounced their infidelity for the truths of Christianity. Ogden offers these deathbed conversions as proof for the faithful that when faced with death, even the most ardent adversaries of Christianity (such as Hobbes and Voltaire) were unable to maintain their hollow and cold Deism and came to realize the truth of Christianity. Ogden argues that these deathbed narratives should not only be convincing to Christians, but should also "merit the serious attention of unbelievers."[527]

The pedagogical component in both Ogden's and the Protestant Lay-Dissenter's works is made equally explicit in the Irish minister William Gahan's 1798 book *Youth Instructed in the*

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[525] Ibid., 105.
[526] Ogden, *Antidote to Deism*, vol 2: 321.
[527] Ibid., 309.

Grounds of the Christian Religion. In this work, Gahan calls for greater religious instruction as a means to combat infidelity, and he offers his own book specifically as a much-needed primer in a larger effort for religious instruction. As the title of his work indicates, Gahan is deeply concerned that infidelity is a phenomenon that is in vogue among young people, and he argues repeatedly that this is due to the stunning lack of proper education in Christian doctrine. Gahan therefore sees his work as more than just a refutation of Paine, but characterizes it as an introduction to the fundamentals in Christian theology not only for the young, but also for a more common audience. With an assumed sense of authorial humility that Christianity had already been defended much more ably than his pen could possibly hope to live up to, Gahan refers to the "numberless learned Christian pens" that have been successful in the defense of Christianity against the "foul calumnies and misrepresentations of Infidels." However, like the Protestant Lay-Dissenter, Gahan is quick to point out that the works of these learned Christian pens are "too voluminous and too expensive to be purchased and read by the generality of the faithful" and he therefore offers his book as both a "Synopsis and Compendium" of Christian doctrine as well as an "antidote against the many impious and blasphemous productions, that will ever disgrace the press of the present age." [528] While criticizing *The Age of Reason* for its unoriginality by holding that Paine has "scarce advanced any thing against the Christian Religion but what the unbelievers of former ages have said before him," Gahan himself plagiarizes fellow-Irishman William Jackson's 1795 prison-cell tract *Observations in Answer to Mr. Thomas Paine's "Age of*

[528] William Gahan, *Youth Instructed in the Grounds of the Christian Religion : With Remarks on the Writings of Voltaire, Rousseau, T. Paine, &c. Intended as an Antidote Against the Contagious Doctrines of Atheists, Materialists, Fatalists, Deists, Modern Arians, Socinians, &c. By the Rev. William Gahan* (Dublin: Printed by T. M'Donnel, No. 50, Essex-Street., 1798), ix.

Reason."[529] Perhaps Gahan can be forgiven his literary purloining since he promotes his work as a "compendium."

Gahan offers his book as a common-man's primer in Christianity, and like the Protestant Lay-Dissenter, he also makes a call for an increase in religious education. Although Gahan laments that religious infidelity has become something fashionable among the younger people in society, he is not completely surprised by this since "religion is the thing in which children in general are the least instructed." Without proper religious instruction, young people rely on the "soundness of their own judgment" with the result that many "become Atheists, Materialists, Fatalists, Deists, Free-thinkers, &c." As a necessary step to combat these "dreadful evils," Gahan proposes "giving youth an early tincture of piety, and a proper instruction in the principles and grounds of Christianity."[530] Although a minister himself, Gahan is wary of relying completely upon the clergy to completely effect the necessary change, and in bit of finger-wagging, he upbraids his fellow clerics for failing to tailor their sermons and ministries to young people. In addition to pointing out the inadequacies of his fellow clerics, Gahan tasks schoolmasters to do a better job in religious instruction as a means to staunch the flow of infidelity.

In his official capacity as the Bishop of Durham, Shute Barrington makes the most detailed argument for an increase in religious education as a response to the insidious infidelity purveyed by Paine (whom Barrington only refers to as "The Infidel"). In his *Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Durham*, Barrington sees the spread of infidelity partly as a

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[529] Ibid., 151.I discovered Gahan's plagiarism by the serendipity that comes from reading so many refutation of *The Age of Reason* in a short space of time—certain passages and turns of phrase stick out. For example a passage on page 43 of Jackson's work reads: "The creation we behold is as visible to the inhabitants of China, Lapland, or Japan, as to Europeans." This is repeated verbatim on page 159 of Gahan's work. Jackson writes on page 35 that "men light their reason at the torch of revelation, and then disown the source from whence they are illuminated." Gahan repeats this on page 161, only adding the word "ungratefully" to describe the way men disown the source of illumination. I suspect that Gahan probably lifts more passages from Jackson, and it would not surprise me if he lifted passages from other authors as well.

[530] Ibid., vi.

failing of the church for not properly instructing the populace in Christianity, leading to an "almost universal lukewarmness and indifference in Christians, respecting the essentials of their religion."[531] Much like Gahan, Barrington partly attributes such indifference to the failure of religious instruction for children, inadequate Christian instruction in schools, and the failures of the clergy to emphasize fundamental Christian doctrine. Yet the real pitch Barrington is making to his clergy is for the "tried advantages of Sunday schools," which he characterizes as the most effective method "promoting religious knowledge among the poor."[532] As a complement to Sunday schools, Barrington promotes the "dispersion of small cheap tracts, on religious and moral duties" as an effective means of instructing the poor in Christianity and overcoming their indifference to their religion. Barrington acknowledges that this lesson has been learned the hard way and that he is taking a page out of the playbook of the "authors of sedition and anarchy," who have used cheap books and pamphlets as a way to effect "mighty changes in political sentiment and conduct."[533]

Not everyone was as sure of the beneficent effects of Sunday schools as Barrington.[534] In his book *Poisoning the Minds of the Lower Orders*, Don Herzog has pointed out that "not all the

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[531] Shute Barrington, *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Durham; at the Ordinary Visitation of that Diocese, in the Year M DCC XCVII. By Shute, Bishop of Durham* (London: Printed by T. Rickaby; and Sold by T. Payne, Cadell and Davies, F. and C. Rivington, and P. Elmsly; Fletcher and Cook, Oxford; Deighton, Cambridge; and the Booksellers at Durham, and Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1797), 20.

[532] Ibid, 26-27. For more on Sunday-school movements in Britain, see Thomas Walter Laqueur. *Religion and Respectability : Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture, 1780-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976); K. D. M. Snell,. "The Sunday-School Movement in England and Wales: Child Labour, Denominational Control and Working-Class Culture." *Past & Present* 164, Aug. (1999): 122-68.

[533] Ibid, 28.

[534] For example, In a 1798 letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine* a pseudonymous author Eusebius lays out his case for his opposition to Sunday Schools. Eusebius is quick to point out that while he is no opponent of religious instruction or Sunday schools *per se*, he is a critic of those that have been established by the wrongheaded people with schemes and purposes that are ultimately self-defeating. Eusebius is a critic of Sunday schools because they educate the multitudes just enough to enable them to want to strive above their station by having read the radical pamphlets foisted upon them by reformers. Such a scheme is dangerous because it does not teach the lower orders what they really need -- discipline and industriousness—but rather teaches them enough to be susceptible to the type of radicalism that puts "swords into their hands, which may be instrumental to their own destruction." Eusebius

friends of social order embraced the project" of Sunday schools since there were some relevant worries that came along with such a program. Herzog notes that those who were critical of Sunday schools worried that the running of a Sunday school might "end up in the wrong hands" and any supposedly beneficent effects could be perverted to disastrous ends. Of additional importance is that "literacy is an ominously flexible tool" and promoting literacy was dangerous since there was always the dangerous possibility that those who "learn to read the Bible might eventually pick up a titillating novel or a radical pamphlet." [535] Certainly Bishop Barrington understood that it was not only a matter of teaching people to read, but it was to get them material to read that was deemed appropriate. Indeed this same realization is a motivation for those responders to *The Age of Reason* who penned their anti-Paine tracts specifically for a more common readership and those who set about offering cheap compendia of anti-Deism and Christian apologetics.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Much of the rhetoric against Deism and against *The Age of Reason* drew on tropes, beliefs and tendencies that had a long history and were in no way new to this decade. However, as Don Herzog has pointed out, the French Revolution was such a pivotal event that it "heightened anxieties, threw things in bold relief, posed worrisome choices that preceding

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points as proof that four hundred copies of *The Age of Reason* had been distributed among the "farmers, servants, and labourers" at a market-day in York who could never have taken notice of such dangerous literature if it had not been for the education they received at Sunday schools. Eusebius, *Gentleman's Magazine* 68, January (1798): 33-4.

[535] Don Herzog, *Poisoning the Minds of the Lower Orders* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 80.

generations managed more easily to evade."[536] These heightened anxieties are seen throughout the response to *The Age of Reason*, not only in the number of writers who felt compelled to respond to Paine, but also in both the content of their arguments and the ways in which they wrote their refutations of Paine's work. There is a definite and widespread awareness in the responses to *The Age of Reason* that to truly refute the work meant doing much more than just invalidating Paine's theology. Paine had to be countered on his own level, and what ultimately made *The Age of Reason* such a threat was not so much the content of what Paine was arguing, which was taken to be unoriginal and rehashed arguments that Deists had been using for a century, and which could be quickly and easily refuted (as they already had been numerous times before). Rather it was the audience for whom Paine was writing and the manner in which he presented his arguments which were threatening. Certainly *The Age of Reason* was dangerous because of the content of Paine's skepticism about revealed religion, and nearly every reply to *The Age of Reason* attempts to refute specific claims that Paine makes about the nature of the deity and the validity of revelation as a source for religious knowledge. But what made *The Age of Reason* particularly and especially dangerous was that it was written for a common audience and Paine's respondents decried its wide and cheap distribution.

Nearly every response to *The Age of Reason* commented upon Paine's bombast and inconsistent logic, his scurrilous assertions, low humor, and ridiculing tone. In so doing, Paine's respondents were undercutting his legitimacy to speak in the *bourgeois public sphere*. In Jürgen Habermas' theoretical framework of eighteenth century print culture, the *bourgeois public sphere* was a discursive arena which was guided by the normative standards of reasoned and dispassionate debate. Such normative standards applied to authors and how they wrote, but were

[536] Ibid., 53.

also expectations about how readers were to evaluate texts and arguments. In the rhetoric of their replies to *The Age of Reason,* the respondents criticized Paine precisely for not adhering to such expectations and operating norms of the public sphere. Paine had shown, though his use of ridicule that he was not approaching his subject in a suitably rational manner and therefore he had disqualified himself from serious consideration. Playing on the title of Paine's tract, a few of the respondents argue that despite its ostensible claims, *The Age of Reason* had very little "reason" in it. John Malham, for example, comments on "how little *shew* of REASON" there is in the book, and that Paine has "suffered his pen to run riot."[537] Furthermore, Paine's style was geared towards an audience that was categorically unqualified to rationally evaluate his claims. Rather than get at the truth via reasoned and disinterested discourse, Paine had shown himself to be an illogical firebrand who only pandered to an audience that was as volatile and illogical as he. In Chapter 6 I will take up in more depth this issue, and of the variety of ways that Paine's respondents sought to guard the normative boundaries of the public sphere.

In the previous chapter I discussed how it was widely assumed and explicitly stated in the replies to *The Age of Reason* that Christianity was the glue that bound society together, and how the societal implications of Paine's theology were tarred with the brush of the French Revolutionary Terror. For Christianity to be undermined, especially among the masses, among the young or uneducated, would result in a complete breakdown in the societal *status quo*, leading to anarchy and mob violence. As "irreligion made easy," *The Age of Reason* had to be refuted in such a way that would be appropriate and understandable for Paine's audience of dangerous readers. In the context of the French Revolution and international radicalism, Paine's common writing style and the distribution of cheap editions of the work was one of the major

[537] Malham, *A Word for the Bible*, 64.

anxieties that motivated so many to respond to *The Age of Reason*. Of related concern about the perceived alluring popularity of *The Age of Reason* has less to do with how Paine wrote and more to do with who Paine was. Paine's reputation cast a long shadow, and the forceful lure of his reputation was taken as an additional problem that had to be dealt with in responding to *The Age of Reason*. In the next chapter I will deal with the various ways that Paine's reputation weighed on the minds of those who responded to *The Age of Reason*, and the ways that they tried to counter the celebrity appeal of its author.

5.0 "LET NOT OUR ADMIRATION OF HIS ABILITIES ON THE ONE SUBJECT WARP OUR JUDGEMENT ON THE OTHER": THE PROBLEM OF PAINE'S REPUTATION

June of 1797 was not a particularly good month for London printer Thomas Williams, who found himself in the dock of Court of King's Bench facing charges for blasphemy, for which he was ultimately convicted and sentence to one year hard-labor. The blasphemy charges, initiated by the "Society for carrying into effect his Majesty's Proclamation against Vice and Immorality" (more commonly known as the "Proclamation Society"), were brought against Williams for publishing a cheap edition of both parts of *The Age of Reason* the previous year. With Paine out of legal reach in France, the Proclamation Society seized upon Williams as an easy target and a ready-made scapegoat in their campaign against the encroaching immorality and infidelity in society. One of the greatest ironies of the trial was that Thomas Erskine, who had a few years earlier made a name for himself as a champion of a free press by defending *Rights of Man*, now took the role as the chief prosecuting attorney for the case against Williams. In his address to the jury, Erskine argued that *The Age of Reason* was categorically different from other books on the same topic, and therefore was ineligible to be protected by the benefits of a free press. For Erskine, part of what makes *The Age of Reason* "infinitely more dangerous"

than other Deistic books is that it has had such a strong effect on "those who attached themselves from principle to [Paine's] former works."[538]

In this line of argumentation, Erskine's characterization of *The Age of Reason* has little if anything to do with the book itself or its arguments, nor with the style with which it was written. Instead, it is Paine himself, as the author of the book, that is the problem. Or, rather, it is Paine's reputation, and the lure which it represents, that make the book such a danger. Erskine was certainly not alone in his concern that what made *The Age of Reason* such a dangerous book was that Paine's reputation preceded him, and that his readers would be duped into accepting his religious nonsense solely on the basis of their affinity for his political principles. These untrustworthy readers emerge again as a factor in the responses to *The Age of Reason*, and it would be impossible to fully understand the reaction to *The Age of Reason* without also taking into account the international reputation that Paine had garnered through the twenty years prior to his Deistic tracts being published. Respondents on both sides of the Atlantic worried precisely that Paine's reputation alone carried sufficient weight to lead his readers into accepting his erroneous characterizations of the Bible, Christianity and revealed religion.

While a full treatment of the ups and downs of Paine's reputation in America and Britain is beyond the scope of this dissertation, Paine's reputation nevertheless does play an important role in the way that responders to *The Age of Reason* frame their responses to the work.[539] In this chapter I will show how Paine's very authorship of *The Age of Reason* became an aspect of

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[538] "Proceedings Against Thomas Williams for publishing Paine's 'Age of Reason'," in *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, ed. T.B. Howell (London: T.C. Hansard, 1819), 668.

[539] Some excellent works that deal with Paine's reputation are: Paul Collins, *The Trouble With Tom* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005); Francina Kercheville Hail, "Thomas Paine: An Interpretive Study of the Treatment of Paine by Biographers, Historians and Critics" (Ph.D., U. of New Mexico, 1977); Jerry W. Knudson, "The Rage Around Tom Paine: Newspaper Reaction to His Homecoming in 1802," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 53(1969); Sheldon, "Thomas Paine's Second Appearance in the United States."; Tommy R. Thompson, "The Resurrection of Thomas Paine in American Popular Magazines," *Midwest Quarterly* 33:1(1991); Dixon Wecter, "Hero in Reverse," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 18:2, no. Spring (1942).

the controversy. Paine's respondents felt that they had to deal with his reputation if they were to successfully counteract the message and the appeal of the work. On the question of Paine's reputation, the British responses to *The Age of Reason* offer a bit more variety than their American counterparts, since on the one hand there are those conservative Britons who despised everything about Paine and had no problem in deriding him for both his politics and his religion. On the other hand are those British responders who were sympathetic to Paine's political principles, yet also show a concern that the popularity of Paine's politics would somehow parlay into an acceptance of his Deism. The American response to *The Age of Reason* is marked by a deep-seated ambivalence with regard to Paine, making it all the more crucial that Paine's reputation be effectively countered for American readers. For American responders, however, reverence for Paine's political reputation was a given, and it therefore was even more crucial that they counter Paine's reputation for American readers. In this chapter I will show that Paine's name and the reputation he had nurtured as a champion of republican political values were the worrisome bait that could set the hook of religious infidelity among an unsuspecting reading public. I will also show the different rhetorical strategies that the British and American responders to *The Age of Reason* employed to counteract the supposedly magnetic effect of Paine's reputation and notoriety.

5.1 SOURCES OF PAINE'S REPUTATION

Upon receiving news in August of 1803 that Paine, newly returned to the United States, was intending to travel throughout New England, Massachusetts cleric William Bentley wrote in his diary that Paine's

> name is enough. Every person has ideas of him. Some respect his genius & dread the man. Some reverence his political, while they hate his religious, opinions. Some love the man, but not his private manners. Indeed he has done nothing which has not extremes in it. He never appears but we love & hate him. He is as great a paradox as ever appeared in human nature.[540]

Bentley marvelously captures in these few lines what could be taken as a general characterization of the entire British and American reaction to Paine. Love him or hate him (or, as Bentley himself asserts, love him *and* hate him), Paine's reputation was such that every person did have some idea of who Paine was, and he could not be ignored. And no doubt Paine would have been the first to acknowledge that his writings were meant to elicit an exaggerated and polarizing response. Indeed, Paine admits that he wrote in a shocking and strident manner in order to engage his readers. "Say a bold thing that will stagger them," Paine advises, "and they will begin to think."[541]

In 1792, well before the first part of *The Age of Reason* was published, the London political cartoonist Isaac Cruikshank circulated an unflattering portrait of Paine which highlights how Paine formed the nexus of British fears about Painite radicalism. The cartoon, titled "Wha Wants Me" (Figure 1) portrays a ruddy and pockmarked-faced man standing with a satchel of bristling weapons on his back, a dagger in one hand and a quill in the other. Floating in front of the figure is an unfurling scroll upon which the standing figure has written the words "Rights of Man" and "Common Nonsense," clearly identifying Paine as the subject of the cartoon. Emanating from Paine's head, like rays from a sun, are the essential "values" that Paine represents, including "Treason," "Rebellion," "Anarchy," "Murder," "Misery," "Famine" and "Atheism." These so-called values are then contrasted with a tangle of banners upon which Paine

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[540] William Bentley, *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts*, ed. Richard Bentley, 4 vols. (Salem, Mass: The Essex Institute, 1905-1914), August 23, 1803, Vol 3, 37.
[541] Paine to Elihu Palmer, February 21, 1802, in Foner, ed., *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 2:1426.

is trampling, such as “Obedience to Laws,” “Morality,” “Religion” “Loyalty,” “Magna Charta,” and “Personal Security.”

Figure 1: Isaac Cruikshank. “Wha Wants Me.” London: S. W. Fores, 1792.

The conceit of the cartoon is a sort of job resume for Paine, and as the caption at the bottom advertises, Paine is “ready and willing to offer my services to any Nation or People under Heaven who are Desirous of Liberty and Equality." Cruikshank’s cartoon is one of the many hostile pictorial representations of Paine that formed a part of what would come to be called the “Rights of Man Controversy,” a wide-ranging pamphlet war that raged in Britain in the wake of Paine’s vocal defense of the French Revolution.[542] The name of the controversy may be a bit of a misnomer since many of the pamphlets were written neither in support of nor in opposition to Paine, but rather against Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France,* which

[542] See Pendleton, "Towards a Bibliography of the Reflections and Rights of Man Controversy " 65-103.

"crystallized conservative hostility to the French Revolution."[543] Yet the pamphlet war became much more than just about the French Revolution, and was fundamentally a debate about the British political system, its basis, its legitimacy, and its future.[544] British reformers and radicals immediately seized upon the forcefulness and accessibility of Paine's prose, the clarity of his arguments for a republican revolution in Britain, and they promoted *Rights of Man* such that it became a foundational text of these movements. Owing partly to the popularity of *Rights of Man*, British radical movements such as the London Corresponding Society shifted into high-gear, with their membership growing and their publications and activities continuing on apace.

The controversy that both Burke's and Paine's works stirred up, and the ensuing pamphlet war, catapulted Paine into the British psyche such that by the close of 1792 his "name became a household word."[545] Paine became either a vaunted hero of a much-needed republican revolution or vilified as *the* spokesman for a dangerous international political radicalism that was equated with the worst abuses of the French Revolution. Despite the praise in some circles for Paine, *Rights of Man* sparked a large and heavy-handed conservative response, which sought to discredit not only the popular radicalism that Paine was supposedly leading, but also to discredit Paine himself. Hannah More's popular *Village Politics*, presented as a conversation between the blacksmith Jack Anvil and stonemason Tom Hod, is but one example of tracts that were written to highlight to the common man the dangers that the republicanism of *Rights of Man* represented. Broadsheet cartoons, such as Cruikshank's, sought to pictorially show Paine in his true light as a rebellious, murderous, anarchic atheist who has trampled the sacred and beneficial values of British society. Others sought to demonize Paine, such as a cartoon accompanying a broadside

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[543] Evans, *Debating the Revolution : Britain in the 1790s* 17.
[544] For an excellent summary of the extent of the controversy over *Rights of Man*, see chapters 5 & 6 of Gregory Claeys's *Thomas Paine : Social and Political Thought* (Routledge, 1989).
[545] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 111.

that purportedly revealed the *Intercepted Correspondence from Satan to Citizen Paine* (see Figure 2). Here, a demonic horned figure with three faces with depicts "Pain, Sin and the Devil/Tres Juncti in Uno [three united in one]." Paine's is one of the demonic faces and is shown speaking "Rights of Man," while one of the other faces (possibly Joseph Priestley) is speaking "SEDITION."[546]

Figure 2: *Intercepted Correspondence from Satan to Citizen Paine*. [London]: J. Aitkin., [1793].

The British government took a number of steps to counteract *Rights of Man*, from trying and convicting Paine *in abstentia* for treason, to commissioning a hostile biography, giving Paine the dubious "honor of being the first major publicist in modern times to be savaged by a government muckraking campaign waged publicly through the press."[547] Purportedly written as

[546] *Intercepted Correspondence From Satan to Citizen Paine*, ([London]: J. Aitkin, [1793]).
[547] Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*: 320.

a "defence" of Paine by one of his admirers, *The Life of Thomas Paine* was anything but. Published in 1792 under the pseudonym Francis Oldys (of the University of Pennsylvania), the biography was actually written by George Chalmers, a Scotsman loyal to the Crown who was disgusted by Paine's popular republicanism and sought to present Paine as "failure, a charlatan, a literary incompetent and a rather insipid anti-Christ to say the least."[548]

As Robert Dozier and others have shown, the increase in British radical societies saw a countervailing rise in popular loyalist activities, which led to a number of violent actions throughout the British countryside, including a wave of Paine effigy burnings. Historian Frank O'Gorman has estimated that there were around five hundred separate incidences of Paine being burned in effigy, leading him to argue that the "Paine burnings must have been among the most widely witnessed events in the long eighteenth century," a conclusion that builds on Nicholas Rogers' estimation that somewhere on the order of four hundred thousand people witnessed Paine's effigy being burned in Britain.[549]

Historians continue to debate the extent to which popular loyalism was directed from above and the extent to which it prevented an English republican revolution in the 1790s. However, most generally agree that the *Rights of Man* Controversy played a central role in British perceptions of the French Revolution, political reform movements, and republicanism. It secured Paine a celebrity that provoked lauding praise by his supporters and damning vilification from his enemies. Paine became a central figure upon whom his friends cast garlands and his

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[548] Hail, "Thomas Paine: An Interpretive Study of the Treatment of Paine by Biographers, Historians and Critics," 45.

[549] O'Gorman, "The Paine Burnings of 1792-1793," 122. Nicholas Rogers, "Burning Tom Paine: Loyalism and Counter-Revolution in Britain, 1792-1793," *Histoire Sociale [Canada]*, no. 32:64 (1999): 139-71. Rogers's article argues that historians need to look past the extensive loyalist propaganda in order to assess the actual effects that loyalist campaigns had on the British populace. Rogers holds that while the loyalist campaigns did indeed help to create a unified front for British ruling elites, the effect on the lower orders was marginal and not deeply held. O'Gorman, who analyzes the specific ritualized details of the Paine effigy burnings, argues that the Paine burnings tapped into some deep cultural roots of the British populace, and that this included a tradition of popular loyalism.

opponents cast pitch and fire, and by the time *The Age of Reason* appeared in 1794, the responders to Paine's Deistic tract still undoubtedly had the taste of *Rights of Man* in their mouths.

In the United States, however, the controversy over *Rights of Man* was not nearly so intense as it was in Britain. This should be expected, since Paine wrote *Rights of Man* specifically with the British political system in mind. However, the work did gain a fair amount of traction in the United States.[550] The work went through at least twenty six different printings, leading historian Alfred Young to speculate that *Rights of Man* "was one of the most widely circulated titles of the 1790s" in the United States.[551]

Yet it was ultimately *Common Sense* and Paine's service to the patriot cause during the American Revolution that persisted in the minds of Americans into the 1790s. Whereas the British responders to *The Age of Reason* feared that the controversy over *Rights of Man* would pave the way for Paine's supporters to uncritically accept the Deism of *The Age of Reason*, for the American responders to *The Age of Reason*, Paine's pamphleteering of the 1770s is the reputational lure. As the staunch Federalist Elias Boudinot charged, *The Age of Reason* had been "met with a more general approbation, than could otherwise have been expected" due to the "reputation the author had gained, by his former political writings" during the heady days of the American Revolution. *The Age of Reason* was perniciously riding on the coat-tails of *Common*

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[550] Although much scholarly work has been done on the printing and distribution of *Common Sense*, a similar treatment of *Rights of Man* in the United States remains to be done.

[551] Young, "Common Sense and the Rights of Man in America," 423. Young rightly expresses some puzzlement as to why Paine's tract, which was so concerned with the British political system, would be met with anything more than a passing interest by Americans. Young concludes that *Rights of Man* became part of a deeper American struggle that had been going on since 1776 over the "two types of republicanism"(419) that would succeed in the United States—a broadly enfranchised popular republicanism as opposed to a more restricted republicanism dominated by societal elites. The political battles between Federalists and their opponents were the most outward expression of this, and *Rights of Man*, while seemingly talking about the nature of the British political system, could be similarly applied to the American situation. As Young argues, *Rights of Man* "appeared in the thick of a renewed conflict between the two types of republicanism epitomized by Paine and Adams in 1776."(414)

Sense, and with characteristic haughtiness, Boudinot warned that simply "by the influence of a name" Paine was deceiving the "ignorant and unwary."[552] Whatever the source of Paine's celebrity, British and American responders felt the same problem, and they acknowledged and took steps to counter the weight of Paine's reputation.

5.2 PAINE'S REPUTATION PRECEDES HIM

A review of the first part of *The Age of Reason* that appeared in the British *Analytical Review* betrays some trepidation about having to review a book that it ultimately characterizes as full of literary deficiencies owing to Paine's lack of erudition. The reviewer nevertheless acknowledges that *The Age of Reason* must be given a "candid hearing," not only because the journal's liberal-minded readers expected to be informed and apprised of newly published books, but most importantly because Paine's name could not be easily ignored. Justifying its review of *The Age of Reason*, the *Analytical Review* prefaces its remarks on the book by stating that "Mr. Paine's power of commanding public attention on important subjects has been more than once proved beyond all contradiction." As such it would therefore be "vain to expect, that either contemptuous silence, or coercive prohibition, will prevent the work from being read."[553] The *Analytical Review* knew only too well that Paine's newest book, because of its author's notoriety, would not pass by without causing some sort of a stir. Indeed, the stir had already begun, and the

[552] Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation*, 26.
[553] *Analytical Review* 19 (1794): 160.

very next book it reviewed was Gilbert Wakefield's *An Examination of the Age of Reason*, which the reviewer praised for having "certainly done much towards the refutation of Mr. P."[554]

While the *Analytical Review* justifies its review of *The Age of Reason* based on the popularity that the work would no doubt enjoy, other responses to the work saw Paine's power of commanding public attention precisely as one of the most dangerous aspects of *The Age of Reason*. Irish Presbyterian minister Thomas Dix Hincks characterizes *The Age of Reason* as having "probably done more harm than any former publication of the same kind" since it has been "conveyed in plainer and more striking language" than even David Hume's "famous objection to miracles." Hincks is not unlike a number of his fellow responders who worried about Paine's writing style as one of the dangers of *The Age of Reason*. Yet Hincks expresses the related concern that *The Age of Reason*'s popularity is not only due to Paine's writing style but also because Paine "has acquired much celebrity by his political writings" and his very "name is therefore calculated to promote the circulation of any work." Hincks warns that although many have a high opinion of Paine, this should not lead them to "receive whatever comes from his pen as deserving credit, and blindly to give up their judgments to his guidance."[555]

Striking a similar note in a 1796 pamphlet, the Rev. George Bennett calls *The Age of Reason* the "most daring and unmasked attack that had ever yet been made on revelation," in part because Paine, through his writings, has positioned himself as a "friend" of the people. For Bennett, the "mischief arising from the spreading of such a pernicious publication" as *The Age of Reason* lies in that the people are "too ready to follow universally as a guide, the man of whom they have once approved." Paine has "hit their taste in one subject, and by this they are disposed

[554] Ibid., 170.
[555] Hincks, *Letters Addressed to the Inhabitants of Cork*, 6-7.

to swallow greedily, and without examination, what he advances in another." Not one to leave a point unsupported, Bennett relates that the deleterious effects of *The Age of Reason* have already begun in "one of the chief manufacturing towns in Scotland" where the infidelity that "Paine has advanced in his Age of Reason has drawn some to the horrid deed of burning their bibles."[556]

Bennett skirts on the edge of a class-based interpretation of how those who have crowned Paine as a champion of the common man will blindly and uncritically accept his Deism as well. For others, the class aspects of Paine's reputational appeal are more overt. As discussed in Chapter 4, the Anglican minister Vicesimus Knox was concerned that Paine's style appealed to an increasingly literate populace, and he wrote his *Christian Philosophy* with an eye towards mimicking the style of the common preacher (albeit without all of the theatrical tricks). Yet Knox was similarly alarmed by the related danger that Paine was already a household name, and that *The Age of Reason* would gain a wide distribution and wide acceptance solely on the weight of its author's celebrity. Knox admits that Paine's "notoriety is already so great, as scarcely to admit of increase," and therefore there is the well-founded probability that "his infidel writings will attract general notice, at least among the lower classes, without any aid from controversial opposition."[557]

American responders to *The Age of Reason*, while not showing nearly as much class hostility as Knox, nevertheless worried that their fellow countrymen would be similarly swayed by the Deism of *The Age of Reason* based on their former esteem for Paine's political writings. The Virginia minister James Muir, for example, admits that his own 1795 *An Examination of the Principles Contained in the Age of Reason* offers "nothing entirely new" to the defense of

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[556] George Bennett, *A Display of the Spirit and Designs of Those Who, Under Pretext of a Reform, Aim at the Subversion of the Constitution and Government. With a Defence of Ecclesiastical Establishments. By the Rev. G. Bennet* (Carlisle: Printed for the Author by W. Halhead. Sold by W. Richardson, London, 1796), 88-89.
[557] Knox, *Christian Philosophy*, 333.

Christianity against infidels such as Paine.[558] Yet he nevertheless realizes the necessity of engaging with *The Age of Reason,* not merely because the "season seemed to require it," but because even its most disgraceful arguments "receive currency without examination" based on the favorable reputation that Paine has "by his writings...acquired among many." [559] So too does the North Carolina Presbyterian minister James Wallis admit that one of the motivations for his book, *The Bible Defended,* stemmed from his fear that the "celebrity of [Paine's] political productions" would lead some of his countrymen to be "disposed too implicitly to receive his theological opinions also."[560] While on the one hand Wallis "cheerfully concede[s]" the debt that the United States owes to Paine for helping to throw off British tyranny, on the other hand he reminds his fellow Americans "let not our admiration of his abilities on the one subject warp our judgment on the other."[561]

Most of Paine's respondents on both sides of the Atlantic realized that much of the popularity of *The Age of Reason* was due in large part to the very fact that Paine was its author and therefore thought that his readers could not be counted on to critically evaluate his religious views. Commenting generally upon the polarized views of Paine and *The Age of Reason,* one Scottish respondent wryly noted that "one man will not allow one sentiment of Paine's to be right, because he is wrong in politics…another thinks him right in politics, and therefore sacrifices to him those truths and assurances of eternal happiness which God offers to mankind through Christ."[562] While this characterization is certainly an exaggeration and is belied by the

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[558] Muir, *An Examination of the Principles Contained in The Age of Reason*, iii.
[559] Ibid., 55-6.
[560] Wallis, *The Bible Defended*, 10.
[561] Ibid., 12.
[562] [James Wardrop], *A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of Alexander Christie, Esq. Of Townfield, Late Chief Magistrate of Montrose, Containing Some Observations on the Progress of Religious Knowledge in Scotland, and on Mr. Paine's "Age of Reason." By a Layman.* (Glasgow: Sold at the Unitarian Chapel, at the Printing-office of J. Mennons, and at the Shops of the Booksellers, 1795), 23.

many respondents who express admiration for Paine's political writings while savaging his religious views, it nevertheless highlights how Paine's reputation was at issue in the acceptance or rejection of his Deism.

5.3 COUNTERING PAINE'S REPUTATION

It is one thing to express a concern that Paine's reputation has the power of making *The Age of Reason* an intellectual bait-and-switch, and quite another to actually take steps to try to diminish the effect of Paine's celebrity. In Chapter 4 I dealt with the steps some respondents took to counter Paine's style of writing, with the most obvious method being to write a common man's defense of Christianity against Paine's "irreligion made easy." Yet a solution for ameliorating the influence of Paine's reputational allure was not quite as straightforward, and his respondents employed a variety of rhetorical strategies to acknowledge and counteract Paine's name. One of the most common ways to deal with Paine's reputation, which shows up in nearly every American response (but also is seen in some of the British authors who were sympathetic to Paine's political agenda), was to bifurcate Paine's career by highlighting the disjunct between his vaunted political writings and his erroneous religious views. Not only do some of the respondents hammer this home as a warning to those readers who may be sympathetic to Paine's previous writings, but they also offer a variety of theories (many which were little more than *ad hominem* attacks) to account for the fundamental disconnect between Paine's politics and his religion. In this section I will focus on the different ways that Paine's opponents recognized and sought to deal with the effect of his reputation in promoting the Deism of *The Age of Reason*.

The classical scholar and English Unitarian Gilbert Wakefield is one of only a handful of British authors responding to *The Age of Reason* who forthrightly praise Paine's politics while subsequently excoriating his latest venture into religion. While the majority of British replies to *The Age of Reason* evince little love for either Paine's religion or his politics, Wakefield comes out strongly in favor of Paine's politics. Yet he does so in order to contrast his admiration for Paine's politics with the disappointment he feels after having read *The Age of Reason*, thereby driving a wedge between Paine's politics and religion. Lauding the profundity, the sagacity, and the "original conception" of Paine's former writings, Wakefield proclaims that "no man…will venture to deny" that Paine is a genius.[563] With an eye on Paine's reputation, Wakefield notes that a book such as *The Age of Reason* "from such a man, of so popular a name on a subject of universal interest" will undoubtedly attract "considerable attention in this country." Unlike many of his more conservative countrymen, however, Wakefield's displays his liberal mindset by admitting to being pleased with the surprisingly rapid increase in the number of people who are "nobly occupied in the discussion of their *civil* and *religious* creed," and he hopes that this interest will "go on increasing, with an accelerated progress." Yet however much Paine may be credited with helping to increase discussion on civil and religious matters, Wakefield nevertheless displays a sincere disappointment in *The Age of Reason*, and he hopes his own refutation of Paine will serve as the "best antidote…against a delicious poison" that has too easily insinuated its way into the "hearts of men" who have only a "superficial intelligence with respect to this subject."[564]

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[563] Gilbert Wakefield, *An Examination of The Age of Reason, by Thomas Paine: the Second Edition, Corrected and Enlarged. With an Appendix of Remarks on a Letter from David Andrews: by Gilbert Wakefield, B.A, Late Fellow of Jesus-College, Cambridge* (London: Sold by Kearsley, and Shepperson and Reynolds, 1794), 1.
[564] Ibid., 2-3. Despite the calm pretense of his prefatory remarks that *The Age of Reason* is due at least some respect owing partly to the genius of its author, Wakefield's refutation of Paine becomes increasingly shrill and vitriolic.

Wakefield is joined by a number of British reformers and radicals who were unwilling to follow Paine down the Deistic path, and who sought to distance Paine's political views from his religious one by stressing that Paine's reformist streak has misfired in *The Age of Reason*. William Jackson, for example, who penned his response to *The Age of Reason* from Dublin's Newgate Prison for his activities with the United Irishmen, continually couples his admiration for Paine with his disappointment in *The Age of Reason*. Jackson glowingly praises Paine as having a reputation that will serve as a beacon to future ages, such that when the "present and future generations shall be swept by the hand of time among the mouldering ruins of ancient world, the name of Mr. Paine will live in celebrity." Reflecting on *The Age of Reason*, however, Jackson admits to finding himself at something of a loss as to how to deal with his hero. With a sense of disappointment, Jackson admits that he "cannot forbear to censure such a man for the rash exposure of his ignorance."[565]

While Jackson speaks in lofty impersonal terms about future generations, the Scottish radical journalist, author and exile James Tytler (better known as "Balloon Tytler" for his brief aeronautical career) makes his disappointment felt in more personal terms. Offering his own case as a personal example of the power that Paine's name has for inducing people to read his works, Tytler acknowledges that part of the reason he had read *The Age of Reason* (and was therefore compelled to respond to it) is due to the favorable reputation he held for works such as *Common Sense* and *Rights of Man*. Indeed, Tytler bluntly admits that "had it not been for the reputation which Mr. Paine has acquired from his political writings, I never would have given myself the trouble of answering either the one or the other" parts of *The Age of Reason*.[566] Taking *Rights of Man* to be the apex of Paine's literary career, Tytler tries to account for the

[565] Jackson, *Observations in Answer to Mr. Thomas Paine's "Age of Reason,"* 29.
[566] Tytler, *Paine's Second Part of The Age of Reason Answered*, 11-12.

paltriness of *The Age of Reason*, speculating that *Rights of Man* must have "exhausted" Paine to such a degree that every "succeeding publication has been worse than the former." With a sense of disappointment, Tytler melancholically reveals that *The Age of Reason* has served to decrease his opinion of a "man I had once so much admired."[567] The Paine of yesteryear, the champion of liberty and the friend of the people, is but a shadow of his former self, and with *The Age of Reason* he has shown himself to be a "traitor to the cause of truth and virtue!"[568]

Other British responders to *The Age of Reason* such as the Irishman William O'Connor, the Suffolk radical and anti-Trinitarian Thomas Bentley, and the Unitarian Joseph Priestley similarly admired Paine's political writings while lamenting his rejection of revealed religion. In Chapter 3 I have argued that those who were sympathetic to Paine's political views but who penned hostile responses to *The Age of Reason* were at pains to distance Deism from republicanism, by invalidating any logical connection that republicanism entailed Deism. A similar dynamic is at work when dealing with Paine's reputation, especially in Britain, since owing to the *Rights of Man* controversy, Paine was taken to be the spokesman of radical republicanism. British conservatives characterized Paine's Deism as the logical outgrowth of a republican mindset. Authors such as Wakefield, Jackson and Tytler argue that this is not the case; that not only is republicanism compatible with revealed religion, but is complimented by it. To do so they must drive a wedge between republicanism and Deism as represented by the Paine of *Rights of Man* and the Paine of *The Age of Reason*.

The American respondents to *The Age of Reason* faced a similar problem, although one that was more pertinent on their side of the Atlantic. Whereas only a handful of British respondents were able to claim republican Paine as one of their own, nearly every American

[567] Ibid, 72.
[568] Ibid, 89.

author acknowledged their own respect for Paine. Indeed one of the most prevalent themes in the American response to *The Age of Reason* is the ambivalence of his respondents. They laud Paine for his politics yet castigate him for his religion. The American ambiguity towards Paine is rooted in his reputation as a hero of the American Revolution, as the patriot who wrote eloquently in *Common Sense* to urge independence from Great Britain. Many American respondents also expressed their admiration for Paine as a "firm and universal friend to the liberties of mankind and an essential instrument in effecting the independence, the freedom, and liberty of America."[569] A persistent theme in the American response is to praise Paine for either his service to the American cause during the Revolution or to admire his political writings (and often times both). Yet this is then contrasted with his religious writings, which serve either as a cause of severe disappointment, or even an incredulous sense of betrayal. How can it be that the same person who had written so eloquently on political matters has done such a poor job of dealing with religious topics? There is a general consensus among the American responses that *The Age of Reason* is so poorly written and so spuriously argued that it could in no way have much impact on any thinking person. And yet the book is also an eminently dangerous one that is indeed spreading a pernicious Deism throughout American society.

Rarely do American responders to *The Age of Reason* express hostility towards Paine's political writings, although certainly during the increasingly intense and hostile partisan sniping of the late 1790s and early 1800s Federalists would seek to connect Painite infidelity with the political principles of their Jeffersonian opponents. For example, Joseph Dennie, the editor of the Federalist newspaper the *Port-Folio* was one of many to use Paine as an irreligious stick with which to beat Jefferson, who was roundly attacked as being an infidel. Upon learning that

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[569] Fowler, *The Truth of the Bible Fairly Put to the Test*, 17.

Jefferson had offered Paine safe passage from France on board the warship *Maryland* in 1801, Dennie fulminated that it was entirely beyond comprehension that the President would dare to "hazard such an insult to the moral sense of the nation" by inviting "the loathsome Thomas Paine, a drunken atheist and the scavenger of faction" to return on a national ship. Dennie was so infuriated that he advised that if "that rebel rascal should come to preach from his Bible to our populace, it would be time for every honest and insulted man of dignity to flee to some Zoar as from another Sodom, to shake off the very dust of his feet and to abandon America."[570] Paine did not return to the United States until October of the following year, after the Treaty of Amiens made it possible for him to return without the need for official sanction on board a warship. And while Dennie did not heed his own advice by fleeing upon Paine's landfall, Paine's actual arrival served as additional fodder for Federalist opprobrium directed against both Paine and the Jefferson administration. As Adolf Koch has noted, for the Federalists, Paine's return to the United States was almost seen as providential, since it "afforded them a remarkable opportunity to exploit the rising tide of public opinion against infidelity for political purposes."[571]

Despite the intensely harsh reaction that poured forth from the Federalist press, which "exhausted the resources of the dictionary to express the unutterable" upon Paine's return, the American responses to *The Age of Reason* were generally a bit more charitable to Paine, at least when it came to his political career.[572] Most American respondents avowed some admiration for Paine for his political writings (usually *Common Sense*) or for his services to the country during the American Revolution.[573] In doing so, they are able to deal directly with the weight of

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[570] Joseph Dennie, "Domestic Occurences," *Port-Folio*, July 18 1801.
[571] Koch, *Republican Religion: The American Revolution and the Cult of Reason*: 131.
[572] Ibid., 133.
[573] William Linn, a Dutch Reformed minister from New York is one of the few exceptions to the usual American praise of Paine's politics, and in a 1798 fast day sermon he disparages Paine's politics along with his religious

Paine's reputation while nevertheless refuting his religious views. The revered Paine of old, they warned, is certainly not the Paine of today. The anonymous writer of *The Folly of Reason* referred glowingly to Paine as a "man, whose writings in the political world, has justly gained him the applause of every class of citizen," while nevertheless calling *The Age of Reason* a "labrynth of absurdity and logic" wherein Paine has shown the "bigotry of a deist." [574] Episcopal cleric Uzal Ogden, the length of whose rambling two volume attack on *The Age of Reason* is matched only by its savaging of Paine, nevertheless notes that it is "in *politicks* only that Mr. Paine appears to reason with any degree of propriety...in this field alone he seems capable of gathering laurels." In a not-so-subtle reference to the pamphlet that made Paine famous, Ogden adds that when Paine "attempts to soar into the sublime regions of religion, we soon cease to behold Mr. Paine, and he as soon loses sight of COMMON SENSE."[575]

Despite the heated and at times virulent portrayals of *The Age of Reason*, most American (and some British) respondents agreed that in venturing into religious topics, Paine has completely outrun his competency as both a writer and a thinker. As a common strategy to deal with Paine's reputation and the pull that it had on his readers, his respondents distanced Paine's political writings from his religious writings by bifurcating him into a valued political theorist

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views. For Linn, the French Revolution has shown the close relationship between the overthrow of governments and the overthrow of Christianity. Paine has become wholly corrupted by French infidelity, and Linn warns his fellow Americans that they would therefore do well to also "suspect [Paine's] political creed." The alignment between Paine's political and religious agendas so shock Linn that he goes so far as to announce that any "favorable mention" that he may have previously made about Paine "I wish to be obliterated and forgotten." William Linn, *A Discourse on National Sins: Delivered May 9, 1798; Being the Day Recommended by the President of the United States to be Observed as a Day of General Fast. By William Linn, D.D. One of the Ministers of the Reformed Dutch Church in the City of New-York.* (New-York: Printed by T. & J. Swords, 1798), 22-5.

[574]George Keatinge, (attributed), *The Folly of Reason. Being our Perfect and Unerring Guide, to the Knowledge of True Religion. In Answer to The Age of Reason, or An Investigation of True and of Fabulous Theology. By Thomas Paine, Author of Works Entitled, "Common Sense, Rights of Man," &c.* (New York: Printed by Tiebout and O'Brien, for G. Keatinge's Book-store, Baltimore, 1794), 5-6. Although this book has been attributed to George Keatinge, I have been unable to verify his authorship. Keatinge was a Baltimore bookseller, and as indicated in the preface of this book, it was written in "Baltimore, August 25th, 1794."

[575] Ogden, *Antidote to Deism*, vol 1: 53-4.

while castigating him as a theologian. In *The Age of Reason & Revelation* (1795) the Virginia Baptist minister Andrew Broaddus attacks *The Age of Reason* with all of the passion of a fire and brimstone sermon. With a characteristic dramatic flair, Broaddus confides that while *The Age of Reason* may best be met with a "silent contempt," he nevertheless feels it incumbent upon his honor to engage in theological battle with Paine, although not without some trepidation.[576] Daunted by Paine's genius, which has hitherto "shone with uncommon lustre," Broaddus admits that for a considerable time he has held Paine in "high esteem" for his political writings. Broaddus goes so far as to admit that even in *The Age of Reason* there are "sufficient indications of a considerable genius unhappily applied."[577] To rhetorically gain courage, Broaddus compares himself to King David, lining up to do battle against the mighty Goliath of Paine, confident that his own attempts to refute Paine will have the same desired effect, not the least because like King David, "God is on our side."[578] Girding his rhetorical loins, Broaddus, in the most pointedly bifurcating phrase hurled towards Paine, notes that "Tho' I admire Mr. Paine as a *Politician*, I am disgusted with him as a *Religionist.*"[579]

In many of the responses there is a pervasive sense of disappointment, verging on betrayal, that Paine has done a real disservice to the cause of religion, when so much more was to be expected of him. In writing *The Age of Reason*, some authors, such as Ebenezer Bradford, express a sense of frustration that in venturing onto theological topics, Paine has really only managed to scuttle his own reputation. Bradford, the pro-French, anti-Federalist minister who

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[576] Andrew Broaddus, *The Age of Reason & Revelation; or Animadversions on Mr. Thomas Paine's Late Piece, Intitled "The age of Reason, &c." Containing a Vindication of the Sacred Scriptures, from the Reasoning, Objections, and Aspersions in that Piece. By Andrew Broaddus, V.D.M.* (Richmond, VA: Printed by John Dixon, for an enquirer after truth, 1795), 4.
[577] Ibid., 5.
[578] Ibid., 9.
[579] Ibid., 6. Broaddus' marvelous phrase would have echoes across the Atlantic, with Irish Presbyterian minister John Abernethy revealing in his *Philalethes; or, Revelation Consistent with Reason* (Belfast, 1795) that "though I consider Mr. Paine as an able politician, yet I consider him at the same time to be a most miserable divine."(5)

was ostracized by fellow Congregationalist clergy as the "Vandal of Rowley" praises Paine for his "political sentiments in general," pointing specifically to *Common Sense*, the *Crisis* letters and *Rights of Man*, and he confesses that based on these writings and Paine's reputation as an unflinching advocate of liberty and freedom, that any subsequent "work bearing his signature" would strike similar blows against the "galling chains of civil and ecclesiastical tyranny." However, not only does *The Age of Reason* not live up to expectations, but Bradford finds to his "great mortification" that it was nothing more than a "bold, blasphemous outrage against Christianity."[580] Moving from his own tarnished image of Paine, Bradford remarks that *The Age of Reason* has done serious harm to Paine's international reputation, and he muses that had Paine kept to writing on politics he would have continued to do valuable service to the world, but in "turning divine…he has branded his character with such imfamy as time itself can never wear out."[581] Bradford admits to being "unfeignedly grieved" that Paine has "prostitute[d] his rare and excellent talents" in the indefensible cause of Deism, and that in so doing, Paine has not only "wounded the warm and tender feelings of more than a million of his real friends" but has given an "unnecessary triumph to as many of his inveterate enemies, both in America and Great Britain." With *The Age of Reason*, Paine has betrayed the cause of liberty and freedom, and has alienated himself from even his staunchest supporters, many of whom "till the publication of this blasphemous performance, exerted their hearts and pens, in defence of Thomas Paine." Even Paine's ardent supporters are "now struck dumb, at his bold infidelity and almost unheard of blasphemy against the holy scriptures."[582]

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[580] Bradford, *Mr. Thomas Paine's Trial*, 67. Bradford admits to agreeing with only one aspect of Paine's religious creed—the equality of mankind--which Bradford argues is wholly consistent with revealed religion.
[581] Ibid., 68.
[582] Ibid., 12.

Not all who confronted the disjuncture between Paine's political writings and his religious blasphemies were struck dumb, owing to the number of respondents who still express admiration for Paine's political writings while taking him to task for *The Age of Reason*. Part of the rhetorical strategy that seeks to distance Paine-the-politician from Paine-the-religionist is to point out the profound shift in his treatment of the Bible. A number of respondents point to their own amazement that a man who had previously used Biblical themes and imagery to argue political points was now engaged in disparaging the scriptures.[583] When the British responders point out the shift in Paine's treatment of the Bible, it is usually for the purpose of highlighting Paine's inconsistency. The review of the first part of *The Age of Reason* that appeared in the British *Literary Review and Historical Journal* reminds those who had previously read *Common Sense* that they should "recollect the earnestness with which [Paine] has cited whole pages of sacred writ, in support of his favourite doctrine, of the inexpedience of monarchy." The reviewer calls Paine's inconsistency "shameless" and characterizes *The Age of Reason* as the unoriginal rehashing of the ideas of previous unbelievers.[584] While the *Literary Review and Historical Journal* refers to *Common Sense*, Scottish dissenting minister John Auchincloss compares *The Age of Reason* to *Rights of Man*, admitting that he is at a loss in understanding Paine's attack on the scriptures, since the "Bible, of all other books, is favourable to liberty," a cause for which Paine has made a name for himself. Pointing out the difference between *The Age of Reason* and *Rights of Man*, Auchincloss intimates that Paine somehow has lost control of his mind, and gives evidence that Paine "could not be more inconsistent with himself…in his different publications." The differences and inconsistencies are so stark, and so damning of Paine's previous work, that

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[583] Paine scholar A. Owen Aldridge echoes Paine's contemporary respondents when he writes that Paine's "attitude towards religion in *Common Sense* is completely contrary to that in *Age of Reason*." A. Owen Aldridge, *Thomas Paine's American Ideology* (Newark: University of Delaware Press 1984), 101.
[584] *Literary Review and Historical Journal* 1 (1794): 51-2.

Auchincloss calls *The Age of Reason* "a furnace prepared and blown by Mr P. himself, to burn up *The Rights of Man*."[585]

In these British responses, the discrepant ways that Paine treats the Bible serve to highlight Paine's inconsistency, thereby casting doubt on Paine's whole religious project.[586] If Paine is inconsistent from one work to the next, then perhaps his arguments within *The Age of Reason* are similarly inconsistent, and are thereby invalid.[587] While the American responders are certainly up to a similar tactic, they show a much greater sense of betrayal than their British counterparts. How could *Common Sense*, which abounded with Biblical themes and imagery, possibly have been written by the same person who now completely disparages the Bible in *The Age of Reason*? Universalist Elhanan Winchester addresses his shock directly to Paine by writing: "how differently you speak now, from what you did when you wrote common sense [sic], wherein you advised that God should be acknowledged King of America, and the Bible solemnly crowned as his law, and the law of our country."[588] It is with some disappointment that Winchester wishes that Paine had "kept to politics, and not attempted to meddle with religion,

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[585] John Auchincloss, *The Sophistry of Both the First and the Second Part of Mr. Paine's Age of Reason; or a Rational Vindication of the Holy Scriptures As a Positive Revelation from God. With the Causes of Deism in Four Sermons* (Edinburgh: G. Mudre & Son, 1796), 89.

[586] Blind seaman and poet J. Osborne would strike a poetic note on the discrepancy between Paine's attitude towards the Bible between *Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason*. In the delightful *Scripture and Reason, a Poem* (which has all the trappings of an classical epic poem), Osborne charges Paine with inconsistency for "Not recollecting that he form'd his plan/ From scripture, pourtray'd out—the Rights of Man/ Unworthy Paine, such inconsistency,/ First to admit, then reject, prophecy." J. Osborne, *Scripture and Reason, a Poem: Containing Various Arguments in Refutation of Mr Paine's Pamphlet Entitled The Age of Reason. By J. Osborne, a Blind Seaman of South-Shields* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Printed by S. Hodgson, for the author; Sold by the Booksellers in Newcastle; G. Baron, Mathematician, South-Shields; W. Kelley, North-Shields; and Messrs Robinsons, London, 1795), 25.

[587] Auchincloss makes the most sustained and explicit argument that Paine's inconsistency disqualifies him for serious consideration. Auchincloss likens the Paine of *Rights of Man* to a man swearing in the morning that "the sun is white; he fully a repeatedly acknowledges the Divinity of the scriptures" However, in *The Age of Reason*, Paine "appears like the same man, in the afternoon of the same day, swearing that the sun is black; he denies, in the most indecent manner, the divinity of the scriptures." Such inconsistency renders Paine a "very unfit person to advocate either side of the question" of the validity of Scripture. Auchincloss, *The Sophistry of Both the First and the Second Part of Mr. Paine's Age of Reason*, 34, 40.

[588] Winchester, *Ten Letters Addressed to Mr. Paine*, 64.

until he understood something about it!"[589] Andrew Broaddus strikes a similar chord when he asks "Who would have thought from reading *Common Sense* that Mr. P. considered 'the Bible a system of wickedness'?" Broaddus then asks his readers if they could possibly have imagined that "two streams of qualities so different could have proceeded from the same fountain?!!"[590] So too the Maryland Lutheran minister G.W. Snyder feels compelled by "civility" to remind Paine that during the American Revolution, "the best and warmest friends to liberty were found among the Bible-believers and their preachers," a point that Paine had previously known since he "had extolled them at that period." Snyder expresses his disbelief that the same man who had previously held the clergy in such regard is now branding them with "with the most opprobrious names."[591]

While Broaddus, Winchester, and Snyder express their amazement at Paine's transformation, other responders reveal a bit less shock and a good bit more anger towards Paine. Citing passage from *Common Sense* that used the Bible to criticize monarchy, the American Citizen concludes that Paine's subsequent attacks on the Bible leads the reader to "no other alternative, but either to pronounce you a shameful impostor, or an infamous liar."[592] In a similar vein, the pseudonymous Delaware Waggoner shows how Paine's inconsistent treatment and "opinions of the scriptures" will serve to "prove you a liar." In a bit of cross-textual analysis, by referring to the "9th page of your piece called Common Sense," the Delaware Waggoner proves that "all these truths which you at that time allowed of, you have in a blasphemous manner

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[589] Ibid., 91.
[590] Broaddus, *The Age of Reason & Revelation*, 7-8.
[591] Snyder, *The Age of Reason Unreasonable*, 35.
[592] American Citizen, *A Letter to Thomas Paine*, 2.

denied again."[593] With increasingly violent imagery and vitriol, the Delaware Waggoner calls Paine the "lyingest [sic] rascal that ever I either read or heard of" and repeatedly demonizes Paine as a "servant of the devil."[594] Not only should *The Age of Reason* be burned by every Christian magistrate in the country, but every "true hearted American" should "set up your effigy, and then as often as nature requires, they may have a convenient opportunity to piss in your face."[595] Nothing in the British response nor in any other American response comes quite as close to the abject hatred leveled at Paine as in the Delaware Waggoner's unceasingly violent reaction to *The Age of Reason.*

The bifurcation of Paine—distancing his politics from his religion-- would play out in an even more dramatic way than just pointing out the differences between *The Age of Reason* and Paine's previous writings. In a few tracts, respondents questioned whether Paine was even the author of *The Age of Reason*, since it seemed to them so markedly different from his previous works, especially *Common Sense*. While in most of these instances, the respondents questioned the authorship of *The Age of Reason* as a tongue-in-cheek way of scoring some points against Paine, they nevertheless highlight the concern over Paine's reputation. James Tytler, in his reply to the first part of *The Age of Reason*, was so taken aback by a particular paragraph from *The Age of Reason* that he admits to having his doubts as to Paine's authorship of the whole work.[596] Tytler writes that the offending passage is "so very unlike Mr. Paine's other works that I am much inclined to doubt his being the author of the pamphlet." Calling *The Age of Reason* "so weak, so silly and so uncandid," Tytler admits that he "cannot help thinking it rather a piece

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[593] Delaware Waggoner [David Nelson?], *An Investigation of that False, Fabulous and Blasphemous Misrepresentation of Truth, Set Forth by Thomas Paine,* 117.
[594] Ibid., 13, 17.
[595] Ibid., 26.
[596] The particular paragraph that Tytler found so shocking was one in which Paine says that it is shameful for humanity to consider a book to be the word of God which has such a ridiculous story as that of Samson and Delilah.

vamped up by the London booksellers, and imposed upon the world as a work of Mr. Paine."[597] Tytler does not make much out of this remark, and he seems to be throwing it out partly in disappointed frustration of the general decline of the man whom he had previously admired. Yet even in his frustration he recognizes the power that Paine's name has in luring readership.

While Tytler may not have sincerely disbelieved that Paine wrote *The Age of Reason*, he does seem genuinely betrayed by *The Age of Reason,* and he casts doubt on Paine's authorship as a way to not only telegraph his own disappointment but also as a way to distance Paine's political writings from his religious ones. Tytler takes the bifurcation of Paine to such a degree that he is actually offering a way to overcome such a bifurcation. By suggesting that the difference between *The Age of Reason* and previous writings is so great that Paine may not actually be the author of *The Age of Reason*, Tytler offers a way to rescue Paine's favorable reputation from the tarnishing that it has received from his Deism. Paine can remain the admired politician without being despised as a religionist, since he might not have written *The Age of Reason*. A brief 1796 article in the New York *Theological Magazine* uses a similar tactic of disputing Paine's authorship, albeit in a more obviously satirical way. The title of the article, "An Attempt to Vindicate the Character of Mr. Thomas Paine from the Infamy of Being the Author of the Pamphlet, 'the Age of Reason'," is enough to indicate that the author frames the article as a defense of Paine's good name against the battering it has received as a result of his Deism. Referring directly to Paine's reputation, the author of this piece states as a "well known" fact that Paine has "sustained an eminent character in America" since the American Revolution, and his "usefulness has been publicly acknowledged and applauded" in the United States. However, Paine's name has certainly suffered in America due to the appearance of *The Age of*

[597] Tytler, *Paine's Age of Reason*, 47.

Reason, and the author sees it as a "deed of charity to Mr. Paine" to publicly rescue his reputation by "suggesting a *doubt*, whether he was, in fact, the author of that publication." As the article progresses, however, it becomes clear that the vindication of Paine is something of a sham, and that the author is really trying to turn the tables on Paine's arguments against the validity of the Bible. Just as Paine has disbelieved the scriptures due to lack of sufficient eye-witness corroboration, the author of this article asks his readers whether "we have more evidence that '*The Age of Reason*' is the *word of Paine*, than we have that the *sacred scriptures* are the *word of God*?"[598] It is not surprising that the *Theological Magazine*, which promoted itself as "newspaper of the Christian world," would be critical of *The Age of Reason*, and the faux-vindication of Paine is one of the more clever ways of trying to undercut the foundations of Paine's arguments against the Bible.[599] Much like Tytler, the author of this faux-vindication in all likelihood does indeed believe Paine to be the author of *The Age of Reason*. Yet the article emphasizes the discrepancies between Paine's previous writings which garnered him such a favorable reputation, and his Deistic writings which have caused his reputation to take a nose-dive. The shift in Paine's reputation is the primary framing device of this article and its author

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[598] "An Attempt to Vindicate the Character of Mr. Thomas Paine from the Infamy of Being the Author of the Pamphlet, 'the Age of Reason.'," *The Theological Magazine, or, Synopsis of Modern Religious Sentiment* 1:4, no. Jan/Feb (1796): 284-6. A subsequent article from this magazine makes the same argument against Paine. Throughout the subsequent article, which is a more standard refutation of the arguments of *The Age of Reason*, Paine's authorship is taken for granted. However, argument number "5" against the work asks if there is any proof that Paine actually wrote *The Age of Reason*, according to the same criteria with which Paine has disbelieved the story of the Resurrection. There being none, the author concludes that on Paine's own principle "we are not rationally obligated to believe anything, of which we have not the evidence of sense." See "Short Comments on New Texts," *The Theological Magazine, or, Synopsis of Modern Religious Sentiment* 3:1, no. Oct-Dec (1797).

[599] A number of other responders to *The Age of Reason*, such as Elias Boudinot, Thomas Taylor, G.W. Snyder, the Mendon Association, and David Wilson use the same strategy to challenge the too stringent criteria that Paine sets for establishing the validity of a text based on establishing its authorship. As Elias Boudinot nicely sums up: "Is there a sensible man in the United-States, who doubts whether Thomas Paine wrote the pamphlet, called the Age of Reason…although perhaps there may not be a man in America who saw him write it…yet, on the principles of the author of the Age of Reason, I am not bound to believe it, unless I had seen him write it, or heard him acknowledge it, myself." Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation*, 66.

sardonically plays with bifurcating Paine as a means of not only undercutting his arguments against the Bible, but also as a way to deal with the persistent American fondness for Paine.

While perhaps no more sincere about doubting Paine's authorship than Tytler or the *Theological Magazine,* English schoolmaster John Malham makes the most sustained use of doubting Paine's authorship in his 1796 *A Word for The Bible*. Malham, who we have seen in the previous chapter, had Paine's intended audience very much on his mind when he critiqued other defenses of Christianity for being inaccessible due to their high cost and too florid language. Malham couples this with his contention that Paine's name, which has served as the "instrument of innovation and change in the political world," carries a great deal of weight and cannot be so quickly discounted. Such is the weight of Paine's name that Malham casts the seeds of doubt that he is even the author of *The Age of Reason*, admitting that he "cannot in any respect reconcile it to my mind, that he [Paine] has had any thing to do with the productions that have lately appeared under his name." The reputational power of having spurious works "pass" under the name of "Paine" leads Malham to speculate that "partisans of a republican system" have "seized his handle for introducing their own lucubrations to the world." While Malham disputes that Paine is the actual author of *The Age of Reason*, he is quick to stress that Paine would certainly not be displeased by such co-opting of his name. Such is Paine's vanity and his penchant for causing upheavals in the political world that it is unlikely that he would "refuse the honour of being brought forward to effect the subversion of the religious world."[600] It is difficult to gauge just how sincere Malham's charges of spurious authorship of *The Age of Reason* are, although he does keep up the pretense of disbelief through his tract by continually referring to Paine with qualifications such as the "reputed author," or by italicizing Paine's name followed

[600] Malham, *A Word for the Bible,* 4-5.

by "or whoever is the author of the Age of Reason."[601] Unlike Tytler and the *Theological Magazine* article, Malham does not cast himself as a particular fan of any of Paine's writings and his remarks about republican partisans seem to indicate a certain degree of hostility towards Paine's political views. Yet Malham does, nevertheless, realize that Paine's name carries its own reputational baggage, such that it could be used as a means of propagating ideas, even if they are not in all actuality those of Paine himself. By casting doubt on Paine as the author of *The Age of Reason,* and persisting in this pretense throughout his work, Malham is recognizing and trying to counteract the influence of Paine's reputation.

In doubting Paine's authorship of *The Age of Reason*, both Malham and Tytler suggest that Paine's name has been surreptitiously used to promote a work that did not come from his pen. Someone else, it seems, has hijacked Paine's name and used it to promote their own agenda. While Malham and Tytler suggest that this may have been the case with *The Age of Reason,* a few tracts did actually put words in Paine's mouth. Presaging Paine's actual death by fourteen years, a purported account of his final words was published in London in 1795 as *The Last Dying Words of Tom Paine, Executed at the Gullotine[sic] in France*. In this 8-page pamphlet, "Paine" admits that he is "determined to speak the Truth" even though he has written and spoken "nothing but Lies all my life." The pamphlet ends with Paine giving a remorseful account of his life and he repents of the "mean wicked and designing principles" that have garnered him the "Infamy I so richly deserve."[602]

While the death-scene remorsefulness of this pamphlet does not single out *The Age of Reason,* a 1797American tract (anonymously written by Donald Fraser) *The Recantation; Being*

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[601] Ibid., 23, 14. Much like the author in the *Theological Magazine* article, Malham also use his disbelief of Paine's authorship as a sly way to score points against Paine's disbelief in those books of the Bible whose authorship is not established (especially the books attributed to Moses).
[602] *The Last Dying Words of Tom Paine, Executed at the Gullotine in France on the 1st of Sept. 1794,* 2.

an Anticipated Valedictory Address, of Thomas Paine, to the French Directory puts Paine's religious views as its central focus. The narrative conceit of Fraser's tract has Paine on the verge of leaving France, and since he admits that he is now "happily secure beyond the invidious power of Pit [sic], or Robespeire [sic]" he decides to speak his mind freely on the subject of the French Revolution.[603] While initially singing praise to the French leadership for the astonishing and much-admired gains that the Revolution has had in liberating the French people from political and ecclesiastical oppressions, Fraser has Paine admit that he cannot hold his tongue about the Revolution's errors, and the rest of the tract is a diatribe enumerating the missteps of the French leadership. The candid Paine notes that nearly every revolutionary misstep has to do with the French hostility to Christianity, and as the title of the work implies, Paine wholly recants his Deistic beliefs and his previous attacks on the Christian religion. The fictitious Paine of the tract admits that he has reflected upon his previous "presumptuous and inconsiderate attack on the Christian Religion" and has come to realize that he had not sufficiently considered or evaluated the evidence for the truth of Christianity. Not only has further reading in the works of John Locke and Soame Jenyns convinced him of the reasonableness of revealed religion, but in perusing an edition of Richard Watson's refutation of *The Age of Reason,* Paine admits that he found all his "objections answered, and all the imaginary difficulties, which lay in the way of my receiving Christianity, fully removed."[604] With an eye towards showing the French leadership that their own hostility to Christianity has been equally misguided, the tract has Paine admit that he is "fully convinced, upon clear and rational principles, of my mistaken zeal, in vainly attempting to sap the foundation of the Christian's hope, and endeavouring to promote the cause

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[603] [Fraser , Donald], *The Recantation; Being an Anticipated Valedictory Address, of Thomas Paine, to the French Directory* (New-York: Printed for the Author, 1797), 4.
[604] Soame Jenyns (1704-1787) wrote *View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion* (1776).

of Infidelity!" Not only has Paine come to be convinced of his previous infidel foolishness, but he emphatically states that he "hereby publickly, candidly, and solemnly RETRACT, and Regret my infatuated presumption, in presuming to attempt the destruction of that divine structure which is built upon the Rock of Ages!"[605]

Fraser's penchant for putting words into Paine's mouth was not exhausted by his *Recantation*, and in a work published the following year, Fraser continued with the theme of a wished-for Paine who turns his back on Deism. In 1798 Fraser published *A Collection of Select Biography*, a triumphalist biographical anthology of eminent and learned laymen who had "firmly adhered to" the truth of Christianity, and who were thereby counterweights-by-example to those (such as Paine) who had embraced infidelity.[606] The prefatory material to the biographical sketches includes two letters in which Fraser takes Paine to task for having written the two volumes of *The Age of Reason*, which he calls the "greatest follies" of Paine's life. Showing the typical American perplexity over the disparities between the Paine of *Common Sense* and the Paine of *The Age of Reason*, Fraser notes that in his earlier work, Paine "professes himself to be a Christian, and to have the highest reverence for the *Scriptures*! The *Bible* he expressly calls the WORD OF GOD!" Casting a coldly cynical eye on Paine, Fraser surmises that "it *then* suited his turn to *profess* Christianity!!," intimating a certain intellectual fickleness of Paine's part.[607] With a schoolmasterly tone of scolding a wayward student, Fraser points out the damage that Paine has done to his popularity in the United States and he urges him to

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[605] *The Recantation; Being an Anticipated Valedictory Address, of Thomas Paine, to the French Directory*: 6-7. When Paine actually did leave France and returned to the United States in 1802 he is reported to have confronted Fraser about this pamphlet, asking him if he had written *The Recantation* and whether he had made any money off of the book. When Fraser replied in the affirmative to both questions, Paine purportedly expressed some bemused satisfaction that Fraser "found the expedient a successful shift for your needy family." Paine, however, advised Fraser that he should "write no more concerning Thomas Paine," and instead "try something more worth of a man" than producing such forgeries. See Francis, *Old New York, or, Reminiscences of the Past Sixty Years* 138-9.
[606] Fraser, *A Collection of Select Biography*, v.
[607] Ibid., 24-6.

"*publicly recant* your ERRORS, and request your friends to suppress your delusive *Age of Reason.*"[608] Perhaps hoping to prime the pump of Paine's disavowal of Deism, Fraser concludes his anthology with an imagined, hypothetical 5-page confessional soliloquy which has Paine realizing his presumptuousness, his arrogance, and his errors. Of particular note, Fraser has his imagined-Paine state that

> In my pamphlet 'entitled Common Sense' published in America, I professed the highest veneration for the BIBLE; but a few years afterwards, in France, I opposed the Bible with all my powers, and declared myself a Deist!—This behavior shocks me! It has been noticed by many, and for that and my writings against the scriptures, I am by some held in contempt! And I begin to fear too deservedly![609]

Fraser even holds out the hope that Paine will, like St. Paul, become a proponent of that same Gospel that he had previously denigrated, and were such a situation come to pass Fraser would "fain embrace the author of *Common Sense*, and the *Rights of Man*, in the *Kingdom of Heaven.*"[610]

While Fraser certainly did not here intend for anyone to believe that his imagined-Paine's words were ones that Paine actually spoke, the same cannot be said for Fraser's earlier *Recantation.* What better way to use Paine's own reputation against him than by making him call himself a liar and a mischief-maker? What better way to negate the lure that *The Age of Reason* represents if its own notorious author were to publicly disavow his Deism and to return to the Christian fold? Much as James Tytler tried to salvage Paine's reputation by suggesting that the differences between *Common Sense* and *The Age of Reason* were such that the two works

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[608] Ibid., 27.
[609] Ibid., 249.
[610] Ibid., 26-7, 245.

could not be written by the same man, Fraser too tries to re-integrate a bifurcated Paine by having him turn his back on *The Age of Reason*.[611]

The prevalent American bifurcation of Paine as a means of dealing with his reputation did not go unnoticed, especially by those who refused to make a similar distinction between Paine's politics and his religion. Upon reading Fraser's *Collection of Select Biography*, William Cobbett lashed out at what he disdainfully saw as the misguidedly persistent American fondness for Paine. Cobbett, the British exile with the appropriately prickly nom-de-plume of Peter Porcupine, was one of the more pugilistic newspaper editors to emerge during the political battles of the late 1790s, and he took every opportunity to disparage Paine in book, pamphlet and periodical.[612] No doubt Cobbett felt that he was part of a small minority who was wise to the real menace that Paine represented, and he criticized Americans for refusing to believe that Paine's politics and his religious beliefs both stemmed from the same rotten source. In his review of Fraser's *Collection of Select Biography* Cobbett initially praises the book as a "judicious" work that has been actuated "by the most laudable motives." However, Cobbett's

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[611] Fraser's *Recantation* would play a part in a late nineteenth century controversy over Paine's actual death. In 1877 Robert Ingersoll, a Paine sympathizer and the most notorious infidel of his day, launched a running battle in the *New York Observer* when he offered to pay a thousand dollars to anyone who could convincingly prove that Paine recanted his Deism when faced with death. A brief 1878 article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* gladly reported that Ingersoll would have to make good on his wager, since a "deliberate recantation of [Paine's] Atheistic opinions" had been discovered by Kentuckian Z.F. Smith among a book of old bound pamphlets. The evidence produced was a copy of Fraser's 1797 *Recantation*. Ingersoll never did pay out on the reward, not the least because he was the arbiter of what was considered to be "convincing proof." See "Colonel Ingersoll's Challenge Met--Copy of Tom. Paine's Recantation," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 2 1878.

[612] In 1798, Cobbett published the Lutheran minister G.W. Snyder's refutation of *The Age of Reason*, *The Age of Reason Unreasonable.* As a part of his larger anti-Paine crusade, Cobbett published an American edition of the scurrilous Oldys/Chalmers *Life of Thomas Paine*. In the introductory material, Cobbett derisively chides that "thousands upon thousands of that blasphemous work, 'the Age of Reason'" had instantly sprung from American presses, while "not a single copy of the life and crimes of the blasphemer [Paine], so fit to counteract his diabolical efforts, was printed in the whole union." William Cobbett, "The Life of Tom Paine, Interspersed with Remarks and Reflections," *Political Censor*, no. Sept. 1796 (1797): 252. For more on Cobbett's evolving opinions of Paine, see J. Potter, "William Cobbett in North America," *British Association for American Studies Bulletin* 2, no. 4-28 (1961); David A. Wilson, *Paine and Cobbett: The Transatlantic Connection* (Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988); Claribel Young, "A Reexamination of William Cobbett's Opinion of Thomas Paine," *Journal of the Rutgers University Library*, no. Spring (1977).

praise quickly dissipates and he notes that certain passages "reduce considerably the merit of the whole." Particularly damaging for Cobbett are the parts where Fraser reveals his fondness for Paine, and Cobbett comments that one of the damnable methods that Fraser adopts is "to express his disapprobation of the *Age of Reason*" by placing it "in *contrast* with *Common Sense*, and the *Rights of Man."* For Cobbett, Fraser commits the unpardonable sin of seeming "to *lament*, that the pen which produced the two latter should have been dishonoured by producing the former." This leads Cobbett to opine that "Mr. Fraser appears to be one of those men, who, at last, are alarmed at the progress of Infidelity, but who are still blinded by their political prejudices." Speaking more generally, Cobbett calls Paine an "infidel Anarchist" and is dumfounded that men such as Fraser are unable to see that there is no distinction whatever between Paine's politics and his religion. In Cobbett's mind, all of Paine's writings "are all scions, from the same accursed root." While addressing Fraser specifically, Cobbett seems to be speaking more generally about the prevailing American ambivalence towards Paine. Cobbett charges that "there is not more blasphemy in *The Age of Reason* than in *Common Sense* and the *Rights of Man*," and he warns his Americans readers to not be blinded by their misplaced affection for Paine's political writings. With the allure of Paine's reputation on his mind, Cobbett charges that Paine's previous political writings have done little more than to prepare the "minds of the ignorant in this country for the reception of that daring and blasphemous publication." For Cobbett, Paine's whole career has been one of "teaching men to despise all authority on earth" and it therefore should come as no surprise that Paine has been leading his admirers "by degrees, to despise that of the Almighty." [613] Cobbett chastises Americans for their divided feelings towards Paine and

[613] William Cobbett, "Philadelphia, July 1," *Porcupine's Gazette*, July 1 1799, 3.

for their failure to realize that Paine's political and religious sentiments are part of the same radically misguided project.[614]

Paine's respondents rightly realized that his reputation and notoriety were at the root of the large circulation of *The Age of Reason*; Paine's name alone was sufficient to popularize a tract. Yet they also worried that too many readers were beguiled into accepting his Deism based on little more than their regard for Paine's political writings. Paine's Deism was riding on the coat-tails of his republicanism. Many of the respondents sought to deal with Paine's reputation by pointing out the stark differences between his political and religious writings. For some, this took the form of highlighting the inconsistencies between *Common Sense* or *Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason*. For others, it meant revealing their own admiration for Paine's politics while repudiating his religious views. By emphasizing a severe disconnect between Paine's politics and his religion, his respondents recognized the weight of his reputation while trying to counteract its effects. Yet if *The Age of Reason* presented such a startling departure for Paine, what could possibly have driven him down the infidel path? In the next section I will discuss some of the ways that Paine's respondents attempted to account for *The Age of Reason*.

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[614] Virginia Deist John Fowler would echo Cobbett's disdain of the ambivalence that Americans felt towards Paine, albeit for the opposite reason. In both pamphlet and periodical, Fowler rallied to Paine's (and Deism's) side a number of times during the controversy over *The Age of Reason* and in a series of combative articles that appeared in the *Columbian Mirror* Fowler cut right to the heart of American ambivalence towards Paine. Fowler notes that Americans praise Paine's genius for being the "universal friend of man" whose political writings have served to "illuminate the world." Yet once Paine turned his intellectual capacities towards religion, then "by some strange artifice, some hidden mystery, or wonderful magic, they immediately become decayed, debilitated, and full of infamy." For Fowler, Paine's politics and his religion are entirely consistent since they both spring from a sincere and "disinterested" investigation which stands in stark contrast to the "ridicule and chagrin" that have been leveled at Paine by his detractors. Fowler, *The Truth of the Bible Fairly Put to the Test*, 21-22.

5.4 POISONING THE WELL: ACCOUNTING FOR *THE AGE OF REASON*

In his May 1796 review of the second part of *The Age of Reason* in the *Political Censor*, William Cobbett noted that the topic of how Paine "came to think of exercising his clumsy battered pen upon the Christian Religion" has "excited a good deal of curiosity" in the United States. Cobbett's review of *The Age of Reason* hoped to satisfy this American curiosity, and his review is primarily a biographical sketch tracing the "ragamuffin deist from America to his Paris dungeon" as a way to "account for his having laid down the dagger of insurrection in order to take up the chalice of irreligion."[615] As I have noted, Cobbett was exasperated with the persistent American fondness for Paine's political writings, and his review/biographical sketch shows how Paine's religious views and his politics are intimately and inherently connected. While Americans, in Cobbett's estimation, may not have sufficiently accounted for *The Age of Reason* (hence the need for Cobbett's biographical sketch), many respondents in both Britain and the United States did offer a variety of explanations to account for Paine's Deistic work.

I have argued above that it is of crucial importance for so many of the American and some of the British responders to drive a wedge between the veneration for the author of *Common Sense* and *Rights of Man* and the blasphemous infidel that Paine had seemingly become. Only by meeting Paine's reputation squarely did they hope to dissuade others from accepting, based on Paine's popularity alone, his theological musings. In attempting to

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[615] William Cobbett, "Paine's Age of Reason." *Political Censor* 4 (May, 1796). Although Cobbett's name does not appear as the author of this review, it seems quite clear that Cobbett was the author, especially since Cobbett included this review in his 1801 self-published collected works *Porcupine's Works* (see volume 3). Putting some doubt to Cobbett's authorship is that in 1819 he says that he ever actually read *The Age of Reason*: "I had never, and have not now, read a word of that work. I have looked into it, but I never thought it worth my while to read any part of it." See *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, January 19 (1819): 583. However, there is nothing in the *Political Censor* review that indicates any real familiarity with the actual content *The Age of Reason*, other than the author describing it with the common epithet of "blasphemous." Instead, the majority of the review article is taken up specifically with trying to find Paine's motivation in writing *The Age of Reason*.

counteract Paine's reputation by pointing out the apparent disjuncture between Paine's politics and his religion, some responders took an additional step of poisoning the well by offering some sort of explanation as to why Paine has suddenly turned his back on Christianity and revealed religion. If *The Age of Reason* represented something completely and shockingly different than what had come before, there must be some reason or explanation for it, and a number of respondents offered some theories that served to further blacken Paine's reputation and the weight that it carried.

Rare indeed is the responder who followed Richard Watson's tack by giving Paine at least some benefit of the doubt that *The Age of Reason* was motivated by sincere desire to get at the truth.[616] Even though his patience with Paine quickly ran dry, Watson made a show of not attributing "bad designs" and "deliberate wickedness" to Paine. While Watson was stridently opposed to *The Age of Reason*, he refused to completely denigrate Paine's motivations, and he tempered his attacks by acknowledging that Paine thinks that he is "doing service to mankind in endeavouring to root out" superstition.[617] Few of Paine's opponents, however, were able to muster even this level of regard for *The Age of Reason*. About as close as they came was to cede one or two points of *The Age of Reason*, usually as a means of scoring points against other opponents. Suffolk radical Thomas Bentley, for example, disappointedly notes that while *The Age of Reason* has "several solid truths" in it, the "evil greatly outweighs the good." Yet Bentley then goes on to make the stingingly acerbic remark that Paine's errors are still nearer to the truth

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[616] Obviously those who came out in support of *The Age of Reason* such as Elihu Palmer, John Fowler and Thomas Dutton thought that Paine was not only a sincere inquirer but that he had actually hit on the essential truth of revealed religion.
[617] Watson, *An Apology for the Bible*, 89.

than the "the cruel, covetous, proud, oppressive hypocrisy of many who reprobate him, and boast in a profession of the Christian religion."[618]

In sharp distinction to Watson's refusal to attribute malicious motives to Paine, other respondents were not quite so charitable, and they saw a Satanic influence at work behind *The Age of Reason.*[619] Irish schoolmaster Elijah Wallace, for example, makes the most direct charge linking Paine and his reputation to demonic machinations. Wallace, whose *Universal Alarm* is cast in starkly apocalyptic terms, is hardly surprised that Paine is the "generalissimo" of the anti-Christian forces that are spreading throughout the world.[620] Indeed, owing to the "celebrity his former writings had gained him," Paine is made a "fitter instrument in the hand and under the influence of the grand adversary of mankind (original and inherent evil), to propagate and disseminate principles seemingly strong, and subversive of all that God has done for fallen mankind." Wallace even goes so far as to call Paine the "*Antichrist long foretold.*"[621] While not quite so apocalyptic-minded, the pseudonymous American Citizen demonizes Paine by referring to the "cloven-foot of your evil intentions" in attempting to spread infidelity throughout society.[622] The demonic influence on Paine also weighs heavily on the mind of the vitriolic

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[618] Bentley, *Reason and Revelation,* 2. Bentley agrees with Paine on his attack on the corruptions of an established church and also that learning dead languages is a complete "waste of time and money."(15)

[619] The demonization of Paine was not limited to his forays into religion, and a brimstone pall was cast around Paine before *The Age of Reason* was ever published. For example, during the Rights of Man controversy in Britain, a broadsheet appeared under the title *Intercepted Correspondence From Satan to Citizen Paine* ([London]: n.p., [1792]) which has Satan giving Paine advice on how to spread his ruinous and seditious French-inspired principles throughout Europe. See Figure 2 on page 228 of this dissertation.

[620] Elijah Wallace, *Universal Alarm, or Age of Restoration. Wherein Theology is Unmasked, ... Being a Final Answer to Mr. Thomas Paine's Age of Reason, -- and a full and final Refutation of all Atheistical, Deistical or Antichristian Dogmas, Principles or Opinions whatsoever, that have been or may hereafter by asserted or maintained, from Adam down to the Conclusion of the Millennium. Including such a Body of Divinity, or System of Christian Doctrine, as cannot be overthrown or refuted by Mahometans, Pagans, Jews, Infidels, Heathens, or Proselytes of Paine. Vol. I By Elijah Wallace,, of the City of Dublin, School-Master* (Dublin: Printed for the author, 1798), xii. For Wallace, the antichristian forces are " Mahometans, Heathens, Jews, Infidels, Atheists, Deists and Theists, with Tom Paine at the head of them."(xiv)

[621] Ibid., xiv, 307.

[622] American Citizen, *A Letter to Thomas Paine,* 3.

Delaware Waggoner, who throughout his *An Investigation of That False, Fabulous and Blasphemous Misrepresentation of Truth* casts Paine as a "lover of darkness rather than light" whose "deeds are evil." The Delaware Waggoner comes to no other conclusion except that in writing *The Age of Reason* Paine has shown himself to really be "a servant of the devil."[623] Thomas Dutton, the poet and pro-Paine Deist who penned *A Vindication of the Age of Reason,* commented on the demonizing epithets that were flung at Paine in the wake of *The Age of Reason*. Dutton points out that every "disgraceful epithet of abuse was conferred with liberal hand upon the author" with terms such as "Deist, Atheist, Infidel, the Apostle of Beelzebub, the Agent of Lucifer." Dutton sees these epithets as a definite shift in emphasis, and he wryly notes that the religious epithets have now succeeded the epithets "Jacobin, Leveller, Anarchist, Revolutionist, Rebel," that had previously been flung towards Paine on account of his politics.[624]

Yet in trying to discern the motivation behind *The Age of Reason*, there are those who looked beyond any purported Satanic or demonic influences, and looked rather to flaws in Paine's character to account for his recent religious ranting. By the middle of the 1790s (and probably a good bit earlier) Paine had gotten the reputation for being a hard and heavy drinker, and a few of the respondents to *The Age of Reason* use this as a way to partially account for both the combatively blasphemous style and the fallaciousness of *The Age of Reason*.[625] One of the most common charges against *The Age of Reason* was that Paine had lost use of his rational faculties. The references to Paine being a drunkard, and that alcohol has impaired his ability to

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[623] Delaware Waggoner [David Nelson?], *An Investigation of that False, Fabulous and Blasphemous Misrepresentation of Truth, Set Forth by Thomas Paine*, 38, 13.
[624] Dutton, *A Vindication of The Age of Reason, by Thomas Paine*, 6.
[625] Paine's reputation as a slovenly drunkard would have a long life, especially after the scurrilous 1809 biography of Paine written by James Cheetham hammered this point home. Nearly every subsequent biographer has had to deal in some way with this issue, and Paine's most enthusiastic biographer Moncure D. Conway devoted almost an entire chapter trying to debunk what he saw as the scurrilous and untrue myth that Paine was a licentious, unkempt drunk. See Chapter 19 (volume 2) of Conway's *The Life of Thomas Paine*.(New York: Putnam, 1893)

reason correctly and dispassionately, form a sub-section of this larger argument about the irrationality of Paine's theology. The pseudonymous "Theocrat," writing in *The Brush of Sound Reason,* holds much of *The Age of Reason* to be based on unsound reason, and the author points out the inconsistencies which are rife in *The Age of Reason*. These he chalks up to either the "irregular sallies of a disordered imagination" or to the "effects of [Paine] making too free with the wine of France."[626] The English Quaker Jeremiah Waring similarly portrays Paine as having "a mind depraved to an extreme," and intimates that Paine's characterization of the Bible "is so unwarrantably rash and untrue, that one can hardly believe it could be written by any *sober* man."[627]

Paine's opponents are able to hit him on two levels with charges of drunkenness. On the one hand, they subvert his qualifications to offer any opinions about religion, and on the other hand they question his ability to argue consistently. They argue that Paine is morally deficient for his vice, and thereby he is obviously unqualified to discuss topics of religion and morality (which were taken to be part of the same thing). One respondent even goes so far as to point out that Paine is actually proof positive as to the very moral bankruptcy of Deism itself. Railing more generally against Deism as a danger to society, the American Citizen writes that "Deism saps the very foundation of all morality…lust, revenge and every thing destructive to the happiness of society is encouraged by this impious system." Eager to provide proof of this statement, the American Citizen points to the "shameful immoralities" of Deists: "Rousseau, in his younger years was a thief, in his middle age an adulterer, Franklin, the best man among them,

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[626] Theocrat, *The Brush of Sound Reason, Applyed to the Cobweb of Infidelity, or, Thomas Paine's Reason Proved False, in Few Words; Being a Brief Reply to The Age of Reason, Part 2d. In a Letter to a Deist. By a Theocrat. To Which is Added, a Letter to an Arminian, on the Subject of the Divine Decrees. By the Same* (Chambersburg, [PA]: Printed by Dover & Harper, 1796), 13.

[627] Jeremiah Waring, *Three Letters Addressed to the Readers of Paine's Age of Reason. By One of the People Called Christians* (London: Printed forf Darton and Harvey, No. 55 Gracechurch-Street; J. Matthews, Near Northumberland-House, Strand; and J. Wright, Opposite Bond-Street, Picadilly, 1797), 14, 13.

was a whoremaster, and Tom Paine is a drunkard."[628] So too, Uzal Ogden takes Paine's penchant for the bottle as a "well know fact, that, unhappily, Mr. Paine is a drunkard." While Ogden righteously points this out as a character flaw that is particularly common among Deists, he makes that related argument that Paine's attack on the Bible may in part be because the "refulgent light of Divine Revelation gave too much pain to his reddened EYES of intemperance, and therefore, in hopes of obtaining ease, closed them against the sun-beams of the gospel."[629] The truth of the Gospel, Ogden surmises, is too much for Paine's liquor-addled brain to accept, and he speculates that it likely that Paine will "drag out the remainder of his days in infidelity, guilt and wretchedness, and leave the world, either in stupid insensibility, or in a state of horror, without the least rational hope of future happiness."[630]

On a more basic level, the very tone of *The Age of Reason*, with its bombast and blasphemies, is little more than the ravings of someone who has clearly had too much to drink. A tongue-in-cheek letter purportedly defending Paine and *The Age of Reason* that appeared in the *Connecticut Courant* has a licentious member of the "Irreligious Society" state that "Tom Paine is not to be abused if he does get drunk, and blaspheme the Bible—it is one of the *rights of man* to get drunk, and blaspheme."[631] Inebriation, it would seem, is the godfather of blasphemy, a sentiment driven home by the English Baptist minister Andrew Fuller who takes it as a well known fact not just that Paine is a "profane swearer, and a drunkard" but that "religion was his favourite topic when intoxicated." The "scurrility" of *The Age of Reason* leads Fuller to the

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[628] American Citizen, *A Letter to Thomas Paine*, 11-12.
[629] Ogden, *Antidote to Deism*, vol 1: 15.
[630] Ibid., vol 2: 297-98.
[631] Tipping off the reader that this letter is satirical is the correspondents name is "Crupper," which was a colloquial term for the rear-end of a horse. Additionally, the article is full of humorous exaggerations, and Crupper is portrayed as an ignorant and libertine fool. For example, he refers to a Deist as "that Frenchman (I can't spell his name)" and he admits that he admires *The Age of Reason* because it helps to justify his debauchery. *Connecticut Courant*, February 2, 1795.

conclusion that "it is not improbable that [Paine] was frequently in this situation while writing his Age of Reason."[632]

Paine's love of the bottle would find its way even into novelistic form. The American author Royall Tyler, in his novel *The Algerine Captive* (1797) gives a similar accounting of the alcoholic underpinnings of Paine's religious creed. In a series of chapters in the first, and certainly more lighthearted part of the novel, Tyler's globe-trotting narrator Updike Underhill relates a time when he met the "celebrated" Thomas Paine in London.[633] The picture of Paine that Tyler paints is one that is humorously unflattering, and he pokes fun at Paine's out-of-date and worn clothing, and his "mean and contemptible" visage. As for Paine's demeanor, Tyler describes it as erratic and "subject to the extreme of low, and highly exhilarated spirits."[634] While it is clear that Tyler's portrayal of Paine is meant to belittle the man and to show him as an object not worthy of much respect, Tyler nonetheless shows the typical American ambivalence to Paine by praising him as the "republican apostle" of the American Revolution.[635] Despite Tyler's parody of Paine, there remains a reverence for him that is tinged with a note of sadness for the state in which Underhill finds him in London. Paine is a tragic figure whose former glories have been eclipsed by his continual seeking to "overturn ancient opinions of government and religion."[636] Tyler has Underhill cast about for a general explanation for Paine's sorry state and specifically to account for *The Age of Reason*. Underhill relates that in all of the time that he spent with Paine, "I never heard him express the least doubt of, or cast the smallest reflection upon revealed religion," and he glowingly recalls how Paine himself "quoted liberally from the

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[632] Fuller, *The Gospel its Own Witness* , 110.
[633] Royall Tyler, *The Algerine Captive* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 87.
[634] Ibid., 88.
[635] Ibid., 91.
[636] Ibid., 87.

scriptures, in his *Common Sense*." How then, could Paine, hero of the American cause, come to publish such a "morsel of infidelity?" Although Underhill states that he is "at a loss to conjecture," he nevertheless hits on one answer that is the most likely solution: that Paine's rants against religion are "only an outrage of wine," and it is in the alehouse that he "most vigorously assaults the authority of the prophets, and laughs most loudly at the gospel, when in his cups."[637] While Underhill had already indicated that he personally never heard Paine say the slightest word disparaging religion, he relates that he has it on good authority that "Mr. Paine's tongue used to flow most freely against revealed religion, when he was most intoxicated."[638]

Paine's love of liquor is certainly not the only character flaw that his opponents give to account for the tone and content of *The Age of Reason*. Andrew Broaddus, for example, thinks that Paine is basically a publicity seeker who is unable to live in the shadows and craves the limelight of controversy. Broaddus, who as we have seen, has a sincere admiration for Paine's political writings, nevertheless feels the need to knock Paine off his lofty pedestal by reminding his readers that Paine should not be elevated to too-heroic heights, since Paine, "like other men, is a depraved mortal; and ambition, which dwells more or less in all aspiring characters is, like avarice, never satisfied." Such insatiable ambition has led Paine to venture onto topics for which he is unqualified, and by moving away from the political sphere, Paine "seems desirous to move and shine in an orbit which does not belong to him."[639] Paine's ambition may be partly the reason that Broaddus admits that the best way to deal with *The Age of Reason* is to ignore it—so as to not to give Paine the satisfaction of having his ambitious pride puffed up even more by the attention that it will receive. In similar fashion, British authors such as the Irish Catholic priest

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[637] Ibid., 91.
[638] In a footnote, Tyler indicates his source as a "Mr. Johnson, a respectable bookseller in St. Paul's church yard, London." Ibid., 92.
[639] Broaddus, *The Age of Reason & Revelation*, 8.

William Gahan and Bristol Unitarian John Estlin characterize Paine as a publicity seeker who has mistaken popularity for competence. Gahan charges that by "having acquired some celebrity by his political writings" Paine has audaciously misled himself into thinking that he should "try his hand at Theology…as if he thought the fame of his name alone was sufficient to sanction whatever came from his pen."[640] John Estlin, in his *Evidences of Revealed Religion* likewise charges that Paine's "considerable celebrity in the political world" has lead him to believe that he has "competency to discuss the subject of revealed religion, although it is evident, that he is perfectly unacquainted both with its nature and evidence."[641] Paine's international celebrity not only serves as a bait-and-switch lure for his sympathetic readers, but is also a reason that he has turned his pen to religious topics. With an over-inflated pride in his own capabilities, brought on by the popularity of his previous writings, Paine has clearly ventured into territory for which he is unqualified.

In addition to dismissing *The Age of Reason* as nothing more than a ploy to garner more popularity, some respondents also charge that Paine wrote *The Age of Reason* as a way to become rich. The Irish schoolmaster James Bourk, who shows little admiration for any of Paine's writings, sees the proximate cause of *The Age of Reason* as a deep-seated vanity that has driven Paine to be a seeker of "singularity, popularity and riches," a point that he hammers home throughout his *An Answer to a Late Pamphlet Entitled, Paine's Age of Reason.*[642] In like

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[640] Gahan, *Youth Instructed in the Grounds of the Christian Religion* , 148.
[641] Estlin, *Evidences of Revealed Religion* , 10.
[642] James Bourk, *An Answer to a Late Pamphlet Entitled, Paine's Age of Reason. By James Bourk, Classical and Commercial School-Master, Cork* (Cork: Printed by Joseph Haly, Skiddy's-Castle-Lane, [1798?]), 20. Bourk's work gives the most sustained attempt at trying to account for *The Age of Reason*, although he ties this in with his larger project of trying to really understand Paine's "bent of mind". While Paine's vanity may be the proximate cause of *The Age of Reason*, Bourk portrays Paine as displaying the characteristics of mental aberration, caused by both physical and psychological influences. Bourk initially speculates that the "defects of your mind may be accidentally from that fever you had, which, I believe, has plundered your reason."(31) Yet Bourk's work delves deeper for a psychological analysis of Paine, and he intimates that Paine's continual international wanderings have

manner, Lutheran minister G.W. Snyder holds that *The Age of Reason* sprang from Paine's desire for popularity and out of monetary concerns. In *The Age of Reason Unreasonable* Snyder speculates that in writing *The Age of Reason*, Paine's has shown some severe character flaws, most notably that his judgment is "blinded by passion, by ambition, by an expectation of becoming famous."[643] Snyder sees Paine's ambition and his desire for popularity as leading him to have a delusional and misplaced sense of his own capabilities, and it is therefore "no wonder that Mr. Paine has frequently overshot the mark."[644] Yet in casting about for a reason as to why Paine has attacked Christianity and revealed religion so forcefully, Snyder opines that perhaps "we come nearest the truth, when we suppose his design in attacking both Bible and priests to have been, to procure a livelihood for himself in the French convention."[645]

In Chapter 3 I discussed how the respondents to *The Age of Reason* emphasized Paine's part in the French Revolution in order to show how he forms a nexus of religious and political radicalism that has its logical outcome in the Terror. Yet Snyder here links *The Age of Reason* to its French context as a way to explain Paine's motivation for writing *The Age of Reason*, as well as to undercut the validity of his arguments. Snyder was replying to the second part of *The Age of Reason*, which was published after Paine was released from the Luxembourg prison, and he intimates that Paine wrote the second part of *The Age of Reason* to get back in the good graces of a French government that was still, even after the execution of Robespierre, hostile to the

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affected his mental capacities—Paine's physical world is in such a continual state of flux that it has impacted his brain. Paine's various intellectual pursuits, his intellectual peregrinations, have likewise been deleterious for his mental state—Paine likes to push boundaries on so many topics, in the spirit of "novelty and innovation"(30) that this has had the negative effect of making his mind unstable. Yet above and beyond Bourk's physical/psychological analysis he looks to a strongly mitigating factor which is Paine's penchant for being contrary, his fundamental "spirit of contradiction," which "adds more to the variety and uncertainty of your temper" than any other cause.(27)

[643] Snyder, *The Age of Reason Unreasonable*, 78. It is not coincidental that Snyder compares ambition and avarice as character flaws that have similar trajectories.

[644] Ibid., 185.

[645] Ibid., 64.

Christian religion.[646] The infidelity of the French (as either a cause of the Revolution itself or as the reason it took such a bloody course) is a prevalent theme throughout both the British and American responses to Paine, and as Snyder implies, Paine wrote *The Age of Reason* with the hopes of ingratiating himself to his fellow Deists (or atheists) in the French government for his own advancement.

Yet some of the respondents to the first part of *The Age of Reason*, who wrote their responses during Paine's stint in the Luxembourg (or soon after his release), charge that Paine wrote the book in a failed attempt to stay out of prison by showing the French leadership that he was as much an infidel as they. A 1794 review of the *The Age of Reason* that appeared in the *English Review* argued that Paine's work could be best characterized as a placatory offering "at the shrine of the *Mountain,"* a reference to the Montagnard faction in the French Assembly. As an overt attempt to make "peace with the ruling party," Paine penned his attack on Christianity as the "first point, where they and he could agree."[647] The New Jersey cleric Uzal Ogden makes a similar argument by portraying *The Age of Reason* as Paine's bold-faced attempt to ingratiate himself with the National Convention in a futile attempt to forestall being thrown into prison. For Ogden, *The Age of Reason* served as a public declaration that Paine was "at least, as good a Deist as any of them, and, therefore, perfectly French and Patriotic, with regard to his religious opinions."[648]

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[646] Snyder lays much of the blame for the Terror on the "tyranny of Robespierre and his party," yet he does not offer much hope that the execution of Robespierre marked a fundamental shift in the anti-Christianity policy of the French government. Snyder challenges the "pious moral critic" Paine to "look about a few moments at his present home: the broom of moral atheism has not yet swept off the gore that flowed from the establishment of the new religion…what else but assassinations, treacheries and cruelties, will the history of the French revolution exhibit." Ibid., 115, 112.

[647] *English Review* 23 (1794): 351.

[648] Ogden, *Antidote to Deism*, vol 1: 14.

While Ogden and the *English Review* characterized *The Age of Reason* as Paine proving his infidel credentials in order to stay out of jail, other respondents cast the menacing shadow of the guillotine as Paine's primary impetus for so disparaging revealed religion. Ebenezer Bradford, who was a devotee of Paine's political writings, tries to account for the "absurd and contradictory" nature of Paine's theological creed, and he speculates that "by his blasphemous writings against the Scriptures," Paine hoped to "conciliate the favour of the French Deists, and save his head from the Guillotine."[649] The *Gazette of the United States* in 1794 strikes a similar note, arguing that Paine hoped that *The Age of Reason* would help "destroy the Christian religion in United America" much as has already been done in France. This, the reviewer notes, would be an "essential service" to the French cause, and the still-imprisoned Paine, whose mind was "constantly haunted with the dreadful image of the guillotine" hoped that *The Age of Reason* would thereby "entitle the author to a pardon and his liberty." [650]

William Cobbett gives the most protracted explanation of how the genesis of *The Age of Reason* is related to revolutionary France. Cobbett portrays Paine as being preternaturally fond of the chaos of insurrection, which is what initially lured him away from the increasingly dull post-Revolutionary America to the anarchy of the French Republic. Although the French initially heralded Paine upon his arrival, his star soon began to wane and he found himself on the

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[649] Bradford, *Mr. Thomas Paine's Trial*, 40.

[650] "For the Gazette of the United States," *Gazette of the United States and Daily Evening Advertiser* 6:81, no. September 15 (1794): 2. While these respondents speak in more general terms about French infidelity, others single out Robespierre as the arch-infidel who would most likely be swayed by the blasphemies of *The Age of Reason*. For example, the anonymous American author of a 1795 response taunts that while Paine does not evince any fear of God by writing the first part of *The Age of Reason*, he nevertheless is "capable of fear." Paine is certainly terrified of the "ghastly edge of the guillotine," but the "real cause of this fear was Roberspierre [sic]," who had thrown him in prison. Paine therefore wrote *The Age of Reason* to save his neck by attempting to mollify Robespierre's "angry passions," as the Deism of the work "exactly fitted to the taste and genius of that bloody minded man." See *Observations on 1st. The Chronology of Scripture. 2d. Strictures on The Age of Reason. 3d. The Evidence Which Reason, Unassisted by Revelation, Affords us with Respect to the Nature and Properties of the Soul of Man. 4th. Arguments in Support of the Opinion, that the Soul is Inactive and Unconscious from Death to the Resurrection, Derived from Scripture* (New-York: Printed by Thomas Greenleaf, 1795), 60.

wrong side of the political fence when Danton, Robespierre and the Jacobins came to power and threw him into prison. Describing Danton and Robespierre as being "incessantly occupied in extirpating the small remains of Christianity" among the French people, Cobbett argues that Paine wrote *The Age of Reason* to save his neck from the guillotine by "flatter[ing] their vanity and further[ing] their execrable views." While Cobbett points to Paine's instinct for self-preservation as the real impetus behind the first part of *The Age of Reason*, Cobbett was savvy enough to realize that this would not account for the second part of the work, which was written after Paine was safely out of jail. To account for the second part of *The Age of Reason,* Cobbett gives two explanations, the first being a combination of Paine's obstinacy and his love of publicity. In writing part one, "the die was cast…and there was no recalling it," so Cobbett imagines that in writing the second part, Paine merely carried on with the same theme in order to further establish his "pretensions to infamy." But beyond a reputational infamy, Paine wrote the second part with the simple aim of making money. Since he had fallen so out of favor with the French government, Paine found himself a "poor, half-starved despised pretender," and the second part of *The Age of Reason* was written for financial gain. With wonderful pithiness, Cobbett writes that the "Second Part of the Age of Reason [Paine] wrote for a living and the First Part he wrote for his life."[651]

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[651] William Cobbett, "Paine's Age of Reason." *Political Censor* 4 (May, 1796). Royal Tyler's novelistic narrator Updike Underhill also has difficulties in trying to account for the second part of *The Age of Reason*. Like Cobbett, Underhill speculates that Paine wrote the first part of the work to save his life, hoping that by "annihilating revealed religion" he might appeal to the "diabolical pleasure" of Robespierre and his "inhuman associates." Underhill even admits that once Paine was out of prison, "an apology was expected" in the form of a recantation of the Deism of *The Age of Reason.* Not only did such an apology fail to appear, but the "missionary of vice has proceeded proselyting" by publishing the second part of *The Age of Reason*. As I have shown, Underhill ultimately chalks up Paine's hostility to Christianity and revealed religion to excessive drinking. Tyler, *The Algerine Captive*: 91-2.

5.5 CONCLUSION

As I discussed in Chapter 3, the repeated allusions to Paine's French connections were an easy way for his respondents to score points against Deism generally and *The Age of Reason* specifically by arguing that the French Revolution was the proof of the dangers of Deism. Yet there is also some sense that the responders to *The Age of Reason* are trying to account for *The Age of Reason* by placing Paine in a French context. Paine's respondents also tie him to France as a way to account for *The Age of Reason*, characterizing it as having been motivated by his desire to show the French that he was as much an infidel as they, and therefore should be spared from prison and the guillotine. This is not to say that Paine's opponents were trying to exculpate him from the Deism of *The Age of Reason*, especially since, as Cobbett succinctly points out, Paine wrote the second part of *The Age of Reason* after he was safely out of prison. Yet the allusions to Paine's French connections form part of the larger and persistent attempts by the responders to *The Age of Reason* to account for Paine's attack on the Bible, Christianity and revealed religion. Almost no respondents saw Paine as being motivated by a sincere desire for discovering religious truth. Instead, his respondents offer a variety of other motivations to account for *The Age of Reason*-- demonic influences, his fondness for drink, a desire for popularity, or self-preservation. Edward Larkin is certainly correct when he notes that in some responses to *The Age of Reason,* Paine's "character not his ideas became the subject of contention." Paine's ideas *were* strongly challenged, but his respondents frequently focused on the personal details of Paine's character and on his biography.[652] Indeed, in the preface to the

[652] Larkin, *Thomas Paine and the Literature of Revolution*: 150. Larkin suggests that the reason for the focus on Paine's character is actually due to a rhetorical strategy of Paine's that backfired. Larkin argues that throughout his career as an author Paine was challenging the assumption of the "disinterestedness" of the public sphere. For Paine,

second part of *The Age of Reason* Paine comments on the very personal nature of the responses when he baits his opponents to continue to "write against the work, *and against me,* as much as they please."[653]

Lurking behind these attempts to account for *The Age of Reason* lies an anxiety over the allure of Paine's name and his reputation—that much of what makes *The Age of Reason* such a pernicious book is that Paine was its author. By speculating on Paine's motivations for writing *The Age of Reason,* his respondents brought the fight to a personal level that had less to do with Paine's arguments and more to do with Paine and his reputation. Authors such as William Cobbett, who had no qualms about detesting both Paine's politics and his religion, nevertheless realized that Paine's reputation was such that a great many people would read his book. Cobbett not only criticized those who showed any fondness for Paine, but he published scurrilous biographical details about Paine to reveal the "true" Paine who could more easily be dismissed. Whereas Cobbett tried to show that Paine's inherent radicalism was the source for both his revolutionary republicanism and Deism, other respondents who looked more favorably upon Paine's political writings sought to drive a wedge between his politics and religion. This is especially true in the American response, which shows an overarching ambivalence towards Paine, such that nearly every American respondent felt the need to at least pay some respect to

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anonymity or pseudonymity was not, as assumed, necessarily an authorial virtue since it was an oblique and covert strategy of masking interestedness. For Paine, we need to know something about the author to be able to judge just where his interest lie and how it biases his account. Yet Larkin rightly argues that Paine never really grasped the full implications of this, and was therefore unable to control his public image and his character was often made the subject of abuse. Although he deigned to respond to the *ad hominem* attacks, by his own rhetoric Paine made his "own person a legitimate topic of discussion in the debates about the political, social, and economic policies he advanced"(151). While Larkin may be correct that Paine opened himself up to personal attacks by his opponents owing to his critique of the assumptions of the public sphere, I am arguing that in the responses to *The Age of Reason* the details of Paine's character served the purpose of counteracting the reputational lure of his reputation.

[653] Thomas Paine, part two of *The Age of Reason*, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine,* vol 1:517 (my italics). Paine then subsequently eggs his opponents on by saying that by writing against him they are actually doing him a service and he therefore "can have no objection that they write on."

the patriot Paine of *Common Sense* and the American Revolution. None could deny that Paine's reputation carried great weight, and as Uzal Ogden charges, it is the celebrity of Paine's name alone that has caused *The Age of Reason* to be "read by many persons." Indeed, Ogden speculates that had *The Age of Reason* been written by "almost any other person… it is reasonable to believe it would have been unnoticed!"[654] There is a clear sense of perplexity and betrayal in the American response (as well as in some of the British responders who were sympathetic to Paine's politics) that in writing *The Age of Reason*, Paine has ventured into dangerous waters, drawing in too many followers by their prior esteem for him. Nearly all of the Americans, and a few of the British, admitted their previous fondness for and admiration of Paine; but along with this praise goes the unfavorable comparison to the Paine of *The Age of Reason*. Some American and British authors such as Andrew Broaddus, William Jackson, Gilbert Wakefield, and John Abernethy, bifurcated Paine into a venerated political writer and a despised theologian. Others, such as Elhanan Winchester, G.W. Snyder and the American Citizen, pointed out the fundamental incongruity between Paine's seeming reverence for Biblical imagery in his political writings and his shocking about-face in *The Age of Reason*. James Tytler and John Malham took such incongruities to be so striking that they actually attempted to re-integrate a bifurcated Paine by intimating that *The Age of Reason* may not have actually been written by Paine. Donald Fraser even took it upon himself to put words in Paine's mouth by publishing Paine's spurious "recantation" of Deism. Still others attempted to account for *The Age of Reason* by offering explanations for such incongruity—that the devil, alcohol, desire for fame (or infamy), or fear of the guillotine were responsible for Paine's attacks on revealed religion. All of these are strategies that acknowledged that Paine's reputation carried a lot of

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[654] Ogden, *Antidote to Deism*, vol 2, 270.

weight, and that subsequently sought to counteract his reputation by driving a wedge between the old Paine and the new Paine. Part of the danger of *The Age of Reason* is that Paine wrote it. His opponents not only recognized this, but they employed a variety of rhetorical strategies to counteract the pull of Paine's name.

6.0 CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have focused on the rhetorical contours of the reaction to *The Age of Reason* to show how its respondents had to deal with a variety of different issues that were not necessarily related to Paine's Deistic arguments. Indeed, as many of the respondents were exasperatedly fond of pointing out, refuting *The Age of Reason* was an easy task because its hackneyed arguments had already been sufficiently and repeatedly invalidated over the course of the previous century. Yet to fully counteract the poison of *The Age of Reason* was quite another matter, which took much more than just rational argumentation against Paine. In the preceding chapters, rather than focusing on the arguments employed against Paine's Deism *per se*, I have shown the different ways that Paine's respondents sought to raise a red flag against *The Age of Reason* and how they went about administering an antidote to the spreading poison of its infidelity. In Chapter 2 I traced the publication history of *The Age of Reason*, emphasizing how the details of its publication became a part of the rhetoric his respondents used against the book. In Chapter 3 I showed how Paine's opponents continually linked him to Deistic forbearers to discredit his claims for any sort of originality and to impugn his capability as a serious thinker. The respondents claim, via their own stated familiarity with the history of Deism, an intellectual legitimacy for their own works that Paine, who seemingly thinks he is arguing something new, does not possess. Yet on a deeper level, Paine's respondents are connecting Paine to his Deistic genealogy as a way of highlighting the dangerously deleterious effects that Deism has on both

the personal and societal level, with the French Revolution serving as the empirical proof of Deism unleashed. The stakes could scarcely have been higher, with the looming specter of a French-inspired Deism that had seemingly hitched its cart to radical republicanism, the end result of which could be a replay of the bloodlust of the Terror. Paine's respondents realized that *The Age of Reason* was not the only irreligious book in circulation, nor was it particularly novel in its arguments. However, they did characterize it as a primary vehicle contaminating the Christian polity, especially among the lower orders and other untrustworthy readers. Chapter 4 focused more specifically on how Paine's respondents accounted for the popularity of *The Age of Reason*. One of the most oft-stated critiques of the book was about Paine's writing style and his intended audience. The respondents' certainty that the book could have little effect on any person of even modest education is matched with a deep-seated concern that *The Age of Reason* was indeed winning Deistic converts among a dangerous cadre: the young, the uneducated and the lower orders of society. The real novelty of *The Age of Reason* was not its arguments, but that it was written so as to appeal specifically to these untrustworthy readers. Paine's respondents thereby point to the numerous ways that the book was geared towards and was actually being read by such dangerous readers. While Paine's respondents make a lot of hay out of his vulgar style and his use of ridicule, irreverence, low humor, ignorant bravado, and buffoonery, a few do more than just fulminate; they try to beat Paine at his own game by penning responses written for and addressed to the same audience. Paine's readers could be left alone to decide on the dubious merits of *The Age of Reason*, but had to be shown, in language that they could understand, that Paine (and Deism more generally) did not have a leg to stand on. If *The Age of Reason* is irreligion made easy, then what is needed is a corresponding "Christian apologetics made easy," and Paine's untrustworthy readers had to be guided back into the

Christian fold by being shown that Paine is an ill-educated pretender, that *The Age of Reason* is spurious, that Deism is dangerous, and that Christian doctrine has nothing to fear from Deist attacks.

Paine's respondents had to contend not just with the inherent dangers of *The Age of Reason*, but they also had to deal with Paine's reputation, which was part of the allure of the book. In Chapter 5, I examined the different ways that Paine's respondents expressed their concerns about Paine's popularity through the rhetorical strategies intended to defuse the allure of his reputation. Building from the wide popularity of *Common Sense* and *Rights of Man*, Paine's notoriety was well established. Depending on one's political views, he was either a dangerously subversive radical or a champion of the rights of the common man. Once again, Paine's readers were supposedly being led to Deism not by the merits of *The Age of Reason* (which they cannot satisfactorily judge for themselves), but by their willingness to follow Paine wherever he may lead. Many respondents, and especially the Americans, dealt with this by meeting Paine's reputation head-on. They acknowledged (and often praised) Paine for his political writings, but then warn that he has severely lapsed in writing *The Age of Reason*. Ambivalence towards Paine leads many respondents to bifurcate him as a vaunted political theorist on the one hand, but as a disgraceful religious saboteur on the other. Out of this rhetorical splitting of Paine flow various theories accounting for Paine's sudden venture into religious radicalism. What, many respondents wonder, can account for this "new" Paine who has so savagely attacked revealed religion? Since Paine's respondents feared that *The Age of Reason* was gaining such traction merely on the strength of its author's reputation, then impugning Paine could go a long way in undercutting the appeal of *The Age of Reason*. Surely there must be some other "real" reason that accounts for Paine's religious performance, and his

respondents variously describe him as an agent of the devil, an addle-brained drunkard, a vain publicity seeker, or a groveling sycophant trying to save his neck from the guillotine. By offering such theories of why Paine wrote *The Age of Reason*, his respondents are obliquely trying to damage not only his reputation, but also subvert the very legitimacy of *The Age of Reason*.

In this dissertation I have focused on how Paine's respondents characterized him, his Deism, and his book. This is not to say that the respondents ignored the arguments that Paine offered in *The Age of Reason* or thought them completely unworthy of response. With only a few exceptions, respondents to *The Age of Reason* did engage with the actual arguments that Paine made, and usually their defenses of the Bible and revelation formed the central part of their responses. As would be expected with such wide and various authorship, some respondents offered more compelling or sophisticated defenses of revealed religion than others. Some certainly offered more colorfully biting and hostile barbs against Paine and *The Age of Reason*, and against Deists and religious infidels more generally. Yet as I have shown, the alarmism over *The Age of Reason* stemmed from the perception that *The Age of Reason* was popularizing Deism on the basis of its tone and style, and that infidelity was riding the coat-tails of Paine's reputation and popularity. Indeed, I believe that it is precisely these issues, combined with the perception that religious infidelity lay at the heart of the French Revolution, that mobilized such a large and heated reaction to *The Age of Reason*. While the controversy over *The Age of Reason* may not have been nearly as extensive as that surrounding *Rights of Man*, the reaction was still wide-ranging, and as historian Alfred Young has suggested, "if the number of titles published in opposition [to *The Age of Reason*] is any measure, it stirred up more passionate responses" than

Rights of Man.[655] To sufficiently discredit *The Age of Reason* took more than just rebutting it, it entailed meeting it on various fronts. It meant highlighting precisely how *The Age of Reason* was dangerous and what Deism implied. It meant calling attention to Paine's intended audience and writing responses accordingly. It meant having to deal not just with Paine's ideas, but with his international celebrity.

6.1 AUTHORSHIP AND AUDIENCE IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Beyond just seeing the rhetorical strategies of Paine's respondents as a way to both call attention to and defuse the danger of *The Age of Reason,* the rhetoric of Paine's respondents also shows some of the fundamental assumptions about print culture of the late eighteenth century. In the remaining pages I will suggest that the responses to *The Age of Reason* reveal the assumptions and normative principles by which "legitimate" authors were expected to write, and who was capable and qualified to read them. Much of the rhetoric against *The Age of Reason* should be seen as an attempt to invalidate the work from any serious consideration by severely questioning its inclusion in the public sphere. Throughout the replies to *The Age of Reason* we see Paine's opponents calling him out for transgressing the boundaries of authorial legitimacy.

Jürgen Habermas' theory of the *bourgeois public sphere* helps to frame much of the rhetoric leveled against Paine. The theories that Habermas offers in his influential *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* are complex and a full explication of them would be

[655] Young, "Common Sense and the Rights of Man in America," 424. Young may be correct on this point on the American side of the case, but one would be hard-pressed to make a similar argument for the British side of things, since *Rights of Man* engendered a hugely passionate response in Britain that went well beyond published tracts.

beyond the scope of this dissertation.[656] Yet his central idea of the public sphere as a particular realm of discourse is useful in understanding why Paine's respondents took Paine to task for his tone, style and his intended audience. For Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere emerged in the eighteenth century out of a new print culture that consisted not only of the modes of communication (newspapers, books, pamphlets) but also the institutions (clubs, coffee houses, salons, libraries, reading societies) that fostered discussion of public affairs. The public sphere was a discursive space in which private individuals came together as a public to discuss important political and social matters. Through their reading, writing, and discussion, this public sphere served as a counterweight to the power of the state. Yet what distinguished the public sphere and gave it persuasive power was that it was fashioned out of the ideals of universality of access, egalitarianism, impartiality, and rational-critical debate. As a participant in the public sphere, ones individuality was transcended, with personal interestedness supposedly giving way to dispassionate argumentation that had rational criticism as the operative norm. Participants in the public sphere became abstracted individuals, and what mattered was not their background, their social standing, or any personal stakes, but rather the cogency and validity of their arguments in what came to be called the "republic of letters." The public sphere's operating norms of universality, egalitarianism, impartiality, and rationality are what gave it such persuasive power, since these norms implied a consensus of a reasoning public that came to

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[656] Although the *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* appeared (in German as *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*) in 1962, it did not gain much attention among British and American historians until the mid-1980s, and it was only after it was translated into English in 1989 that non-German scholars really began to employ Habermas' theories about the *bourgeois public sphere* as a tool for analysis. For a good introduction to Habermas' work, see Craig Calhoun, "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1992).

"appear as the very embodiment of impartial reason," and which could therefore not be ignored by the state.[657]

While Habermas' theories have met their fair share of scholarly criticism, they remain a touchstone for scholars studying eighteenth and nineteenth century print culture.[658] As historian of early American print culture Robert Gross has indicated, even though Habermas' theories may be severely limited, he nevertheless "set the agenda for recent research," and scholars from a variety of disciplines have used his framework in various ways.[659] One limitation of the theory, when applied to the controversy over *The Age of Reason,* is that Habermas seemingly limits the public sphere to topics that are overtly political. This does make some sense, in that Habermas sees the public sphere as an autonomous discursive space that is of private individuals who engage in rational-critical debate as a counterweight against the power of the state. Yet as some scholars have emphasized, there is often substantial political theorizing in ostensibly religious works, and they have argued for a more expansive conception of the public sphere that

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[657] Harold Mah, "Phantasies of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians," *Journal of Modern History* 72:1(2000): 178.

[658] For example, Feminist scholars such as Dena Goodman (*The Republic of Letters*, Cornell University Press, 1994) and Joan Landes (*Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution,* Cornell University Press, 1988) point out that the public sphere's supposed universality of access was highly gendered and was structured in such a way as to preclude participation by women. Habermas is open to this type of criticism, and he stresses that an idealized public sphere often contained elements that sought to exclude rather than include, and he notes that one of the primary yet unstated assumptions of the public sphere was that it's participants were to be drawn from propertied men with an education. Some scholars have criticized Habermas's theories for being too narrowly defined and have pushed for a conception of the public sphere that is more expansive and which includes subaltern groups and oppositional "counterpublics." For a defense of Habermas against this line of criticism, see Mah's "Phantasies of the Public Sphere." For some of the earliest and most cogent scholarly discussion of Habermas, see the essays in Craig Calhoun, ed. *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1992).

[659] Robert A. Gross, "Print and the Public Sphere in Early America," in *The State of American History,* ed. Melvyn Stokes (Oxford:: Berg Press, 2002), 247. Others who have been guardedly critical of historians' use of Habermas include: Ruth H. Bloch, "Inside and outside the Public Sphere," *William and Mary Quarterly* 62:1, no. January (2005); David Waldstreicher, "Two Cheers for the "Public Sphere"... and One for Historians' Skepticism," *William and Mary Quarterly* 62:1, no. January (2005).

recognizes the political nature of many religious works.[660] This is especially true of a work like *The Age of Reason*, especially due to Paine's primary reputation as a political writer. Paine's respondents were certainly not hesitant in pointing out the social and political ramifications of *The Age of Reason*, and as I have shown, they engaged in a good deal of theorizing about the relationship between religious infidelity and political radicalism. However much those who were sympathetic to Paine's political writings tried to drive a wedge between his political and religious writings, *The Age of Reason* is as much a political work as it is a religious one.[661]

What is revealing in the responses to *The Age of Reason* is that Paine's respondents are using the normative assumptions of the public sphere to undercut the book from serious consideration. The rhetoric that the respondents fling at Paine and *The Age of Reason* should be seen as a way of protecting the boundaries of the public sphere against an author who had transgressed its norms and assumptions. Indeed, there is occasionally a sense that writing on religious topics requires an even stricter adherence to the operative norms of the public sphere. Religion, as Paine's respondents hammer home, is a topic of ultimate importance that should be discussed on an even more elevated plane than that of political matters. Paine is roundly charged

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[660] In a 1993 article T.H. Breen has argued that Habermas and many historians have given too much primacy to political tracts as an integral part of the public sphere, and have not paid enough attention to the way that religious tracts also form a part of the rational-critical discourse of the public sphere. For Breen, the very public religious disputes arising during First Great Awakening in the American colonies are central to the creation of an American public sphere. Breen looks to the ways that colonial religious pamphleteers and authors used the rhetoric of "public opinion" and an assumed "common sense" to show the political assumptions and implications of the religious disputes. The American colonists, and especially New Englanders "explored political rights and liberties within a religious context that modern historians have defined as peripheral to the great constitutional debates of the revolutionary era."(64) Breen calls for more attention to be paid to this "religious public sphere," although on a more fundamental level he urges that the line between religious and political discourse should not be so rigidly drawn. See T.H. Breen, "Retrieving Common Sense: Rights, Liberties and the Religious Public Sphere in Late Eighteenth Century America," in *To Secure the Blessings of Liberty: Rights in American History* ed. Josephine F. Pacheco (Fairfax, VA: George Mason University Press 1993). See also Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England, 1760-1832* ; ———, "English Sermons and Tracts as Media of Debate on the French Revolution 1789-99."

[661] One of the main thrusts in Davidson and Scheick's book is to emphasize the continuity between Paine's political and religious writings, such that "*The Age of Reason* was, in short, a political treatise with a strong religious design." Davidson and Scheick, *Paine, Scripture and Authority: The Age of Reason as Religious and Political Idea*: 18.

with being ill qualified to even offer his opinion on religious topics, not only because he lacks the proper education, but also because he lacks the proper frame of mind to do so in a dispassionate and reasoned way. Such boundary maintenance is endemic throughout the responses to *The Age of Reason*, although it may be even more pronounced in the review periodicals, which were the self-appointed guardians of the public sphere. As Paul Keen has noted, editors of review journals saw their role as not just helping their readers to navigate the increasingly expanding and chaotic world of print, but they also saw their task as "preserving the coherence of the republic of letters as a unique cultural domain" against inexperienced or ignorant interlopers.[662] It is in the reviews that we see the rhetoric of an idealized dispassionate and reasoned republic of letters most vigorously promoted, and subsequently how *The Age of Reason* is ultimately breaking the rules. The periodical reviews almost universally condemn Paine for his lack of seriousness in approaching a topic of such importance, bred out of a lack of education or a lack of mental ability. For example, the liberally-minded *Analytical Review*, in its review of the first part of *The Age of Reason*, notes that Paine's work has already stirred up some controversy and that it had already received some harsh criticism. In a fundamental statement about the role of literature, the public sphere, and a reviewer's place in the republic of letters, the reviewer stresses that *The Age of Reason* should receive a "candid hearing" because it is part of "our duty to the public, and to the cause of truth, to give a report of the contents of Mr. P.'s work, with the same fidelity, with which we shall report the replies of his respondents." The reviewer, who comes across as having some Unitarian sympathies, concedes that although *The Age of Reason* has some important points regarding religion, Paine "appears ill qualified to do

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[662] Paul Keen, *The Crisis of Literature in the 1790s : Print Culture and the Public Sphere* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 117.

justice to the subject of revelation from his want of erudition."[663] In a similar manner, *the New Annual Register* takes pains to justify its treatment of a work that is "drawn up in that blunt and popular manner" and which is full of "forcible but unsupported assertions, which, by the ignorant and half-thinking, may be mistaken for arguments." Nevertheless, the reviewer holds that its one redeeming quality is that *The Age of Reason* has been "serviceable to the cause of Revelation, in provoking discussion: and from the most liberal and unrestrained discussion, nothing can arise that will excite alarms in the mind of the consistent friend to truth." [664] The silver lining of *The Age of Reason* is that it may promote more serious discussion on important topics, although Paine is little more than provocateur who is himself not engaging in such serious deliberation.

The restrained patience of the *Analytical Revie*w and the *New Annual Register* wears thin by the time these journals review the second part of *The Age of Reason*, and they intimate that because of his use of ridicule, Paine has proven that he is not a serious inquirer after the truth. The reviewer in the *Analytical Review* maintains some sense that it is still a necessary evil to review a work by an author whose "language is often not only arrogant, but scurrilous," and he blasts Paine for his irreverence on a topic that "ought at least to be treated with decent respect." Despite the scurrilities and arrogance endemic to the second part of *The Age of Reason*, the *Analytical Review* nevertheless justifies its review by stating that Paine's intemperate language does not immediately "lessen our obligation as literary purveyors, to report faithfully the substance of his objections." [665] The review in the *New Annual Register* strikes a similar chord by criticizing how the "disingenuousness" of the first part of *The Age of Reason* is further compounded by the second part's "degree of arrogance, indecency, and scurrility" which has

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[663] *Analytical Review* 19 (1794): 160, 165.
[664] *New Annual Register* 15(1794): 176-77.
[665] *Analytical Review* 22(1795): 499.

"disgraced the annals of controversy." Paine has violated the basic ground rules of controversial discourse, leading the reviewer (mindful of his own readership) to admit that he "cannot say what conclusion the dispassionate reader will draw from such conduct." [666] The role of the reviewer as a guide to the public sphere butts up against the reviewer's disdain for Paine's transgressing the norms of the public sphere.

These reviewers show a real commitment to the impartial rationality that supposedly marked the public sphere, even to the extent that they feel duty bound to candidly and truthfully review a work that itself transgresses these very boundaries. As the reviews in the *Analytical Review* and *New Annual Register* imply, one of the most serious defects of *The Age of Reason,* which nearly disqualifies it from serious consideration, is its irreverent tone. Other reviewers, as well as many of the respondents to *The Age of Reason,* make similar hay out of the book's tone to argue that its irreverence is indicative of Paine's lack of the necessary education to discuss religious matters. Moreover, Paine is of the completely wrong frame of mind to opine on a topic of such importance. For most of the respondents, religion is a serious topic deserving the utmost respect, and in no way admits to the type of ridicule, exaggeration, and irreverence that is characteristic of *The Age of Reason*. As such, Paine is disingenuous, leaving *The Age of Reason* disqualified from any sort of real consideration. The *Critical Review* for example charges that *The Age of Reason* is characterized by a "degree of profaneness which cannot be acceptable even to unbelievers of a philosophical and dispassionate turn of mind."[667] As such Paine's use of "ridicule, bombast, and puerility" proves that he has "not the temper of mind fit for a searcher after truth."[668] This sentiment is echoed in a series of pastoral letters from the *Protestant*

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[666] *New Annual Register* 16 (1795): [198].
[667] *Critical Review* 16(1796): 319.
[668] Ibid., 313.

Dissenter's Magazine which chides that the "degree of disingenuity[sic] and malignity" found in *The Age of Reason* is clear indication that Paine is unworthy to be considered a "man who wished to promote the cause of truth."[669]

In Chapter 3, I discussed how Paine's respondents frequently tied him to a Deistic heritage as a way to point out his unoriginality and to contrast the paltriness of *The Age of Reason* to an intellectual tradition that at one time had at least a modicum of intellectual respectability (if not credibility). Yet we should also see such references to Paine's unoriginality and his irreverence as a way to banish *The Age of Reason* from serious consideration in the public sphere. Paine has shown that he is not really a sincere seeker of truth and therefore he is unable to offer anything but stolen ideas, stale arguments, and buffoonery in place of anything that might reasonably advance knowledge. *The Age of Reason* is not only a far cry from the supposedly impartial rational debate that was to mark the public sphere, but it is vamped up plagiarism that leads to no real knowledge at all (except perhaps as a handbook of new ways to insult and blaspheme sacred texts). As David Levi charges in his *A Defence of the Old Testament*: "there is no novelty" in *The Age of Reason* except perhaps the "acrimony and abuse; the illiberal satire, pretended ridicule and impertinent witticism."[670] For Levi, as for so many others who criticize Paine's irreverence, *The Age of Reason* is written "not [in] the manner of a sincere inquirer after truth," but is rather the work of the "basest of calumniators," who has even

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[669] "Pastoral Letters to the Youth of a Congregation: In Answer to Mr. Paine's "Age of Reason"." *Protestant Dissenter's Magazine* (January 1, 1795): 26. These pastoral letters appeared serially across three more issues in 1795: February 1, April 1, and June 1.

[670] David Levi, *A Defence of the Old Testament, in a Series of Letters Addressed to Thomas Paine, Author of a Book Entitled, The Age of Reason, Part the Second, Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology. By David Levi, Author of Letters to Dr. Priestley, in Answer to His to the Jews, &c. &c. &c.* (New York: Printed by William A. Davis, 26 Moore Street, for Naphtali Judah, bookseller, no. 47, Water Street, 1797), 1.

outdone his "predecessor Voltaire, and the other infidel criticks."[671] Paine offers nothing that has not already been said before, and he has done so poorly, as evinced by his style and tone.

Paine's unoriginality and irreverence are the more telling indicators that he is not a sincere inquirer after religious truth, and his opponents' references to a normative "dispassion" further ostracizes *The Age of Reason* from serious consideration within the republic of letters. The evidence that Paine is not a dispassionate searcher after truth is further compounded by his inherent biases and prejudices. The author of the *Folly of Reason,* for example, charges that *The Age of Reason* stems from the "bigotry of a deist" rather than the "impartial researches of a man of learning, or a philosopher."[672] Others charge that Paine's rabid anti-clericalism serves as an insurmountable prejudice, skewing his arguments and precluding any sort of rational debate on religious topics. Respondents such as John Padman, Robert Thomson, Miers Fisher and the Delaware Waggoner emphasize that they are writing as laymen because Paine "refuses to encounter a priest, or to listen to him on the subject."[673] Indeed, Paine's outright dismissal of his critics (clerical or not) is taken by many of his opponents as one of the most telling indications that Paine is comfortable in his prejudice, complacent in his bias, and content with his "dogmatical assertions."[674] Paine, they charge, clearly does not care about sincere intellectual debate, is no true inquirer after truth, and therefore *The Age of Reason* has no legitimate place in the public sphere.

Paine's irreverence, his dogmatism, his unoriginality and his dismissal of criticism are enough to bar *The Age of Reason* from serious consideration in the public sphere. Yet perhaps even more damning is his lack of actual qualification to discuss religious topics. While many

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[671] Ibid., 4, 50.
[672] Keatinge, *The Folly of Reason.*, 5.
[673] Thomson, *Divine Authority of the Bible*, 139.
[674] Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation*, 250.

respondents see Paine's recourse to ridicule and irreverence as indicative of his insincerity, others see this as a mask behind which he is attempting to conceal his ineptitude. Arrogance combined with ignorance can only result in ridicule and exaggeration, and Paine has shown himself to be completely ill-equipped to deal with religious topics. The American Universalist minister Elhanan Winchester, for example, chides that if Paine "had known the scriptures better" he would "never have attempted to represent them in that ridiculous light." While admitting that Paine may be "far my superior" in terms of being a writer, Winchester notes that he himself has much "more extensive knowledge of the Bible" than Paine does and is therefore able to make short work of Paine's Deism.[675]

Other respondents are more generally convinced that the actual content of *The Age of Reason* proves that Paine is really quite ignorant of the Bible and Christianity. With a sense of some disappointment, the Rev. Thomas Meek writes that it is "to be lamented, that he [Paine] understood so little about the subject before he began."[676] One anonymous American respondent shows a bit more hostility by advising that in a spirit of contrition, Paine should gather up all copies of *The Age of Reason* "and burn them, and sincerely confess to the world, that he wrote on a subject of which he was totally ignorant."[677]

Claiming that one's opponent is ignorant is a time-tested tool of polemicists and polemics. Yet Paine actually sets himself up beautifully to have this charged leveled against him. In the first part of *The Age of Reason*, in the midst of critiquing the Bible, Paine makes the startling admission that he "keeps no Bible" and therefore he is basically working from

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[675] Winchester, *Ten Letters Addressed to Mr. Paine*, 4.
[676] Meek, *Sophistry Detected*, 7.
[677] *Observations on 1st. The Chronology of Scripture. 2d. Strictures on The Age of Reason. 3d. The Evidence Which Reason, Unassisted by Revelation, Affords us with Respect to the Nature and Properties of the Soul of Man. 4th. Arguments in Support of the Opinion, that the Soul is Inactive and Unconscious from Death to the Resurrection, Derived from Scripture*: 48.

memory.[678] A number of respondents use this for great rhetorical advantage, such as the pseudonymous Churchman who charges that Paine "frequently discerns flaws in the Scriptures which exist only in his own distempered brain." Paine's flights of exegetical fancy come as little surprise to the Churchman since "Mr. Paine keeps no Bible."[679]

Paine's admission that he lacks a Bible leaves him vulnerable, but ultimately this has less to do with his own personal capacities or qualifications and is rather more of procedural problem that Paine remedies (and uses for his own rhetorical fodder) in the second part of *The Age of Reason*. Yet in another section of the first part of *The Age of Reason* Paine again opens himself up again to the charge that he lacks the necessary skills to discuss Biblical texts by inveighing against the study of "dead" languages.[680] In a multi-page harangue against the study of Greek and Latin, Paine charges that nothing new is to be learned by their study (because all the important works have already been translated) and the "time expended in teaching and in learning them is wasted." Paine makes the stronger charge that the teaching of dead languages has been a form of priestcraft, diverting the mind from the more useful study of science, and so stultifying one's faculties that even the nonsensicalities of the Christian faith seemed to make sense. As Paine would have it, "genius is killed by the barren study of a dead language," and he rejects the possibility of new knowledge arising from their study.[681]

A number of Paine's more highly educated opponents use his disdain of dead languages as a wedge to claim that Paine lacks the qualifications necessary to expound upon the Bible.

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[678] Paine certainly makes some mistakes in his recall about the Bible, yet on the whole, his memory for Biblical passages is impressive, a skill that Paine's acquaintance Henry Redhead Yorke commented upon. In addition to Paine's "extraordinary" ability to recite from memory "every thing he has written in the course of his life," Yorke claims that the Bible was the "only book which [Paine] has studied, and there is not a verse in it, that is not familiar to him." See Yorke, *Letters from France, in 1802*: vol 2: 365.
[679] Churchman, *Christianity the Only True Theology*, 40.
[680] For a more in-depth treatment of Paine's views of classical learning, see A. Owen Aldridge, "Thomas Paine and the Classics," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 1:4(1968).
[681] Thomas Paine, part one of *The Age of Reason*, in Foner, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol 1: 492.

Joseph Priestley, for example, mocks Paine's biblical analysis by pointing out that "Mr. Paine had forgotten that the Bible was not written in English." In a bit of intellectual one-upmanship, Priestley subsequently boasts that he reads the Bible "daily in the original, which is certainly some advantage, and one to which Mr. Paine will not pretend."[682] Paine, Priestley intimates, clearly does not have the requisite language skills to be taken at all seriously, making *The Age of Reason* little more than "superficial and frivolous…hackneyed objections to Christianity" stemming from Paine's "grossest ignorance of the subject."[683] Priestley's one-time theological opponent, the London Jew David Levi, similarly lambasts Paine for his boastful ignorance.[684] Levi, who had made a lifetime study of biblical Hebrew, charges that Paine's categorical dismissal of dead languages is not only wrong-headed, but is a clear indication that Paine is clearly not up to the task of analyzing the Bible. Levi charges that if Paine "had the least knowledge of the language in which Moses wrote" then Paine "would certainly not have trifled thus with [his] readers" by offering them such inept Biblical analyses. Since Paine has shown that he is "totally unacquainted" with Hebrew, Levi goes on to give Paine an elementary lesson in basic Hebrew with the admonition that knowledge of that language is so "highly requisite in the task you have undertaken."[685]

Paine's opponents took full advantage of these openings, and they used them to establish the groundwork for serious study of religion and the Bible. To engage in serious Biblical analysis, one must actually have ready access to the text itself, and one must be competent in the

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[682] Joseph Priestley, *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever. Part III. Containing an Answer to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason* (Philadelphia: Printed by Thomas Dobson, at the stone-house, no. 41, South Second-Street, 1795), 71.
[683] Ibid., iv.
[684] Levi and Priestley had engaged in a pamphlet debate in 1786, after Priestley wrote a missionary tract *Letters to the Jews*, in which he stressed that the immanence of the biblical end times made it necessary for Jews to quickly convert to Christianity. Levi responded in a 1787 tract *Letters to Dr. Priestley in Answer to those he Addressed to the Jews*. For more on Levi and his engagement with Priestley, see Richard Popkin, "David Levi, Anglo-Jewish Theologian," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 87:1/2(1996).
[685] Levi, *A Defence of the Old Testament*, 7-8, 136.

original languages in which it was written. For Priestley and Levi, Paine's lack of qualifications to talk intelligently about religion is certainly related to his educational level. However, some of their disappointment has to do with Paine not really adding anything much to Biblical scholarship—that he could not legitimately discuss the topic on the level of a real Biblical scholar. Of course, Paine never had any pretense to qualifying as a real Biblical scholar. Instead, he saw himself as just pointing out textual difficulties and inconsistencies, as well as highlighting the dubious morality promoted by the Biblical texts.

Other respondents, however, do impugn Paine's educational level more broadly by deploring Paine for his hubris that aims beyond his educational level and his social class. One of the harshest critics of the first part of *The Age of Reason*, the pseudonymous True Briton, is the most incensed at Paine's attempts to impose his uneducated and lower-class opinions on the world. In a paragraph that drips with a disdain, the True Briton reveals that it must "astonish every reflecting mind" that a man like Paine, who has the "meanest education" and who was "apprenticed to the meanest business" should ever have become a figure of international renown. More astonishing still is that an uneducated tradesman such as Paine should "presume to prescribe a religion to the world."[686] Such sentiment is echoed by the humble country carpenter Will Chip, who reminds Paine that when it comes to religious matters "you are not much better qualified for this than myself," and admits that he does not quite see "what relationship there is between making stays and making creeds."[687]

Throughout the response to *The Age of Reason*, Paine's opponents claim that his irreverent style of writing proves that he does not understand how discussion of religious topics should be handled, and that he is no serious inquirer of the truth. Additionally, due to his lack of

[686] True Briton, *A Letter to the Analytical Reviewers*, 17.
[687] Chip, *A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith*, 5-6.

proper or sufficient education, Paine is unqualified to weigh-in on religious topics and *The Age of Reason* is categorically unfit for serious consideration. While Paine is little more than a gatecrasher in the republic of letters, many of the responses evince a tension between attempts to ostracize *The Age of Reason* and the necessity of refuting it. Despite all of the rhetoric that precludes Paine and *The Age of Reason* from serious consideration, most of the replies do in fact take the work seriously enough to engage with its actual arguments. The rhetoric is somewhat at odds with the reality, since so many authors chose to engage with work that they saw as scarcely worth the effort. A number of respondents show some frustration with having to refute Paine (since Deism has already been refuted numerous times), but nevertheless do get on with the business of treating his arguments. Other respondents, such as Rhode Island Congregationalist minister William Patten, comment specifically on their quandary that engaging with *The Age of Reason* might serve to legitimize and popularize the work. Throughout the preface to *Christianity the True Theology, and Only Perfect Moral System*, Patten shows a preoccupation with the public perception of Paine, as well as an apprehension about the ways in which controversies in the public sphere serve to legitimize the very objects that are scorned. While Patten sees *The Age of Reason* as the product of an "ignorant and perverse mind" that must be ably and forcefully countered, it is not without some hesitation that Patten offers his book as yet another refutation.[688] Patten notes that the growing number of replies to Paine may lead some (including Paine himself) to mistakenly believe that *The Age of Reason* actually has some merit, which it clearly does not. Mindful that responding to controversial books can often have the unintended dual effect of popularizing and validating them, Patten warns that despite the number of works have already appeared refuting Paine, "no argument can be drawn in favor of the merits

[688] Patten, *Christianity the True Theology*, vii-viii.

of that [Paine's] performance." Both Paine and his readers should therefore not conclude that *The Age of Reason* contains anything worthwhile or that the controversy has any merit. With a bitingly caustic tone, Patten cautions that Paine should not feel too flattered by the attention paid to *The Age of Reason*, nor should he thereby conclude that he has written an important book, since "great evils sometimes require great and general attention."[689] While weighing the dangers of even engaging with a book like *The Age of Reason*, Patten nevertheless feels justified in penning his own response, since he considers it to be an empirical fact that the dangerous spread of error is most often due to the "neglect which resulted from the contempt of it."[690]

Patten is not the only author who feels the need to justify adding his own response to the larger controversy over *The Age of Reason*. Other respondents share his trepidation that responding to the book will only serve to validate it and add fuel to the controversy. Understanding the bind that many authors found themselves in, Patten notes that "some persons have thought [Paine's] treatise too contemptible to deserve an answer."[691] Andrew Broaddus, for one, thinks that *The Age of Reason* may best be met with "silent contempt," but like Patten, he realizes that this may instead be taken as a "tacit Confession in Favour of that Piece."[692] Better to engage with *The Age of Reason* and refute it than to ignore it, even at the risk that a disputation with Paine would only serve to legitimize or promote the work. Joseph Priestley,

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[689] Ibid., iv, viii.
[690] Ibid., 10.
[691] Ibid.
[692] Broaddus, *The Age of Reason & Revelation*, 4. In more biblically charged language, the pseudonymous Theocrat notes that when it comes to the "blasphemous attacks" of an infidel book, there are some cases in which "it may be proper to pass it over in silence," and he gives a biblical example where King Hezekiah orders silence in the face of the Assyrian blasphemer Rabshakeh. Considering the author, the tone, the audience, and the dire times, the Theocrat concludes that in the case of *The Age of Reason* silence is certainly not the best avenue, and he mounts a vigorous defense of Christianity against Paine. Theocrat, *The Brush of Sound Reason, Applyed to the Cobweb of Infidelity* 7.

however, found the second part of *The Age of Reason* so "so extravagant and ill founded" he chose to ignore the work rather than engage with it.[693]

To completely ignore *The Age of Reason* was scarcely a serious option for the review journals of the day, no matter how unworthy they thought the work was for even the most cursory review. To do justice to their readers, literary reviewers, as self-appointed guides to the literary universe, had to at least acknowledge that people were indeed interested in *The Age of Reason*, not because of its inherent worth, but simply on the basis of Paine's reputation. As the reviewer in the *Analytical Review* acknowledges, Paine has proven that he has the "power of commanding public attention on important subjects," and to therefore treat the book with "contemptuous silence" would be a disservice to the reading public, and would do nothing to dissuade people from reading Paine's work.[694] Even the True Briton, a harsh critic of both Paine and the *Analytical Review*, acknowledges the drastic effect of Paine's reputation. Although he charges that *The Age of Reason* would have "passed unnoticed into the gulf of oblivion" had it not been for reviews like those in the *Analytical Review*, the True Briton nevertheless pens his own work "lest the popularity of [Paine's] name…supply the deficiency of his learning, and seduce the unwary and suspicious among my fellow citizens."[695]

Despite Paine being a patently unworthy interloper in the republic of letters, his reputation was such that his respondents found that they could not summarily ignore *The Age of*

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[693] Priestley made it known that he would not engage again with Paine during a series of lectures on the evidences of revealed religion that he gave in Philadelphia in 1796. Priestley could not, however, resist an additional touch of disdain regarding Paine's audience by remarking that the ill-founded arguments of the second part of *The Age of Reason* could only carry weight with the "extremely ignorant and prejudiced" who would not listen to any reasoned argumentation anyways. A refutation would therefore "only be throwing pearls before swine." See Joseph Priestley, *Discourses Relating to the Evidences of Revealed Religion, Delivered in the Church of the Universalists, at Philadelphia, 1796. : And Published at the Request of Many of the Hearers.* (Philadelphia: Printed for T. Dobson, by John Thompson, 1796), xi.

[694] *Analytical Review* 19 (1794): 160.

[695] True Briton, *A Letter to the Analytical Reviewers*, 8, 54.

Reason. Although his work ostensibly violated the norms of educated, rational, and dispassionate inquiry, the battering ram of Paine's reputation had seemingly crashed through the gates of the republic of letters and therefore *The Age of Reason* had to be answered. A few respondents did so grudgingly, since to engage with *The Age of Reason* was to give it some legitimacy and publicity over and above that which Paine's name alone could bring to it. They worried, that to engage with *The Age of Reason* might be worse than to ignore it since it could only add to the notoriety and distribution of the work. This sentiment is startlingly evident in the *British Critic*, which vented its ire not only at Paine but also at those who had already published replies to *The Age of Reason*. With a mixture of both surprise and concern that "any men of education would have thought it necessary to answer" *The Age of Reason*, the *British Critic* warns that the replies are just as "pernicious" as Paine's tract, since merely by dint of engaging with Paine, they are "adding something to the fame of the tract," especially among the "vulgar."[696] The replies to *The Age of Reason* are not part of the solution, but are actually part of the problem since they unintentionally legitimize and popularize infidelity.

The *British Critic*'s reference to the danger of the responses themselves is useful in reminding us that the normative principles of the republic of letters were not only applied to authors and their works, but that they were also applied to a reading audience. The assumption of public sphere was of a readership that conformed to a certain educational level and was temperamentally qualified to evaluate texts and arguments. One of the central issues of Chapter 4 is how the respondents to *The Age of Reason* showed an intense preoccupation with the audience for which it was supposedly written. Much of the scholarship built on Habermas' conception of the public sphere deals with the participants who are actively engaged in the public

[696] *British Critic* 4 (1794): 438.

sphere through authorship. Yet fewer scholars deal specifically with how the normative expectations of the public sphere encompass not only authors, but also audiences. Paul Keen's book *The Crisis of Literature in the 1790s* takes seriously the expectations about audience as it relates to the public sphere, and his work has been particularly helpful in framing how Paine's intended readers are, like Paine himself, seen as unwanted interlopers in the republic of letters. Keen argues that by the 1790s an increase in literacy and the availability of printed materials led to the development of a variety of different reading publics that challenged the ideals, values and practices of the public sphere, which was formed around the Enlightenment ideal of literature as an engine of useful knowledge with positive social benefits. The public sphere presumed not only authors and publishers who were able to produce books and pamphlets, but also an educated readership that was able to evaluate the literature being produced, and who also understood the ground rules by which the public sphere operated. As Keen notes, the public sphere was not only a discursive space where "rational individuals could have their say," but also where an "enlightened reading public would be able to judge the merit of different arguments for themselves."[697] One of the guarded assumptions of the public sphere was the central "conviction that rational individuals were capable of exchanging ideas, however radically misconceived, without being tempted into acting on them."[698] Part of the danger posed by Paine (and other radicals) was that he was disrupting "the legitimate boundaries of traditional readership" by including an audience that was educationally and temperamentally incapable of rationally and dispassionately evaluating ideas.[699] This growing body of readers was too easily swayed, too quick to blindly follow someone like Paine, too untrustworthy to legitimately engage in the

[697] Keen, *The Crisis of Literature in the 1790s : Print Culture and the Public Sphere*: 4.
[698] Ibid., 56.
[699] Ibid., 67.

public sphere. Paine, the uneducated, unqualified, and irrational Deistic bigot has written an unoriginal and scurrilous book that appeals primarily to an equally uneducated and dangerously unenlightened audience that is incapable of evaluating his arguments rationally and dispassionately.

Such normative assumptions regarding reading audiences is highlighted most starkly by the Protestant Lay-Dissenter, who is fighting a rear-guard action against books like *The Age of Reason*. Remarking on the title of Paine's work, the Protestant Lay-Dissenter considers that Paine may, perhaps, have been correct to refer to the current days as an 'age of reason,' since the Protestant Lay-Dissenter holds fast to the Enlightenment assumption of a steady progress of knowledge. However, his optimism is tempered by the regretful realization that increased literacy is not necessarily a positive thing, especially when a "very general access to books" has led them to be read by those whose "minds have been too little prepared by Education, to make a proper use of them." Compounding the problem is that not only are these uneducated readers interlopers in the republic of letters, but they create a context in which unworthy authors can similarly crash the gates. In the estimation of the Protestant Lay-Dissenter, such an uneducated readership has the function of producing authors like Paine who may become "candidates for fame" through their writings, but who are ultimately "vain and ill qualified" pretenders to any sort of reasoned discourse.[700] However much an author like the Protestant Lay-Dissenter may declaim against Paine's readers, he nevertheless cast his own work to a similar audience, with the realization that it is the "bulk of the people" who are "least prepared" for having had Paine's "very artful attack on Revelation industriously circulated among them" and who are therefore

[700] Protestant Lay-Dissenter, *Remarks on a Pamphlet Entitled the "Age of Reason,"* 2.

most in need of a refutation of *The Age of Reason*.[701] Just as Paine, through his tone and style, is an unworthy participant in the republic of letters, so too is his intended audience educationally and temperamentally unqualified to understand the serious business of the republic of letters.

Yet there is an irony at the heart of a number of responses to *The Age of Reason* between the rhetoric seeking to disqualify Paine from serious consideration in the public sphere, and the realization that Paine's arguments must be refuted for a common audience. By writing *The Age of Reason* in his common style, Paine sought to democratize religious discourse by bringing a wider segment of the population into discussions from which they had traditionally been excluded.[702] Paine's rhetorical *modus operandi*, as literary scholar Edward Larkin has noted, was to "expand the 'public' included under the rubric of the 'public sphere' to make it more representative of the general population."[703] Most of Paine's respondents seized on his writing style as a way to disqualify *The Age of Reason* for serious consideration within the public sphere, and they railed that much of the danger of the work came from its intended audience. They characterized Paine as an ignorant and unoriginal bigot who was unable to engage in serious discussion on important topics, and who was writing for an audience that was similarly

[701] Ibid., 104. In his address to the jury during Thomas Williams's blasphemy trial for publishing a cheap edition of *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Erskine makes even more explicit reference to the dangers of an unqualified readership entails. In a statement that reflects the assumptions of the working of the public sphere, Erskine charges that even the most erroneous of "intellectual" books, when "addressed to the intellectual world upon so profound and complicated a subject" have some redeeming merit in that they will "only incite the minds of men enlightened by study, to a closer investigation of a subject well worthy of their deepest and continued contemplation." Yet *The Age of Reason* has no such redeeming qualities since it "presents no arguments to the wise and enlightened" and therefore has "no such object, and no such capacity" to spur any further contemplation. Yet Erskine makes the stronger charge that in writing *The Age of Reason*, Paine has sought nothing less than to stir "up men, without the advantages of learning, or sober thinking" in order to lead them not only to a "total disbelief of everything hitherto held sacred," but even more dangerously, into a complete disregard of "all the laws and ordinances of the state, which stand only upon the assumption of their truth." See "Proceedings Against Thomas Williams for publishing Paine's 'Age of Reason'," in *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, ed. T.B. Howell (London: T.C. Hansard, 1819), 669.

[702] Paine was obviously not the first writer to write on religious topics for a common readership, nor was he the first to be criticized for doing so. The rhetoric against an emergent enthusiastic evangelicalism carried with it similar critiques about the legitimacy of common authors and common preachers, and perhaps some of the clerical respondents to Paine had sharpened their rhetorical skills in discourse over just such issues.

[703] Larkin, *Thomas Paine and the Literature of Revolution*: 24.

unqualified to evaluate his objections to revealed religion. Yet a number of Paine's respondents did more than just fulminate against him and his readers; they wrote works specifically intended for Paine's common readers. On the one hand they characterize *The Age of Reason* as being unworthy of serious consideration, but on the other hand they realize that they must nevertheless take on Paine's arguments, and do so in a way that could be understood by Paine's common readers. Paine sought a more expansive public sphere by including a broader segment of the populace, and some of his respondents complied by offering refutations that were intended for the same audience. If *The Age of Reason* included common folk into the discussion about the basis of religious truth, then these respondents pushed the conversation forward by taking Paine seriously enough to engage with his arguments. To refute Paine's arguments for a common reader is to concede that a greater portion of the populace is not only taking part in the discussion, but can sufficiently evaluate the two sides of the issue. While much of the respondents' rhetoric tries to carve Paine and a common readership out of the public sphere, there is at least some realization that they cannot be completely ostracized. Indeed, while these respondents may not have had much faith in the capabilities of the common reader as Paine did, they at least recognized that their own arguments defending revealed religion would be read and understood (and hopefully accepted) by a common readership.

The many responses to *The Age of Reason* not only highlight the assumptions and norms by which the public sphere was supposed to operate, but they also show some of the tensions that Paine's respondents felt in having to reply to the work. The responses also show how the assumptions about legitimate authorship and readership could be used as rhetorical devices to maintain the integrity of the public sphere against unwarranted and unqualified intruders. Many

of Paine's respondents acted as guardians of the republic of letters against him, and their rhetoric displays the assumptions about what it meant not only to be a legitimate author, but just as importantly, what it meant to be a qualified reader as well. Paine's respondents wielded the norms and expectations of the public sphere precisely as a means of attacking him and invalidating *The Age of Reason* as meriting any serious consideration. Yet they did so at some cost, because by enforcing the norms of the public sphere to disqualify *The Age of Reason*, Paine's respondents were, in a sense, violating these very norms themselves. If the public sphere was the arena of impartial rational critique that supposedly evaluated arguments on their own merit, then by focusing so much attention on Paine's background, his education, his character, his motivations, and his intended audience, the respondents were going against these very norms. Rather than just defending Christianity and revealed religion by refuting the Deistic arguments of *The Age of Reason*, the respondents thrust Paine himself into the discourse and he became a central part of the rhetorical fodder against the book.[704] To truly refute *The Age of Reason* involved more than just defeating its doctrines; it meant defeating its author, and many of the respondents did so by applying the norms of the public sphere that they were themselves violating. One of Paine's most vocal defenders, the Virginian Deist John Fowler, notes both his distaste and his disappointment with just how low the level of discourse against *The Age of*

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[704] Both Edward Larkin and Trish Loughran have commented on the ways that Paine himself often became rhetorical grist for his opponents. Loughran comments on the tangible embodiment of Paine in the writings of his opponents. Rather than being an abstracted author, Loughran notes that "Paine's body...was always painfully present at the scene of every social exchange," and his opponents frequently set about "particularizing him in any number of ways—marking his poverty, his bodily habits, his authorial ambitions, and his social politics" a part of their attacks on him. Loughran, *The Republic in Print : Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770-1870* 37, 81. Larkin sees the fixation on Paine's individuality as partly the result of Paine's project of trying to democratize discourse by undermining the so-called "disinterestedness" of the public sphere. As a critique of an anonymous "disinterestedness" that too often served as a mask for entrenched power and interest, Paine thereby interjected his own self into his writings. Larkin notes, however, that this strategy backfired, and not only did Paine's "own person [become] a legitimate topic of discussion" but too often his "character not his ideas became the subject of contention." See Larkin, *Thomas Paine and the Literature of Revolution*: 150.

Reason had sunk, and he criticizes Paine's respondents for engaging in the very same practices for which they disparaged Paine. As a statement about how the republic of letters is supposed to operate, Fowler contrasts the petty and abusive works of Richard Watson, William Cobbett, Gilbert Wakefield and James Muir, with the cogently argued and high-minded work written by fellow-Virginian Bryan Fairfax. Although Fowler (an ardent Deist) holds that that Fairfax's defense of Christianity is categorically unconvincing and unpersuasive, he nonetheless gives Fairfax "great praise" for the "calm and dispassionate manner in which he has conducted himself throughout" his refutation of *The Age of Reason*.[705] In Fowler's estimation, Fairfax has at least engaged with Paine's arguments without, as so many other respondents have done, resorting to invective, personal attacks or cheap rhetoric.[706]

Fowler's disappointment with the majority of the replies to *The Age of Reason* shows the gap between how the public sphere was supposed to operate and how, when it came to Paine, these norms were discarded for polemical purposes.[707] Most of the respondents did, of course, try to give some valid and reasoned counter-arguments to refute Paine's logic. While some offered more sophisticated and cogent refutations than others, nearly all of the responses to *The Age of Reason* did engage with the basic thrust of Paine's attacks on Christianity, the Bible and revealed religion. Yet in addition to the counter-arguments and the reasoned discourse lie a host

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[705] John Fowler, *Strictures Upon Strictures;: Containing a Reply to Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible: Also, Weighty Remarks on the Bishop's Comparison Between the Crucifixion of Jesus and the Execution of Louis the Sixteenth; : With a Contrast of the Various Opinions of Different Divines on the Same Parts of Scripture, and the Testimony Given by Each of the Evangelists Contrasted. : Likewise, a Reply to the Author of Strictures on the Second Part of the Age of Reason* (Alexandria [Virginia]: Printed for the author by Henry Gird, Jun, 1798), 115.

[706] In another pamphlet defending Paine, Fowler levels his sights on James Muir by asking his candid readers "whether our author [Muir] has acted in an open, disinterested and impartial manner on the present occasion?" Fowler then, of course, goes on to enumerate the many ways that Muir is neither disinterested nor impartial in his treatment of Paine, and criticizes him for being overly "fond of ridicule." Fowler, *The Truth of the Bible Fairly Put to the Test*, 46.

[707] As Robert Gross points out, the "ideal of the public sphere was chiefly honored in the breach." Robert A. Gross, "Print and the Public Sphere in Early America," in *The State of American History*, ed. Melvyn Stokes (Oxford:: Berg Press, 2002), 260.

of attacks on Paine that invalidate his capacity, capability and qualifications for even discussing religious matters. As Fowler derisively notes, *The Age of Reason* brought forth only a "torrent of abuse" full of "illiberal aspersions" against both the book and its author.[708]

In this dissertation I have focused precisely on some of the abuse and aspersions leveled against Paine, as well as the different ways that his respondents highlighted the "poison" of *The Age of Reason* in order to counteract it. To give a truly effective antidote to the Deism of *The Age of Reason*, Paine's respondents had to do much more than just refute his arguments in a dispassionate and logical fashion. They needed to triumphantly foreground that Paine's claims to originality were mere show, and that he was not arguing anything that had not already been repeatedly and convincingly refuted. They had to showcase Paine as the lynchpin between Deism and radical republicanism, with the French Revolution serving as the empirical example of a society that has become unhinged by a Deistic rejection of Christianity. They had to diminish Paine's international celebrity by impugning his character and by showing that his attacks on revealed religion came from motives that had little to do with sincere and honest inquiry. They had to raise the alarm about Paine's irreverent and blasphemous style of writing, and the untrustworthy audience that was reading (and was being duped by) his common man's primer in radical Deism. In the revolutionary context of the 1790s, the stakes over Deism were high and the potential consequences extreme, so the norms of the transcendent and disinterested rationality of the public sphere could not serve. Although they applied the norms of the public sphere to disqualify *The Age of Reason* from serious consideration, many respondents themselves deviated from these very norms to fully counter the book.

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[708] Fowler, *The Truth of the Bible Fairly Put to the Test*, v, 17.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES.

For many of the works that formed a part of the controversy over *The Age of Reason*, I have drawn on the bibliographies of Michael Lasser, Gayle Pendleton, Edward Davidson and William Scheick, and Anthony Dean Rizzuto. For the primary periodical literature, I am indebted to Davidson and Scheick, and William Ward's *Literary Reviews in British Periodicals, 1789-1797*. Because I have read the majority of these tracts responding to *The Age of Reason*, I have classified them according to their engagement with the book. Before each citation, I have added a classification symbol according to the following scheme:

*= Tracts written specifically against the first or second parts of *The Age of Reason.*
**= "Second Tier" responses (i.e. those written against other responses/respondents).
†=Tracts written generally against Paine's religious views, or other tracts Paine wrote on religious topics (including the "third" part of *The Age of Reason*).
‡= Tracts written against infidelity/Deism/irreligion, but which also include material against *The Age of Reason*.
§= Tracts motivated by *The Age of Reason* but that do not really engage too much with it.

I have annotated many of the primary sources listed below, including information about whether it is a British or American response, and if there are other editions of the work. I have indicated how the work fits into the controversy, such as if it is in response to the first or second part of *The Age of Reason.* This was not as easy as it might appear. Those written in 1794 are obviously responding to the first part of the work. Yet a few responses published after the second part of the work appeared were still written only in response to the first part of the work. Also, many of the responses were written against both parts without making any distinction between the two—a generalized "Paine's *Age of Reason*" was sufficient, and the respondents did not quibble over the details against which of the two parts they were responding. I have, however, tried to determine by the general thrust or context of the respondents' arguments to which part they were responding. I have also included in my annotations, whenever possible, some brief biographical information about the author of the work. For biographical details, I primarily drew from the following works:

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Dictionary of American Biography. New York: C. Scribner's sons, 1928-58.
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Garraty, John A., and Mark C. Carnes, eds. *American National Biography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
Levernier, James A., and Douglas R. Wilmes, eds. *American Writers before 1800: A Biographical and Critical Dictionary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983.
National Cyclopaedia of American Biography. New York : J.T. White, 1898.
Oxford Dictionary of National Biography New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
Rivers, David, ed. *Literary Memoirs of Living Authors of Great Britain, Arranged According to an Alphabetical Catalogue*. 2 vols. London Printed for R. Faulder, 1798.
Wilson, James Grant, and John Fiske, eds. *Appleton's Cyclopædia of American Biography*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1886-1900.

Within my annotations, I have included the following abbreviations:
AR= The Age of Reason.
*AR*1= first part of *The Age of Reason.*
*AR*2=second part of *The Age of Reason.*

<u>*Periodicals*</u>

American Minerva [American]
1 (August 4, 1794): 3. [Review of *AR*1.]

American Monthly Review [American]
1 (January 1795): 17-21. [Review of *AR*1. This is an American reprint of the review appearing in the British *Monthly Review.*]
3 (December 1795): 301-04. [Review of Priestley. This is an American reprint of the review appearing in the British *Monthly Review*.]

Anti-Jacobin Review [British]
2 (January-April 1799): 307. [Review of Marsom.]

Analytical Review [British]
19 (1794): 159-65. [Review of *AR*1. Also reviews of: Bentley (478); Layman, *Age of Infidelity Part I* (312-14); Wakefield *Examination* (165-70).]
20 (1794). [Reviews of: Churchman,(285-7); *Deism Disarmed* (402-3); M'Neille (401-2); Nash (202-3) True Briton (484-5).]
21 (1795). [Reviews of: Burges (304-5); Priestley (630-36).]
22 (1795): 498-505. [Review of *AR*2. Also reviews of: Jackson (66-8);Wardrop (71); Protestant Lay-Dissenter (194).]

23 (1796). [Reviews of: Auchincloss (263-4); Dutton (56-7); Estlin (405-10); Layman, *Age of Infidelity Part II* (180-86); Malham (403-5); Winchester (261-63).]
24 (1796). [Reviews of: Hincks (69-70); Watson (184-92).]
25 (1797). [Reviews of: Binns (302); Levi (415-189); Scott (60-62).]
26 (1797): 573. [Review of Helton.]

British Critic [British]
4 (1794): 438. [Review of *AR*1. Also reviews of: Chip (551-2); Layman, *Age of Infidelity Part I* (551);Wakefield *Examination* (684-85).]
5 (1795): 76. [Review of M'Neille.]
6 (1795). [Reviews of: Burges (675-76); Nash (323); Priestley (174-78).]
7 (1796): 326-7. [Review of *AR*2. Also reviews of: Dutton (327); Jackson (557-8); Wardrop (199); Watson (648-55).]
8 (1796): 425-7. [Reviews of: Auchincloss; Layman, *Age of Infidelity Part II*; Malham; Wakefield *Reply*. Also, review of Winchester (184-85).]
9 (1797). [Reviews of: Coward (200); Deist, *Thomas Paine Vindicated* (449)*;* Hincks (437); Waring (449); Wilson (436-37).]
10 (1798): 320-21. [Review of Scott.]
12 (1798): 190. [Review of Helton.]
22 (1803): 573. [Review of Wait.]

British Magazine [British]
65 (Sept. 1795): 758-59. [Review of Jackson.]

Columbian Mirror (1794?). [American]
[Virginia Deist John Fowler wrote a series of letters to this newspaper defending *AR*1 against the attacks against it. I have been unable to consult existent copies of this newspaper, but Fowler himself reprints them in his 1797 *The Truth of the Bible Fairly Put to the Test.*]

Connecticut Courant [American]
30 (January 19, February 2, February 9, 1795). [Articles about *AR*1. A series of articles debating the merits of *AR*1. Articles are all pseudonymous: "H," "Irenaeus," "F. Crupper," "A Believer in the Age of Reason," "No Fanatic."]

Connecticut Evangelical Magazine [American]
1 (March,1801): 347-52. Parsons, David. "To the Editors of the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine.", [Parsons gives the story of a friend who was a Deist and who was a fan of *AR*, but has a deathbed conversion to Christianity.]

Critical Review [British]
12 (1794):77-82. [Review of *AR*1. Also review of M'Neille (470); Wakefield *Examination* (111).]
13 (1795). [Review of Churchman (348-50)*; Deism Disarmed* (347-48); Layman, *Age of Infidelity Part I* (350-52).]
14 (1795). [Reviews of: Nash (459-60);True Briton(236).]

16 (1796): 312-19. [Review of *AR*2. Also reviews of: Dutton (401-5); Layman, *Age of Infidelity Part II* (413-18); Padman (466); Wakefield *Reply* (319-25) Wardrop (227); Winchester (405-12).]
17 (1796): 84-92. [Review of Watson.]
19 (1797): 227-30. [Reviews of: Estlin; Jackson.]
20 (1797) [Reviews of: Binns (109); Deist, *Thomas Paine Vindicated* (349); Scott (106-8); Waring (468).]
21 (1797). [Reviews of: Un Laique (345); Levi (39-41); Martin (478).]
22 (1798). [Reviews: of Coward (222-3); Jones (464).]
23 (1798): 340 [Review of Benjoin.]

English Review [British]
23 (1794): 351-55. [Review of *AR*1.]
24 (1794): 123-24. [Review of Layman, *Age of Infidelity Part I.*]
25 (1795). [Review of Churchman (140); *Deism Disarmed* (140); M'Neille (140).]
26 (1795): 453-6. [Review of *AR*2. Also review of: Dutton (456-7).]
27 (1796). [Reviews of: Estlin (475); Malham (263); Priestley (260-62); Wardrop (187-88); Watson (465-70).]

European Magazine [British]
29 (April 1796): 259-60. [Review of Watson.]
32 (December 1797): 400. [Review of Helton.]
32 (July 1797): 34. [Review of Padman.]

Evangelical Magazine [British]
3 (1795). [Reviews of: Layman, *Age of Infidelity Part I* (209-10); Meek (472-3); Nash (298); Wakefield *Examination* (208-9).]
4 (1796):392-3. [Review of Auchincloss.]

Evangelical Review [British]
3 (1795): 167-8. [Review of *AR*1]

Freemason's Magazine [British]
6 (1796): 419. [Review of Winchester.]

Gazette of the United States and Daily Evening Advertiser [American.]
6:81 (September 15, 1794): 2. "For the Gazette of the United States."[Letter to the editor against *AR*1.]

Genius of Kent [British]
1 (1794): 124, 175-9, 212-15. [Review of *AR*1.]

Gentleman's Magazine [British]
64[75] (1794):403. [Letter to the editor against *AR*1, signed by "Eudoxus." Also, reviews of: Layman, *Age of Infidelity Part I* (1025-26); Wakefield *Examination* (642-44).]

65 (July, 1795): 598. "On Reading Thomas Paine's Age of Reason." [A poem critical of *AR*1. Also reviews of: Jackson (758-9); Priestley (943-44).]
66 (1796). [Reviews of: Malham (859); Wakefield *Reply* (852); Watson (580-85).]
68 (1798). [Article critical of Sunday schools, and uses *AR* as proof of the dangers of teaching the lower classes to read. Article is signed by "Eusebius," (32-4); Also reviews of: Benjoin (135-6); Padman (603-4).]

Kentish Register [British]
2 (1794): 343-44. [Letter to the editor on *AR*1.]

Literary Review and Historical Journal [British]
1 (1794): 51-2. [Review of *AR*1. Also reviews of: Churchman (52-4); Nash (273-75).]

London Chronicle [British]
November 12, 1794: 468. [Review of Chip.]

Massachusetts Spy [American]
25:1255 (May 3, 1797). The Neighbor, "Miscellany for Thomas's Massachusetts Spy." [Against *AR*1 & *AR*2. This article mentions that students at Harvard were given a copy of Watson's *Apology* to counteract *AR*. Issue also prints extracts from Winchester, *Ten Letters Addressed to Mr. Paine.*]

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5 (March 13, 1795). "Observations on Several Paragraphs in Mr. Paine's 'Age of Reason'." Article continues in next issue: 5:22, no. March 20 (1795). [Article on *AR*1.]

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March 7, 1797. [Review of Scott.]
September 27, 1797. [Review of Erskine.]

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14 (1794): 393-97. [Review of *AR*1. Derek Roper (1978) attributes this review to clergyman Christopher Moody, who did many reviews of religious books in this magazine, including the review of *AR*2.]
15 (1797). [Reviews of: Un Laique (463); Churchman (463-4); *Deism Disarmed* (462-3); Layman, *Age of Infidelity Part I* (342); Nash (342-43); Wakefield *Examination* (339-42).]
16 (1795). [Reviews of: Burges (458-9); M'Neille (217-18).]
17 (1795). [Review of Jackson (219); Priestley (254-57).]
18 (1795): 352. [Review of Protestant Lay-Dissenter (194).]
19 (1796): 157-61. [Review of *AR*2. Also reviews of: Dutton (165); Wakefield, *Reply* (161-65).]
20 (1796): 102-4. [Reviews of: Auchincloss; Layman *Age of Infidelity Part II*; Malham. Also of: Watson (133-41).]

21 (1796): 104-5. [Reviews of: Coward; Deist, *Thomas Paine Vindicated.*]
22 (1797): 222. [Review of Wilson.]
23 (1797): 464-66). [Review of Scott, *Vindication* 1st edition.]
24 (1797): 227. [Review of Padman.]
27 (1798): 114-17. [Reviews of: Benjoin; Helton.]
29 (1799): 213-14. [Review of Scott, *Vindication* 2nd edition.]

New Annual Register [British]
15 (1794): [176-79.] [Review of *AR*1, followed by reviews of some of the responses to it, including: Un Laique; Churchman; *Deism Disarmed*; Bentley; Layman, *Age of Infidelity Part I* ; Nash; M'Neille; Wakefield, *Examination.*]
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17 (1796). [Review of Auchincloss ([186]); Layman, *Age of Infidelity Part II* ([177]); Watson ([178]); Winchester ([177]).]
18 (1797): [205-7] [Reviews of: A.M., *Remarks on Revelation & Infidelity*; Jones; Levi; Padman; Philalethes; Scott; Waring.]

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1 (1794):319-21. ["Remarks on Mr. Paine's Creed," letter to the editor on *AR*1. Also reviews of: Layman, *Age of Infidelity Part I* (252, 379-80); Wakefield *Examination* (461).]
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3 (1796): 35-6. [Review of *AR*2. Also reviews of: Layman, *Age of Infidelity Part II* (78-79); Wakefield, *Reply* (37-8).]

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7 (1795): 172-74, 242-45 [Review of *AR*2. Also, review of Wakefield, *Reply* (174-75).]

Scots Magazine [British]
57 (1795):512. [Review of Priestley.]
58 (1796): 267-68. [Review of *AR*2.]
59 (1797): 49-50. [Review of Tytler, *An Answer to the Second Part.*]

The Theological Magazine, or, Synopsis of Modern Religious Sentiment [American]

1 (Jan/Feb, 1796): 284-86. "An Attempt to Vindicate the Character of Mr. Thomas Paine from the Infamy of Being the Author of the Pamphlet, 'The Age of Reason.'" [Article on *AR*1.]

2 (Aug/Sep., 1797): 429. "Deistic Objections Considered." [Article on Deism that singles out Paine and *AR*. Sept/Oct edition reprints review of Watson originally in the *United States Christian Magazine*.]

3 (Oct-Dec,1797): 22-28."Short Comments on New Texts." [Article on *AR*2.]

Theophilanthropist [American]

6 (1810): 220-28, 263-72. ["Extract from Thomas Paine's Answer to Bishop Watson's *Apology for the Bible*: Never before Published." Paine's intended "third" part of *AR*.]

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1 (Feb. 1, 1796): 154. [Review of Watson.]

Weekly Entertainer [British]

21 (September, 1794): 512-16. "Remarks on Some Parts of Paine's Age of Reason." [Letter on *AR*1.]

Western Star [American]

September 9, 1794. "The Cordwainer, No. 4." [Commentary on *AR*1. Reprinted in other American newspapers.]

September 23, 1794. "The Cordwainer, No. 6." [Commentary on *AR*1. Reprinted in other American newspapers.]

<u>*Books, Pamphlets, & Tracts*</u>

**Abernethy, John. *Philalethes; or, Revelation Consistent with Reason : An Attempt to Answer the Objections and Arguments against It in Mr. Paine's Book, Entitled, Age of Reason*. Belfast: Printed for the author, 1795. [British. Against *AR*1 and *AR*2. Abernethy (1736-1818) was a Presbyterian minister in Templepatrick, Ireland. This work is framed as a dialogue between Thomas, who has just read *The Age of Reason* and who is convinced by it, and John, who although an admirer of Paine's political writings, tries to convince his friend as to the errors of Deism. Abernethy's dialogue is one of the more thought provoking replies to *The Age of Reason* since, as a dialogue, Abernethy really does a good job of portraying the "Deist" side of the argument. The rational Christian John ultimately and not surprisingly wins the debate, but Thomas gives him a run for his money.]

**A.M. *Remarks on Revelation & Infidelity, Being the Substance of Several Speeches Lately Delivered in a Private Literary Society in Edinburgh: With Anecdotes of Two of the Members; and an Appendix, Containing Two Letters Which since Passed between Them. By A.M. Secretary*. Edinburgh: Printed by John Moir, Paterson's Court, for S. Chepne,

Bookseller, No. 22. George-Street; and Vernor & Wood, No. 31 Poultry, London, 1797. [British. Against two works that responded to Watson's *Apology*: Allan MacLeod's *The Bishop of Landaff's "Apology for the Bible" Examined;* Samuel Francis' *Watson Refuted: Being an Answer to the Apology for the Bible.*]

*American Citizen. *A Letter to Thomas Paine, in Answer to His Scurrilous Epistle Addressed to Our Late Worthy President Washington: And Containing Comments and Observations on His Life, Political and Deistical Writings, &C. &C. Intended as an Alarm to the Good People of These States, from Being Led Astray by the Sophistical Reasonings of Mr. Paine. By an American Citizen, in Whose Heart the Amor Patriae Holds the Highest Place*. New York: Printed for the Author by John Bull, no. 115, Cherry-Street, 1797. [American. Against *AR*1 and *AR*2 as well as Paine's *Letter to George Washington.*]

*Anketell, John. *Strictures Upon Paine's Age of Reason : Into Which Are Incorporated a Few Observations Upon a Belfast Edition of Remarks Upon Paine's Pamphlet. By a Person Subscribing Himself a Citizen of the World by the Rev. John Anketell, A.B. Curate of Donaghendry, Co. Tyrone, Ireland*. Dublin: Printed for the Author, by William Porter, 1796. [British. Against *AR*1 and also against James Tytler's *Paine's Age of Reason, With Remarks, Containing a Vindication of the Doctrines of Christianity from the Aspersions of that Author*. Anketell (1750-1824) was a Church of Ireland minister in County Tyrone. He was also a bit of a poet, having written *Poems on Several Subjects* (1793).]

*Auchincloss, John. *The Sophistry of Both the First and the Second Part of Mr. Paine's Age of Reason; or a Rational Vindication of the Holy Scriptures as a Positive Revelation from God. With the Causes of Deism in Four Sermons*. Edinburgh: G. Mudre & Son, 1796. [British. This book originally appeared in 1796 as a response only against *AR*1, but in an edition appearing later in 1796, a sermon against *AR*2 was added. Auchincloss was ordained a Presbyterian minister but in 1790 was deposed in a scandal, and he then moved to Stockport (near Manchester) and became affiliated with an "Independent" church.]

*_____. *The Sophistry of the First Part of Mr. Paine's Age of Reason; or, a Rational Vindication of the Holy Scriptures as a Positive Revelation from God: With the Causes of Deism. In Three Sermons, by J. Auchincloss, D.D.* Stockport, England: Printed by Joseph Clarke, Sold by T. Knott, London, 1796. [British. See note for previous entry on this author and tract].

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**Baloudoufroutskow, John Michael *The Source of Virtue and Vice; or, a Few Remarks as Well on the Impropriety of Great Part of the Bishop of Landaff's Reasoning, in His Apology for the Bible, as in Favour Of "The Age of Reason."* London: Crosby and Symonds, 1797. [British. I have not consulted this work. Ostensibly against Watson's *Apology*, but it may be a satirical send-up.]

Barlow, Joel. 1795. "Copy of A Letter from Joel Barlow, Esq. to John Fellows. Hamburgh, May 23, 1795." *Connecticut Journal*, (August 28,1799).

‡Barrington, Shute. *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Durham; at the Ordinary Visitation of That Diocese, in the Year MDCCXCVII. By Shute, Bishop of Durham*. London: Printed by T. Rickaby; and Sold by T. Payne, Cadell and Davies, F. and C. Rivington, and P. Elmsly; Fletcher and Cook, Oxford; Deighton, Cambridge; and

the Booksellers at Durham, and Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1797. [British. Against *AR*1 and *AR*2. Barrington (1734-1826) was the Bishop of Durham, and his attack on *AR* begins on page 8.]

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‡Belknap, Jeremy. *Dissertations on the Character, Death & Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the Evidence of His Gospel: With Remarks on Some Sentiments Advanced in a Book Intitled "the Age of Reason." By Jeremy Belknap, Minister of the Church in Federal-Street, Boston*. Boston: Joseph Belknap, 1795. [American. Against *AR*1. Belknap (1744-1798) was a Congregationalist minister as well as a noted historian who wrote *History of New Hampshire*.]

Bellamy, John. *The Anti-Deist: Being a Vindication of the Bible, in Answer to the Publication Called the Deist. Containing Also a Refutation of the Erroneous Opinions Held Forth in the Age of Reason. And in a Recent Publication, Entitled, Researches on Ancient Kingdoms*. London: Printed by A.J. Valpy, 1819. [Part of the "second wave" of responses to *AR*.]

*Benjoin, George. *The Integrity and Excellence of Scripture*. Cambridge, England: F. Hudson, 1797. [British. Against *AR*2. Benjoin was an academic at Jesus College, Cambridge who also did a translation of the Book of Jonah (in 1796), and he notes in the preface to this book the difficulty he has had translating the Hebrew, which he had been studying for 15 years.]

Bennett, George. *A Display of the Spirit and Designs of Those Who, under Pretext of a Reform, Aim at the Subversion of the Constitution and Government. With a Defence of Ecclesiastical Establishments. By the Rev. G. Bennet.* Carlisle: Printed for the Author by W. Halhead. Sold by W. Richardson, London, 1796.

*Bentley, Thomas. *Reason and Revelation : Or, a Brief Answer to Thomas Paine's Late Work Entitled the Age of Reason*. [London?], [1794?]. [British. Against *AR*2. Bentley (1775-1819) was a Suffolk-based radical who wrote a number of pamphlets seeking assistance for the poor.]

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**Binns, Abraham. *Remarks on a Publication, Entitled, "A Serious Admonition to the Disciples of Thomas Paine, and All Other Infidels"*. Stockport [England]: Printed for the Author, by J. Clarke, 1796. [British. In support of Paine against the anonymous broadside *A Serious Admonition to the Disciples of Thomas Paine, and All Other Infidels*. London? 1796.]

*Boudinot, Elias. *The Age of Revelation, or, the Age of Reason Shewn to Be an Age of Infidelity*. Philadelphia: Asbury Dickins, 1801. [American. Against *AR*1. Boudinot (1740-1821) was a New Jersey lawyer, aide-de-camp to Washington during the American Revolution,

Director of the US Mint, Federalist Congressman, philanthropist, and founding member of the American Bible Society.]

*Bourk, James. *An Answer to a Late Pamphlet Entitled, Paine's Age of Reason. By James Bourk, Classical and Commercial School-Master, Cork*. Cork: Printed by Joseph Haly, Skiddy's-Castle-Lane, [1798?].[British. Against *AR*2. Bourk, an Irish school teacher in Cork, was inspired by Watson's *Apology* to do to *AR*1 what Watson had done to *AR*2.]

§Bousell, John. *The Ram's Horn Sounded Seven Times Upon Lifeless Hills and Mountains, Which Shall Be Brought Down, ... Also Remarks Upon Thomas Paine's Second Part of the Age of Reason*. City of Norwich [England]: Printed for the Author, [1799?].[British. Bousell was a leather cutter from Norwich who was a seeker influenced by Swedenborg. Interprets *AR* in a millenarian light.]

*Bradford, Ebenezer. *Mr. Thomas Paine's Trial; Being an Examination of His Age of Reason. To Which Is Added, Two Addresses, the First to the Deists, and the Second to the Youths of America. With Some Brief Remarks on Gilbert Wakefield's Examination of Said Age of Reason. Dedicated to George Washington, President of the United States of America. By the Author of the Dialogue between Philagathus and Pamela*. Boston: Printed at Boston, by Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer T. Andrews, Faust's Statue, no. 45, Newbury-Street, 1795. [American. Against *AR*1, but also against Gilbert Wakefield's *An Examination of the Age of Reason.* Bradford (1746-1801) was born in Connecticut, and became a Presbyterian minister in New Jersey until he left the Presbyterians in 1780. Between 1782-1801 he was the pastor of the Congregational Church in Rowley, Mass. He was an outspoken anti-Federalist, strong defender of the Democratic-Republican societies and of the French Revolution, and was derisively nicknamed the "Vandal of Rowley."]

*Broaddus, Andrew. *The Age of Reason & Revelation; or Animadversions on Mr. Thomas Paine's Late Piece, Intitled "The Age of Reason, &C." Containing a Vindication of the Sacred Scriptures, from the Reasoning, Objections, and Aspersions in That Piece. By Andrew Broaddus, V.D.M.* Richmond, VA: Printed by John Dixon, for an enquirer after truth, 1795.[American. Against *AR*1. Broaddus (1770-1848) was a Baptist minister from Virginia who served rural congregations.]

Broughton, Thomas. *The Age of Christian Reason: Being a Refutation of the Theological and Political Principles of Thomas Paine, M. Volney and the Whole Class of Political Naturalists; Whether Atheists or Deists*. London: Printed for F.C. And J. Rivington, 1820. [This tract would form part of the "second wave" of responses to *AR*.]

§[Brown, J.]. *Concise Selection of the Divine Excellencies of Revelation: With a Word of Advice for the Reformation of the Reformer Thomas Paine.* London: Longman, 1798.[British. I have not been able to consult this work, but the review of it in *The Anti-Jacobin Review* (v5, 1800, pg. 301) mentions that the author admits to never having read any of Paine's religious or political works.]

*Bull, T.J.R. *An Oration Delivered in the Westminster Forum, Impartially Considering the Truth, Utility, and Probable Consequences of Mr. Paine's Age of Reason*. London: Printed for the Author, 1796.[British. I have not been able to locate this tract.]

*Burges, George. *A Letter to Thomas Paine, Author of the Age of Reason. By George Burges, B.A. Curate of Whittlesea, in the Isle of Ely, Peterborough.* London: Evans, 1794. [British. Against *AR*1. I have not been able to locate a copy of this tract.]

Burke, Edmund. *Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to That Event. In a Letter Intended to Have Been Sent to a*

Gentleman in Paris. By the Right Honourable Edmund Burke. London: Printed for J. Dodsley, In Pall-Mall, 1790.

Carlile, Richard. *The Theological Works of Thomas Paine*. London: Printed and published by R. Carlile, No. 183, Fleet Street, 1818.[It was this work that touched off the "second wave" of responses to *AR*, and that got Carlile imprisoned.]

Cheetham, James. *The Life of Thomas Paine*. New York: Southwick and Pelrue, 1809. [Scurrilous biography of Paine].

*Chip, Will, [pseud.]. *A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith: With a Few Plain Remarks on the Age of Reason. In a Letter from Will Chip, Carpenter, in Somersetshire, to T. Pain, Staymaker, in Paris*. London F&C Rivington, 1794.[British. Against *AR*1. This tract was *not* written by Hannah More, but by some unknown author who co-opted More's fictive character Will Chip. This tract went through at least three editions.]

*Churchman. *Christianity the Only True Theology; or, an Answer to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason. By a Churchman*. London: Printed, by Vaughan Griffiths, for F. and C. Rivington; and J. Matthews, 1794.[British. Against *AR*1.]

**Citizen of New York. *A Cursory Review of Strictures on Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible. By a Citizen of New-York.* New-York: Printed by G. Forman, Opposite the Post-Office, for T. Greenleaf, no. 54, Wall-Street 1796. [American. Against the other Citizen of New York's *Strictures on Bishop Watson's "Apology for the Bible."*]

**Citizen of New York [Joel Barlow?]. *Strictures on Bishop Watson's "Apology for the Bible." By a Citizen of New-York*. New York: Printed for John Fellows, Wall-Street, no. 60., 1796. [American. Supports Paine against Watson's *Apology*. This work has been attributed to American poet Joel Barlow, who was a friend of Paine's and who had a hand in getting *AR*1 into print.]

Cobbett, William. *The Bloody Buoy Thrown out as a Warning to the Political Pilots of America: Or, a Faithful Relation of a Multitude of Acts of Horrid Barbarity, Such as the Eye Never Witnessed, the Tongue Never Expressed, or the Imagination Conceived, until the Commencement of the French Revolution. To Which Is Added an Instructive Essay, Tracing These Dreadful Effects to Their Real Causes.* Philadelphia: Printed for Benjamin Davies no. 68. High-Street, 1796.

———. "The Life of Tom Paine, Interspersed with Remarks and Reflections." *Political Censor*, no. Sept. 1796 (1797): 251-300.

———. "Philadelphia, July 1." *Porcupine's Gazette*, July 1 1799.

———. "Mr. Eaton.--Paine's Age of Reason." *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* 21, no. 24, June 13 (1812).

———. *Observations on the Character, and Motives of Paine in the Publication of His "Age of Reason". With an Authentic Account of His Death Bed.* [Birmingham]: T. Knott, 1819.

———. "Letter II. To the People of Botley. On the Character and Conduct of Their Own Parson, Baker." *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* 34, no. 19, January 30 (1819).

———. *Rural Rides in the Counties of Surrey, Kent, Sussex, Hants, Berks, Oxford, Bucks, Wilts, Somerset, Gloucester, Hereford, Salop, Worcester, Stafford, Leicester, Hertford, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridge, Huntingdon, Nottingham, Lincoln, York, Lancaster, Durham, and Northumberland, During the Years 1821-1832; with Economical and Political Observations by the Late William Cobbett.* 2 vols. London: Reeves and Turner, 1885.

†Colvin, John B. *An Essay Towards an Exposition of the Futility of Thomas Paine's Objections to the Christian Religion : Being a Reply to a Late Pamphlet Written by Him, Entitled Examination of the Passages in the New Testament, Quoted from the Old, and Called Prophecies Concerning Jesus Christ &C. &C.* Baltimore: Printed by Fryer and Rider, 1807. [American. Against Paine's 1807 *Examination of the Passages in the New Testament.* Colvin (1778?-1826) was a clerk in the Department of State, and was also newspaper editor with strong Jeffersonian sympathies.]

**Coward, John. *Deism Traced to One of Its Principal Sources, or the Corruption of Christianity the Grand Cause of Infidelity. Containing Brief Reflections on This Subject, in a Letter to the Bishop of Landaff on His Late Work, Entitled, "An Apology for the Bible," In Answer to Mr. Paine's Second Part of the Age of Reason*. London: W. Richardson, 1796. [British. I have not consulted this work, so I am not sure if it is critical or supportive of Watson's *Apolo*gy. Reviews of this work indicate that it is trying to bolster revelation against Deists (see *Monthly Review* 21 (1796): 104-5). *Literary Memoirs of Living Authors of Great Britain* says that Coward was a "silversmith in Cornhill, and a preacher among those methodists who hold the doctrine of Universal Salvation."]

‡Dana, Daniel. *Two Sermons, Delivered April 25, 1799: The Day Recommended by the President of the United States for National Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer. By Daniel Dana, A.M. Pastor of a Church in Newburyport. Published by Desire.* Newburyport, [Mass.]: Printed by Angier March, 1799. [American. Singles out Paine for being a major part of the rapid spread of infidelity in the United States.]

**Deism Disarmed; or a Short Answer to Paine's Age of Reason, on Principles Self-Evident, but Seldom Produced*. London: Printed for T. Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies (successors to Mr. Cadell), 1794.[British. Against *AR*1.]

**Deism Defeated by Matter of Fact. Or, an Answer to Thomas Paine's Age of Reason, in Which the Authority of the Bible Is Defended, the Argument of That Gentleman Refuted and Revelation Proved, from Reason, Experience, and Common Sense*. London: N. Scarlett, 1796.[British. I have not consulted this tract, nor does it appear in any of the review periodicals of the time.]

**Deist. *Thomas Paine Vindicated. Being a Short Letter to the Bishop of Landaff's Reply to Thomas Paine's Age of Reason. By a Deist*. London: Printed for B. Crosby, 1796.[British. Supports Paine against Watson's *Apology*. Went into a second edition.]

*Delaware Waggoner [David Nelson?]. *An Investigation of That False, Fabulous and Blasphemous Misrepresentation of Truth, Set Forth by Thomas Paine, in His Two Volumes, Entitled the Age of Reason, Dedicated to the Protection of the United States of America. By a Delaware Waggoner: Also Dedicated to the Protection of the United States of America: Where the Devil, Mahomet, and the Heathen Philosophers, Are Evidences against Paine's Age of Reason*. Lancaster, Pa: Printed by W. & R. Dickson, 1800.[American. Against *AR*1 and *AR*2. The preface to this book was signed by a "D. Nelson" and Evans attributes it to David Nelson, who lived 1754-1829.]

‡Dennie, Joseph. *The Lay Preacher, or, Short Sermons, for Idle Readers.* Walpole, Newhampshire David Carlisle, 1796.[American. The essay "Favor is Deceitful" uses Paine and *AR* as a negative example for readers. This essay was originally published in Dennie's newspaper *The Farmer's Weekly Museum*, October 27 (1795).]

§*Divine Oracles the True Antidote against Deism, and False Christianity; or, the Clear Light of Revelation Contrasted to the Darkness of a Boasted Age of Reason. In Letters to a Son. To Which Are Prefixed, Introductory Strictures on Some Late Writings*. Providence (R.I.): Printed by B. Wheeler for D. Brewer, of Taunton, and Sold at their Respective Book-stores, 1797.[American. *AR* (probably part 2) is the pretext for this anonymous author's letter to his son, warning him away from Deism.]

*Drew, Samuel. *Remarks, on the First Part of a Book, Entitled "The Age of Reason," Addressed to Thomas Paine, Its Author* St. Austell: Printed at the Office of E. Hennah, 1799.[British. Against *AR*1. This tract also published in New York. By Thomas Kirk. Drew (1765–1833) was a shoemaker from Cornwall, who became a Methodist preacher (although he never became an ordained minister). This tract was reprinted in a second edition in 1820 and also in 1831.]

**Dutton, Thomas. *A Vindication of the Age of Reason, by Thomas Paine: Being an Answer to the Strictures of Mr. Gilbert Wakefield and Dr. Priestley, on This Celebrated Performance*. London: Printed for Griffiths and Co., 1795.[British. Supports *AR*1 against Wakefield's *Examination* and Priestley's *Letters to A Philosophical Unbeliever*. Dutton was a poet who wrote a number of long poems. *A Biographical Dictionary of the Living Authors of Great Britain and Ireland* mentions that he was educated in seminaries of the United Brethren in Yorkshire and in Germany, but that on his return to England he "forsook that community, and some years since proved a renegade to his country, which he deserted for France, where he took a part in that infamous publication *The Argus.*"]

Eaton, Daniel Isaac. *Trial of Mr. Daniel Isaac Eaton, for Publishing the Third and Last Part of Paine's Age of Reason; before Lord Ellenborough, in the Court of King's Bench, Guildhall, March 6, 1812; Containing the Whole of His Defence, and Mr. Prince Smith's Speech in Miti*. London: Daniel Isaac Eaton, 1812.

**Erskine, Thomas. *The Speeches of the Hon. Thomas Erskine, in the Court of King's Bench, June 28, 1797, before the Right Hon. Lloyd Lord Kenyon, and a Special Jury, on the Trial the King Versus Thomas Williams, for Publishing the Age of Reason, Written by Thomas Paine; Together with Mr. Stewart Kyd's Reply, and Lord Kenyon's Charge to the Jury*. London: Printed for J. Debrett, Picadilly, 1797. [British. This is Erskine's address to the Jury during the Thomas Williams Blasphemy trial. It was widely republished in newspapers and in a variety of stand-alone tracts in Britain and America, such as *Christianity Vindicated, in the Admirable Speech of the Hon. Tho. Erskine, in the Trial of J. Williams, for Publishing Paine's "Age of Reason." 24th June, 1797*. (Philadelphia: Printed from the 12th London Edition by J. Carey, 1797).]

‡Estlin, John Prior. *Evidences of Revealed Religion, and Particularly Christianity, Stated, with Reference to a Pamphlet Called the Age of Reason; in a Discourse Delivered at the Chapel in Lewin's-Mead, Bristol, December 25, 1795. And with Omissions, in Essex Street, London, January 17, 1796*. Bristol (England): Printed by N. Biggs, 1796.[British. Against *AR*1 and *AR*2. Estlin (1747–1817) was a Unitarian minister in Bristol.]

*Fairfax, Bryan. *Strictures on the Second Part of the Age of Reason*. George-Town [D.C.]: From the press of Green, English, & Co, 1797.[American. Against *AR*2. Fairfax (1730-1802) was the 8th Baron Fairfax and came from a long line of Virginians. In 1789 he was ordained as an Episcopal clergyman in Alexandria.]

Fiske, Nathan. *A Sermon Preached at the Dudleian Lecture in the Chapel of Harvard College, September 7, 1796*. Boston: Printed by Manning & Loring, 1796.

**Fowler, John. *The Truth of the Bible Fairly Put to the Test, by Confronting the Evidences of Its Own Facts*. Alexandria [D.C.]: Printed for the Author, by Price and Gird, 1797.[American. Supports *AR*1 against James Muir's *An Examination of the Principles Contained in the Age of Reason.* Fowler was a from Fairfax, Virginia.]

**———. *Strictures Upon Strictures;: Containing a Reply to Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible: Also, Weighty Remarks on the Bishop's Comparison between the Crucifixion of Jesus and the Execution of Louis the Sixteenth; : With a Contrast of the Various Opinions of Different Divines on the Same Parts of Scripture, and the Testimony Given by Each of the Evangelists Contrasted. : Likewise, a Reply to the Author of Strictures on the Second Part of the Age of Reason*. Alexandria [Virginia]: Printed for the author by Henry Gird, Jun, 1798.[American. Supports Paine against Watson's *Apology* and Bryan Fairfax's *Strictures on the Second Part of the Age of Reason.*]

Francis, John W. *Old New York, or, Reminiscences of the Past Sixty Years : Being an Enlarged and Revised Edition of the Anniversary Discourse Delivered before the New York Historical Society*. New York: C. Roe, 1858.

**Francis, Samuel, [pseud.] *Watson Refuted: Being an Answer to the Apology for the Bible. In a Series of Letters to the Bishop of Llandaff*. Edinburgh: n.p., 1797. [British. Against Watson's *Apology*. The author of this tract treats Paine respectfully, but he doesn't always agree with him, and he declares that he himself is not a Deist. Scholar Helio Osvaldo Alves attributes this tract to Portuguese immigrant Francisco Solano Constancio, see "Wondering About Wonders: Paine, Constancio and the *Age of Reason*, 1794-97 " In *Radicalism and Revolution in Britain, 1775-1848 : Essays in Honour of Malcolm I. Thomis*, edited by Michael T. Davis, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000, 84-95.]

‡Fraser, Donald. *A Collection of Select Biography: Or, the Bulwark of Truth: Being a Sketch of the Lives and Testimonies of Many Eminent Laymen, in Different Countries, Who Have Professed Their Belief in, and Attachment to the Christian Religion --Whether Distinguished as Statesmen, Patriots, Philosophers, &C. --to Which Are Prefixed Two Letters to Thomas Paine, Containing Some Important Queries and Remarks Relative to the Probable Tendency of His Age of Reason*. New York: Printed for the Author at the Literary Printing-Office, 1798.[American. Against *AR*1 and *AR*2. Fraser (1755?-1820) was a schoolteacher in New York and wrote instructive books for young people.]

† [Fraser, Donald]. *The Recantation; Being an Anticipated Valedictory Address, of Thomas Paine, to the French Directory*. New-York: Printed for the Author, 1797. [American. This tract has Paine recanting his Deism.]

Freneau, Philip. *Letters on Various Interesting and Important Subjects; Many of Which Have Appeared in the Aurora. Corrected and Much Enlarged. By Robert Slender. O.S.M.* Philadelphia: Printed for the Author. From the Press of D. Hogan, 1799.

‡Fuller, Andrew. *The Gospel Its Own Witness: Or the Holy Nature, and Divine Harmony of the Christian Religion, Contrasted with the Immorality and Absurdity of Deism*. Clipstone [England]: Printed by J.W. Morris; Sold by Button; Gardiner; Ogle; and Williams, London; Ogle, Edinburgh and Glasgow; James, Bristol; and Brightly, Bungay, 1799.[British. Against *AR*1 and *AR*2. Fuller (1754–1815) was a Baptist minister in Kettering who published quite a number of works and sermons. In 1792 he became the secretary to the newly formed Baptist Missionary Society.]

‡Gahan, William. *Youth Instructed in the Grounds of the Christian Religion : With Remarks on the Writings of Voltaire, Rousseau, T. Paine, &C. Intended as an Antidote against the*

Contagious Doctrines of Atheists, Materialists, Fatalists, Deists, Modern Arians, Socinians, &C. By the Rev. William Gahan. Dublin: Printed by T. M'Donnel, No. 50, Essex-Street., 1798. [British. Against *AR* (but unclear which part). Gahan (1730?–1804), was a Roman Catholic priest and (probably) a United Irishman from Dublin who became a doctor of divinity at the University of Louvain. Gahan plagiarizes significant passages from William Jackson's *Observations in Answer to Mr. Thomas Paine's "Age of Reason."*]

†Gemmil, John, et al. *Paine Versus Religion, or, Christianity Triumphant : Containing the Interesting Letters of Sam. Adams, Tho. Paine, and John Gemmil : To Which Is Added, Mr. Erskine's Celebrated Speech at the Trial of the Age of Reason*. Baltimore: G. Douglas, Bookseller, 1803. [American. In response to Paine's 1803 *Letter to Samuel Adams*. The letter from Gemmil originally appeared in the newspaper *Aurora*. Gemmil (1759-1814) was a Presbyterian minister from Great Valley, Pennsylvania. The final section of this compilation is "Religious Intelligence," relating some ecstatic religious happenings in Western Pennsylvania.]

Gentleman. *The Pernicious Principles of Tom Paine, Exposed in an Address to Labourers and Mechanics, by a Gentleman*. 2nd ed. London: D.I. Eaton, 1794.

Grisenthwaite, W. *A Refutation of Every Argument Brought against the Truth of Christianity, and Revealed Religion, by Thomas Paine, in the First Part of His Work, Called 'the Age of Reason.'* [London]: Printed and Published by H. Neville, 1822. [This tract form a part of the "second wave" of responses to *AR*.]

*Hagen, Frederick Wilhelm. *Vindiciae Prophetarum Ebraicorum Et Jesu Christi Contra Thomam Paine Ejusque Libelli De Vera Et Fictititia Religione Germaniucm Interpretem*. Norimbergae [Germany?], 1798. [German. I have not consulted this tract.]

‡Hales, William. *The Inspector, or Select Literary Intelligence for the Vulgar A.D. 1798, but Correct A.D. 1801, the First Year of the XIXth Century*. London: Printed for J. White, 1799.[British. General response to Paine's religious views. Hales (1747–1831) was a Church of Ireland clergyman and scientific writer. He was a lecturer at Trinity College, Dublin but quit in 1788 to be minister of a parish in County Cavan.]

Hall, Robert. *Modern Infidelity Considered with Respect to Its Influence on Society: In a Sermon, Preached at the Baptist Meeting, Cambridge*. Cambridge: Printed by M. Watson; Angel-Inn-Yard. and sold by J. Deighton, and O. Gregory: by J. James, Bristol; W. Button, Paternoster-Row, T. Conder, Bucklersbury, and W. H. Lunn, Oxford-Street, London, 1800.

*[Helton, John]. *The Insufficiency of the Light of Nature: Exemplified in the Vices and Depravity of the Heathen World. Including Some Strictures on Paine's "Age of Reason."* London: Printed for John and Arthur Arch, and John Wright, 1797.[British. Against *AR*1. Helton (1731-1817) was from Cork, and during his life, a Methodist and a Quaker.]

*Hincks, Thomas Dix. *Letters Addressed to the Inhabitants of Cork, Occasioned by the Circulation of a Work, Entitled, the Age of Reason, &C. In That City*. Cork: Printed and Sold by J. Haly, King's-Arms, Exchange, 1795. [British. Against *AR*1.A second edition of this work appeared in 1796 and was sold in London with the slightly modified title *Letters Originally Addressed to the Inhabitants of Cork, in Defence of Revealed Religion, Occasioned by the Circulation of Mr. Paine's Age of Reason, in That City. Second Edition, with Alterations and Additions*. Hincks (1767–1857) was an Irish Presbyterian clergyman, academic and headmaster in Cork.]

*Hoge, Moses. "The Sophist Unmasked in a Series of Letters, Addressed to Thomas Paine, Author of a Book Entitled, the Age of Reason." In *Christian Panoply; Containing an Apology for the Bible; in a Series of Letters, Addressed to Thomas Paine, Author of a Book Entitled the Age of Reason, Part the Second. By R. Watson, D.D. F.R.S. Lord Bishop of Landaff, and Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge: An Address to Scoffers at Religion. By the Same Author: And a Brief View of the Historical Evidences of Christianity. By William Paley, M.A. Arch Deacon of Carlysle*, edited by Moses Hoge. Shepherd's-Town [Va.]: Printed by P. Rootes & C. Blagrove, 1797. [American. Against *AR*1. Hoge (1752-1820) was a Virginian, a Presbyterian minister (ordained in 1782) and the sixth president of Hampden-Sydney College (from 1807-1820) where he also taught theology.]

**Humphreys, Daniel. *The Bible Needs No Apology: Or Watson's System of Religion Refuted; and the Advocate Proved an Unfaithful One, by the Bible Itself: Of Which a Short View Is Given, and Which Itself Gives, a Short Answer to Paine: In Four Letters, on Watson's Apology for the Bible, and Paine's Age of Reason, Part the Second*. Portsmouth, NH: Printed by Charles Peirce, for Samuel Larkin, at the Portsmouth Bookstore, 1796.[American. Against both *AR*2 and Watson's *Apology*. Although Humphrey's name does not appear on this book, a Portsmouth, N.H. newspaper, *The Oracle of the Day* carries an advertisement for the book that says that Humphreys is the author.(Sept. 30, 1797). Humphreys (1740-1827) was a Yale graduate, studied law, and was a school teacher. In 1804 he became a US District Attorney for New Hampshire. In matters of religion, Humphreys was "Sandemanian", a Scottish sect founded in the 1730s that was hostile to the concept of national Churches. Dexter's *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College* says that Humphreys took his Sandemanian feelings "against a paid clergy so far that he would never remain in the court-room while the minister made the opening prayer"(1896, vol. 2: 472). This certainly explains his hostility to Richard Watson, Bishop of Landaff.]

*Hunt, Henry. *A Caution to the Readers of Mr. Paine's Age of Reason. By Henry Hunt, Esq. Of Cappagh, County Tipperary*. Dublin: Printed by John Halpen, No. 19, New-Sackville-Street, near Earl-Street, 1795. [British. Against *AR*1.]

Intercepted Correspondence from Satan to Citizen Paine. [London]: J. Aitkin, [1793].

*Jackson, William. *Observations in Answer to Mr. Thomas Paine's "Age of Reason." By the Rev. William Jackson, Now a Prisoner in the New-Prison, Dublin; on a Charge of High Treason*. Dublin: Printed for G. Folingsby, 1795.[British. Against *AR*1. Jackson was a Irish minister and a United Irishman. He was tried for treason in 1795 and wrote this tract from his prison cell.]

**Jones, John. *A Vindication of the Lord Bishop of Landaff's Apology for the Bible, in a Series of Letters Addressed to Mr. A. Mcleod* London: Printed for V. Griffiths, 1797. [British. Against MacLeod's critique of Watson's *Apology*. I have not consulted this book. *Bibliotheca Britannica* (vol. 2) notes that Jones was a "Unitarian Teacher, and Member of the Philological Society at Manchester."]

Jones, William. *Popular Commotions Considered as Signs of the Approaching End of the World. A Sermon Preached in the Metropolitical Church of Canterbury, on Sunday, September 20, 1789: With an Occasional Preface. By William Jones, M. A. F.R.S.* London: Printed for G. G. J. and J. Robinson, Pater-Noster-Row, 1789.

*Kain, Maurice. *Kain against Paine on the Age of Reason: With a Hint to the Public*. Staunton, [Va.]: Printed by William Throckmorton, 1795. [American. I have not consulted this book.]

*[Keatinge, George?] *The Folly of Reason. Being Our Perfect and Unerring Guide, to the Knowledge of True Religion. In Answer to the Age of Reason, or an Investigation of True and of Fabulous Theology. By Thomas Paine, Author of Works Entitled, "Common Sense, Rights of Man," &C.* New York: Printed by Tiebout and O'Brien, for G. Keatinge's Book-store, Baltimore, 1794.[American. Against *AR*1.]

‡Knox, Vicesimus. *Christian Philosophy: Or, an Attempt to Display, by Internal Testimony, the Evidence and Excellence of Revealed Religion. With an Appendix, on Mr. Paine's Pamphlet, on Prayer, on Psalmody, and a Short List of Books for the Use of the Plain or Unlearned Reader*. London: Printed for C. Dilly, 1798.[British. Has sections written against *AR*1 and *AR*2 which were added to this third expanded edition of the work. This work went into at least three editions in London, and also appeared in a Dublin edition (H. Fitzpatrick, 1796) and in Philadelphia (Emmor Kimber, 1804). Knox (1752–1821), was an Anglican minister, academic, and headmaster of Tonbridge School.]

*Un Laique *Age Du Desordre Pris Pour Celui De La Raison Par Mr. Paine; Ou, Defense De La Religion Chretienne Contre Les Attaques De Ce Thomas: Contenant Un Abregé Des Preuves Qui Décident Toutes Le [!] Personnes Raisonnables À Reconnoitre Jesus Christ Pour Le Messie Promis Par Les Prophêtes. Ecrit Par Un Laïque* À Londres: Chez F. Wingrave, Strand; F. et C. Rivington, St. Paul's Church Yard; W. Richardson, Royal Exchange; R. Faulder, New Bond Street; et J. Deighton, Holborn., 1794. [I have not been able to consult this tract. Although ostensibly published in London, this book was originally written in French and it does not seem as though it was translated into English. Two different British journals reviewed the book and translated the title (and only the title) differently as" The Age of Confusion" (review in the *Analytical Review* 20 (1794): 287) and "The Age of Disorder" (*Critical Review* 21 (1797): 345). The *Monthly Review* does not translate the title but refers in the review to "the French layman" (*Monthly Review* 15 (1794): 463). This work is mistakenly listed in the Davidson & Scheick bibliography as two separate bibliographic entries under the title *The Age of Disorder Mistaken by Mr. Paine for the Age of Reason* and also as *The Age of Confusion Taken for That of Reason.* I believe that when Davidson & Scheick were compiling their bibliography, they based their information on the review journals and mistakenly took these two titles to be unique titles, rather than just translations of the French title.]

The Last Dying Words of Tom Paine, Executed at the Gullotine in France on the 1st of Sept. 1794, with a Description of the Genuine Water for Converting the Jacobines. Verses on the Death of Paine, and a Dialogue between a Jacobine and the Devil. London, [1795].

*Layman [Miers Fisher?]. *A Reply to the False Reasoning in The "Age of Reason." : To Which Are Added, Some Thoughts on Idolatry; on the Devil; and the Origin of Moral Evil; on Educating Young Men for the Gospel Ministry; and on What Is "The Word of God." All Which Refer, More or Less, to Opinions Advanced in Thomas Paine's "Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology." By a Layman*. Philadelphia: Henry Tuckniss, 1796.[American. Against *AR*1. Miers Fisher (1748-1819) was a lawyer and legislator from Philadelphia.]

*Layman. *A Defence of the Bible; in Reply to Thomas Paine's Age of Reason : Compiled from the Answers to That Book. By a Layman.* Huddersfield: Printed and sold by J. Brook,

Huddersfield ; sold also by Scatcherd and Whitaker, London ; Wilson and Co. York ; Binns and Greenwood, Leeds, &c., [1796?].[British. Against *AR*1 and *AR*2. This work is primarily a compilation of other replies to *AR*, including sections from John Estlin's *Evidences of Revealed Religion*, Layman's *The Age of Infidelity*, and Watson's *Apology*.]

*Layman. *The Age of Confusion Taken for That of Reason, by Mr. Paine; or, a Defence of the Christian Religion against the Attacks of This Thomas, Containing an Abridgement of the Proofs Which Determine All Reasonable Men to Acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Promised Messiah,* 1794. [See notes above for "Un Laique."]

*Layman. *The Age of Disorder Mistaken by Mr. Paine for the Age of Reason; or, a Defense of the Christian Religion against the Attacks of This Thomas; Containing a Summary of the Proofs Which Induce All Reasonable Persons to Acknowledge Jesus Christ for the Messiah Foretold by the Prophets, 1794.* [See notes above for "Un Laique."]

*Layman. *The Age of Infidelity. --Part II.-- in Answer to the Second Part of the Age of Reason. With Some Additional Remarks Upon the Former. By a Layman*. [Philadelphia?]: Printed by Lang & Ustick, and Sold at no. 79, North Third Street, and by the Booksellers, 1796.[British. Against *AR2*. Attributed to a Thomas Williams (but most likely not the same person who was convicted of blasphemy for publishing *AR*.) This tract originally published in London (W. Button, 1796).]

*———. *The Age of Infidelity: In Answer to Thomas Paine's Age of Reason. By a Layman*. [London?], 1794.[British. Against *AR*1. This tract went into at least two London editions. It was also published in the United States: Boston (Manning & Loring, 1794), Worcester, Mass (Isaiah Thomas, 1794), Philadelphia (Stephen C. Ustick, 1794), New York (J. Buel, 1794).]

‡*A Letter from a Chancellor, out of Office to a King in Power. Containing, Reflections on the Aera of His Present Majesty's Accession to the Throne of His Ancestors. On the War with America; the Spanish and Russian Armaments; and the Present War with France; Thoughts on Church and State Establishments, Forming an Enquiry into the Immediate Expediency of Reform, Political, Religious, and Moral; in the Course of Which Are Examined, the Relative Points About Which Trinitarians and Unitarians Chiefly Differ, as Well as Thomas Paine's Assertions Concerning Jesus Christ... The Whole Being a Solemn Appeal to the Justice, Benevolence, and Political Wisdom of Our Gracious King, George the Third.* London: Printed and sold by D. I. Eaton, 1795.[British. This tract is a reformist letter on politics and religion, and in the section on religion it uses Paine and *AR*1 and *AR*2 as examples of how a corrupt church pushes men towards infidelity.]

*Levi, David. *A Defence of the Old Testament, in a Series of Letters Addressed to Thomas Paine, Author of a Book Entitled, the Age of Reason, Part the Second, Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology. By David Levi, Author of Letters to Dr. Priestley, in Answer to His to the Jews, &C. &C. &C.* New York: Printed by William A. Davis, 26 Moore Street, for Naphtali Judah, bookseller, no. 47, Water Street, 1797.[British. Against *AR2*. This tract originally published in London (J. Johnson; and J. Walker, 1797), and a Philadelphia edition also appeared (Hogan & M'Elroy, 1798). Levi (1742-1801) was an English Jew who apprenticed as a shoemaker, but pursued the study of theology and the Hebrew language and wrote numerous essays. He defended Judaism against Joseph Priestley.]

Linn, William. *A Discourse on National Sins: Delivered May 9, 1798; Being the Day Recommended by the President of the United States to Be Observed as a Day of General*

Fast. By William Linn, D.D. One of the Ministers of the Reformed Dutch Church in the City of New-York. . New-York: Printed by T. & J. Swords, 1798.

———. *Discourses on the Signs of the Times* New-York: Printed by Thomas Greenleaf, 1794.

*Lover of Truth. *Revelation, the Best Foundation for Morals: Being, an Investigation of the True & Fabulous in the Age of Reason, and the French Philosophy by a Lover of Truth*. Edinburgh: Printed for J. and J. M'cliesh, New Town, 1798. [British. Against *AR*1 and *AR*2. This work has been attributed to a Mr. "Curtis, Apothecary in Edinburgh."]

Mackintosh, James. *Vindiciae Gallicae. Defence of the French Revolution and Its English Admirers, against the Accusations of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke; Including Some Strictures on the Late Productions of Mons. De Calonne. By James Mackintosh, of Lincoln's Inn, Esquire*. London: Printed for G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1791.

**MacLeod, Allan. *The Bishop of Landaff's "Apology for the Bible" Examined. In a Series of Letters, Addressed to That Excellent Man*. London: Printed for B. Crosby, 1796.[British. Against Watson's *Apology*; somewhat supportive of Paine, but not wholly so. Macleod(d. 1805) was a writer and editor of the London *Albion Journal*.]

†Maison, Peter. *Letters to Thomas Paine: In Reply to His Last Pamphlet, Entitled, Examination of the Passages in the New Testament, Quoted from Old, and Called Prophecies Concerning Jesus Christ : And Shewing the Fallacy and Incompetency of Deism as a Rule for the Regulation of Human Conduct*. New-York: Printed by Henry C. Southwick, 1807. [American. Against Paine's 1807 *Examination of the Passages in the New Testament.* Maison was a lawyer in Poughkeepsie, New York.]

*Malham, John. *A Word for the Bible; Being a Serious Reply to the Declarations and Assertions of the Speculative Deists and Practical Atheists of Modern Times; Particularly in the Age of Reason, Part the Second, by Thomas Paine*. London: Allen and West, 1796.[British. Against *AR*2. Malham (1747-1821) was a schoolmaster, naval chaplain, and author of a book on naval navigation.]

**Marsom, John. *Falshood Detected: Being Animadversions on Mr. Paine's Letter to the Honorable Thomas Erskine, on the Trial of Thomas Williams, for Publishing "The Age of Reason;" Wherein His Attacks Upon the Bible Are Examined, and Shewn to Be Founded in Misrepresentation and Falshood. In a Letter to a Friend*. London: Printed for and Sold by the Author; Mr. Chapman; Mr. Knott; Mr. D. Taylor; and Mr. Hatchard, 1798. [British. Against Paine's *A Letter to the Honourable Thomas Erskine*. Marsom was a preacher (though not ordained, it seems) for the General Baptists. He was also a well known book-seller in Holborn.]

**Martin, John. *A Letter to the Hon. Thomas Erskine, with a Postscript to the Right Hon. Lord Kenyon, Upon Their Conduct at the Trial of Thomas Williams for Publishing Paine's Age of Reason. By John Martin, Solicitor for the Defendant*. London: Printed by H. Smith; Published by Ballard; Evans and Bone; Leslie, Edinburgh; and May be Had of Every Bookseller in Town and Country, 1797. [British. Martin was the defense counsel for Thomas Williams during his trial for blasphemy for publishing *The Age of Reason*. This short pamphlet (which went into at least three editions) is basically Martin's attempt to defend himself from the things that were said by Thomas Erskine (the prosecutor) during the trial.]

*Meek, Thomas. *Sophistry Detected, or, a Refutation of T. Paine's Age of Reason. By the Rev. Tho. Meek*. Newcastle [England]: Printed by M. Angus, 1795.[British. Against *AR*1.

Meek was a minister (Scotch Presbyterian?) and schoolmaster in the Newcastle Upon Tyne area. This work went into at least two editions.]

‡Mendon Association, Massachusetts. *Evidences of Revealed Religion*. Northampton, Mass: William Butler, 1797.[American. Against *AR*1 and *AR*2. This was the first publication of the Mendon Association, a society of New England Congregationalist Ministers. The section against *AR* (Chapter 4, "Strictures on Deistical Writings") was written by Rev. John Crane.]

§Miller, George. *An Antidote to Deism; Selected from the Works of a Friend to Religious Liberty, and Recommended as a Supplement to Paine's Age of Reason : To Which Is Prefixed an Address to the Rational Part of Mankind: And to Which Are Added, Four Queries Addressed to Confirmed Deists . By a Lover of Truth*. n.p.1794. [British. Motivated by *AR1*.]

*M'Neille, Daniel. *Dogmatism Exposed, and Sophistry Detected: Or, a Confutation of Paine's "Age of Reason." To Which Is Prefixed, a Brief Account of the Replies Already Published. By Daniel M'neille, A.M.* London: Printed for T. Chapman, 1794.[American. Against *AR*1.]

More, Hannah. *Cheap Repository. The History of Mr. Fantom, the New Fashioned Philosopher and His Man William.* [London]: Sold by J. Marshall, (printer to the Cheap Repository for Religious and Moral Tracts), 1797.

‡Morse, Jedidiah. *A Sermon, Delivered at the New North Church in Boston, in the Morning, and in the Afternoon at Charlestown, May 9th, 1798 : Being the Day Recommended by John Adams, President of the United States of America, for Solemn Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer.* Boston: Printed by Samuel Hall, 1798.[American. Jedidiah Morse (1761-1826) was a Congregationalist minister who touched off the conspiracy over the Bavarian Illuminati in this sermon. Morse refers to *AR* as proof of the Illuminati conspiracy.]

_____. *A Sermon, Preached at Charlestown, November 29, 1798, on the Anniversary Thanksgiving in Massachusetts. With an Appendix, Designed to Illustrate Some Parts of the Discourse; Exhibiting Proofs of the Early Existence, Progress, and Deleterious Effects of French Intrigue and Influence in the United States. By Jedidiah Morse, D.D. Pastor of the Church in Charlestown*. [Boston]: Printed by Samuel Hall, 1798.

*Muir, James. *An Examination of the Principles Contained in the Age of Reason. In Ten Discourses. By James Muir, D.D. Minister of the Presbyterian Church, Alexandria*. Baltimore: Printed by S. & J. Adams, for the Author; and Sold by Clarke and Keddie, Booksellers, in Market-Street, 1795.[American. Against *AR*1. M'Neille (d. 1816), as far as I can discern, was a Church of Ireland minister in Hacketstown, Co. Wicklow. This tract also critiques Wakefield and the pseudonymous Churchman.]

‡Nares, Edward. *A View of the Evidences of Christianity at the Close of the Pretended Age of Reason: In Eight Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary's, in the Year MDCCV., at the Lecture Founded by the Rev. John Bampton, M.A., Canon of Salisbury*. Oxford: The University Press for the Author; Sold by J. Cooke, 1805.[British. A series of sermons in which Paine's religious views are criticized throughout. Nares (1762–1841) was a historian, poet, lecturer and writer.]

——— *[Eis Theos, Eis Mesites]: Or, an Attempt to Shew How Far the Philosophical Notion of a Plurality of Worlds, Is Consistent, or Not So, with the Language of the Holy Scriptures.* London: Printed for F. and C. Rivington, 1801.[British. Although listed in the Pendleton bibliography of replies to *AR*, this work does not mention *AR* or Paine at all. Paine did

discuss the "plurality of worlds," but so did a number of other writers, so I am not sure it really warrants being considered as a response to *AR*. Pendleton's inclusion of this work as a reply to *AR* may perhaps be based on a 1938 article by Marjorie Nicolson that claims that Nares was responding to Paine, but no real evidence is offered for this. See Marjorie Nicholson, "Thomas Paine, Edward Nares, and Mrs. Piozzi's Marginalia " *The Huntington Library Bulletin* 10 no. Oct (1936): 103-33.]

*Nash, Michael. *Paine's Age of Reason Measured by the Standard of Truth. Wakefield's Examination of, and a Layman's Answer to, the Age of Reason, Both Weighed in the Balance, and Found Wanting*. London: Printed for the author. Sold by J. Mathews; and J. S. Jordan, 1794.[British. Against *AR*1. Also against Wakefield's *Examination* and Layman's *Age of Infidelity*. Nash may have been a Methodist, but probably not ordained. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online ed.) refers to Nash as an "obscure and enigmatic figure, little of his life, and nothing of his death, is known."]

**Observations on 1st. The Chronology of Scripture. 2d. Strictures on the Age of Reason. 3d. The Evidence Which Reason, Unassisted by Revelation, Affords Us with Respect to the Nature and Properties of the Soul of Man. 4th. Arguments in Support of the Opinion, That the Soul Is Inactive and Unconscious from Death to the Resurrection, Derived from Scripture*. New-York: Printed by Thomas Greenleaf, 1795.[American. Against *AR*1. Ruth Bloch in her *Visionary Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985) speculates that Postmaster General Samuel Osgood (1748-1813) wrote this work.(note 69, pg 264).]

*O'Connor, William. *Candid Remarks, on Pain's Age of Reason*. Cork: printed by Robert Dobbyn, 1795.[British. Against *AR*1.]

*Ogden, Uzal. *Antidote to Deism. The Deist Unmasked; or an Ample Refutation of All the Objections of Thomas Paine, against the Christian Religion; as Contained in a Pamphlet, Intitled, the Age of Reason; Addressed to the Citizens of These States. By the Reverend Uzal Ogden, Rector of Trinity Church, at Newark, in the State of New-Jersey. To Which Is Prefixed, Remarks on Boulanger's Christianity Unveiled. And to the Deist Unmasked, Is Annexed a Short Method with the Deists. By the Reverend Charles Leslie*. 2 vols. Newark: Printed by John Woods, 1795.[American. Against *AR*1. This work was also published in Glasgow, Scotland. In 1794, Ogden placed an extended advertisement in the *American Minerva* (October 25, 1794) and the *New Jersey Journal* (October 29, 1794), calling for all those who had an interest in "virtue and Religion [and] the good of human society" to subscribe to this work (which was still being written). Ogden (1744-1822) was an Episcopalian clergyman from New Jersey. He was elected as bishop of New Jersey, but was never officially instated. In 1807 he was suspended from the ministry, but defected to the Presbyterians of New York. According to *History of the Parish of Trinity Church in the City of New York* (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1901) "two hundred copies" of Ogden's work "were ordered to be purchase and placed at the disposal of the Rector and the Assisting Clergy."(144). Donald Fraser used Ogden's book as a source for his *A Collection of Select Biography* and included letters of praise from other ministers touting the usefulness of Ogden's work in the battle against religious infidelity.]

§Oliver, Peter. *Five Short Sermons for Poor People; in Which the Doctrines of the Church of England Are Stated and Illustrated: The Last Chiefly Intended as a Guard against the Pernicious Principles of Mr. Thomas Paine. By the Rev. P. Oliver, M.A.* Chester: Printed and Sold by Jones and Crane; and May be Had of All Booksellers, 1796.[British. The last

sermon deals generally with Paine's religious views as a warning to poor people not to be swindled out of their chance for everlasting life.]

*Osborne, J. *Scripture and Reason, a Poem: Containing Various Arguments in Refutation of Mr Paine's Pamphlet Entitled the Age of Reason. By J. Osborne, a Blind Seaman of South-Shields*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Printed by S. Hodgson, for the author; Sold by the Booksellers in Newcastle; G. Baron, Mathematician, South-Shields; W. Kelley, North-Shields; and Messrs Robinsons, London, 1795.[British. Against *AR*1.]

*Padman, I [John?]. *A Layman's Protest against the Profane Blasphemy False Charges, and Illiberal Invective of Thomas Paine, Author of a Book, Entitled "The Age of Reason", Part 1 and 2, Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology. By I. Padman, Jun.* London: Printed for the Author, 1797. [British. Against *AR*1 and *AR2*. Padman was a clerk in the Bank of England (*A Biographical Dictionary of the Living Authors of Great Britain and Ireland*).]

Paine, Thomas. Most citations from Paine are taken from Philip S Foner, editor, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*. 2 vols. New York: Citadel Press, 1945.

**_____. *A Letter to the Honourable Thomas Erskine, on the Prosecution of Thomas Williams, for Publishing the Age of Reason*. Paris: Printed for the Author, 1797.[Against Thomas Erskine's speech during the Thomas Williams trial for blasphemy for publishing *The Age of Reason*. This tract garnered its own response, such as Marson.]

_____. *A Lecture on the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, as Deduced from a Contemplation of His Works.* [London?]: n.p., 1795. [This is an extracted/expurgated version of AR1.]

_____. *Rational and Revealed Religion Calmly and Candidly Investigated and Compared. By a Layman*. ed. London: np, 1794. [This is a re-titled version of *AR*1].

_____. Thomas Paine to B.F. Bache, 13 July 1795. Castle-Bache microfilm collection, American Philosophical Society Library.

_____.Thomas Paine to B.F. Bache, 20 September 1795. Castle-Bache microfilm collection, American Philosophical Society Library.

_____. *The Age of Reason. Part the Third : Being an Examination of the Passages in the New Testamment, Quoted from the Old and Called Prophecies Concerning Jesus Christ. To Which Is Prefixed, an Essay on Dream, Shewing by What Operation of the Mind a Dream...With an Appendix Containing My Private Thoughts of a Future State... By Thomas Paine. Author of the Works Entituled, Common Sense--Rights of Man, Part the First and Second--and Dissertations on First Principles of Government.* London: Printed, Published and Sold by Daniel Isaac Eaton, at the Ratiocinatory, or Magazine for Truth and Good Sense, No. 3 Ave Maria Lane, Ludgate Street., 1811.

**Palmer, Elihu. *The Examiners Examined: Being a Defence of the Age of Reason*. New York: Printed for the Author; and Sold by L. Wayland and J. Fellows, 1794.[American. Supports *AR*1 against *Folly of Reason*, Wakefield's *Examination*, Layman's *Age of Infidelity*, Stilwell's *Guide to Reason*, "New York Reviewer" article in *American Minerva* (July 2, 1794), an article in the *Gazette of the United States* (September 15, 1794), Uzal Ogden's advertisement in *American Minerva* (Oct. 25, 1794) calling for subscriptions for "Deist Unmasked" (which would later become his two volume *Antidote to Deism*). Elihu Palmer was one of the most active American "militant" Deist of the 1790s. He had been a Presbyterian minister in New York. He was active in a number of

Deist societies and was the publisher of two Deistic newspapers *Temple of Reason* and *Prospect, or View of the Moral World*.]

*Patten, William. *Christianity the True Theology, and Only Perfect Moral System; in Answer To "The Age of Reason:" With an Appendix, in Answer To "The Examiners Examined:" By William Patten, A.M. Minister of the Second Congregational Church in Newport*. Warren, RI: Printed by Nathaniel Phillips, 1795.[American. Against *AR*1. Patten (1763-1839) was a Congregationalist minister in Rhode Island. This tract is also includes an appendix against Elihu Palmer's *Examiners Examined*.]

Pershouse, John. Personal correspondences to James Pershouse. John Pershouse Correspondence and Papers, 1749-1899, Mss.B.P43, American Philosophical Society Library. [For Pershouse's opinion of Paine and AR, see the letters from Dec. 2, 1801; an undated letter from 1802; April 8, 1803; Sept. 23, 1803; May 4, 1804; May 25, 1805; Oct. 26, 1805; Feb. 23, 1806; June 10, 1810. John Pershouse was an English merchant who lived for many years in Philadelphia. These letters are to his younger brother, who seemed to be a fan of Paine. For more on Pershouse, see James Tagg (1985).]

‡Philalethes [Daniel Turner]. *Common Sense; or, the Plain Man's Answer to the Question, Whether Christianity Be a Religion Worthy of Our Choice in This Age of Reason? In Two Letters to a Deistical Friend. By Philalethes*. London: Printed for the Author; and Sold by T. Knott; and J. Marsom, [1796?].[British. Only mentions Paine and *AR* obliquely; suggests to readers that they consult Watson's *Apology* as a refutation of Paine specifically.]

Place, Francis. *The Autobiography of Francis Place (1771-1854), Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Mary Thale*. Edited by Mary Thale. Cambridge [Eng.] Cambridge University Press, 1972.

‡Porteus, Beilby. *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of London, at the Visitation of That Diocese in the Year Mdccxciv. By Beilby Lord Bishop of London.* London: Printed for F. and C. Rivington, 1794.[British. Against *AR1*. Beilby was Bishop of London and this sermon rails against infidelity in general, but in a long footnote on pages 22-4, *AR1* is singled out.]

*Priestley, Joseph. *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever. Part III. Containing an Answer to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason*. Philadelphia: Printed by Thomas Dobson, at the stone-house, no. 41, South Second-Street, 1795. [British. Against *AR*1. This book was originally published in 1794 as *Continuation of the Letters to the Philosophers and Politicians of France, on the Subject of Religion; and of the Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever; in Answer to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason.* (Northumberland-Town [Pa.], 1794). In the 1780s Priestley had written two books addressing the "Philosophical Unbeliever" and this work was a continuation of these letters. Priestley's reply to Paine also appeared in England as *An Answer to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason, Being a Continuation of Letters to the Philosophers and Politicians of France, on the Subject of Religion; and of the Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*. (London: Reprinted for J. Johnson, 1795). Priestley (1733-1804) was an eminent scientist and Unitarian of his day, who engaged in many religious disputations. He had to flee his native England in the wake of what became known as the "Priestley Riots" of 1791, and he settled in Northumberland, Pennsylvania.]

_____. *Discourses Relating to the Evidences of Revealed Religion, Delivered in the Church of the Universalists, at Philadelphia, 1796. : And Published at the Request of Many of the Hearers.* Philadelphia: Printed for T. Dobson, by John Thompson, 1796.

"Proceedings Against Thomas Williams for Publishing Paine's 'Age of Reason'." In *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, edited by T.B. Howell, 653-720. London: T.C. Hansard, 1819.

*Protestant Lay-Dissenter. *Remarks on a Pamphlet Entitled The "Age of Reason," Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology, by Thomas Paine. By a Protestant Lay-Dissenter*. Dublin: Printed by P. Byrne, No. 108, Grafton-Street, 1795.[British. Against *AR*1.]

*Purves, James. *Review of the Age of Reason : With Remarks on Some Other Deistical Writings : Part I*. Edinburgh Printed by J. Ruthven and Sons, 1795.[British. Against *AR*1. Purves (1734–1795) was a "Universalist dissenter" preacher, who was raised in the Church of Scotland but abandoned it for Arianism. A second part of this tract was intended, but Purves died before he was able to write it.]

‡Reid, William Hamilton. *The Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies in This Metropolis: Including, the Origin of Modern Deism and Atheism; the Genius and Conduct of Those Associations; Their Lecture-Rooms, Field-Meetings, and Deputations; from the Publication of Paine's Age of Reason Till the Present Period*. London: Printed for J. Hatchard, T. Burton, Printer, 1800.[British. A general work about radicalism and infidel societies, but singles out *AR* as one of the central texts of these societies.]

Rickman, Thomas Clio. *The Life of Thomas Paine*. London: Rickman, 1819.

Robbins, Thomas. *Diary of Thomas Robbins, D.D. 1796-1854*. Boston Beacon Press, 1886-1887. [Diary entries indicate his distaste for AR.]

‡Robison, John. *Proofs of a Conspiracy against All the Religions and Governments of Europe, Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies. Collected from Good Authorities, by John Robison, A.M. Professor of Natural Philosophy, and Secretary to the Royal Society of Edinburgh*. Edinburgh: Printed for William Creech; - and T. Cadell, junior, and W. Davies, London, 1797.

*Scott, Thomas. *A Vindication of the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and of the Doctrines Contained in Them: Being an Answer to the Two Parts of Mr. T. Paine's Age of Reason. By Thomas Scott, Chaplain to the Lock Hospital*. London, printed: New-York: Re-printed by G. Forman, for C. Davis, Book-seller, no. 94, Water-Street, 1797.[British. Against *AR*1 and *AR*2. This tract also went into a second edition in London (with a new preface), and was reprinted along with some of Scott's other writings in the United States in 1810 and 1815. Scott (1747–1821), was a Church of England clergyman and biblical scholar. He had tangled with Paine before, in writing his reply to *Rights of Man*, titled *The Rights of God* (London : Printed by D. Jaques, 1793).]

†*A Serious Admonition to the Disciples of Thomas Paine, and All Other Infidels*. London?, 1796. [British. This is a one-page pamphlet that is reproduced and responded to by Abraham Binns' *Remarks on a Publication* (1796).]

†Shann, Timothy Metcalf *Observations on Certain Passages of the Old Testament, Cited in the Historical Books of the New Testament, as Prophecies...In Answer to Paine's Age of Reason, Part the Third. By the Rev. T.M. Shann, A.M.* York: Printed by C. Peacock, 1812. [British. Against the "third" part of *The Age of Reason* (which is really just the British title for Paine's *Examination of the Passages in the New Testament.*)]

‡Simpson, David. *A Plea for Religion, and the Sacred Writings: Addressed to the Disciples of Thomas Paine, and Wavering Christians of Every Persuasion: By the Rev. David Simpson, M.A.* Macclesfield [England]: Printed and Sold for the Author by Edward

Bayley; Aold also by Dilly, London, Clarke, Manchester, and Others, 1797.[British. This tract is as much a critique of corrupt and lax Christians as it is about the perils of infidelity. Simpson makes frequent reference to Paine as a dangerous popularize of infidelity. Simpson (1745–1799) was a Church of England clergyman and author who gravitated towards Methodism and Arminian beliefs. After his death in 1799, his son reprinted this book in 1802.

*Snyder, G.W. *The Age of Reason Unreasonable; or, the Folly of Rejecting Revealed Religion. In a Series of Letters to a Friend. By G.W. Snyder, A.M.* Philadelphia: Published by William Cobbett, Opposite Christ Church, 1798.[American. Against *AR*2. Snyder was a German-born Lutheran clergyman in Frederickstown, MD.]

†Southcott, Joanna. *An Answer to Thomas Paine's Third Part of the Age of Reason. Published by D.I. Eaton; Likewise to S. Lane, a Calvinistic Preacher, at Yeovil, Is Somersetshire; and to Hewson Clarke, Editor of the Scourge, and Late of Emanuel College, Cambridge. By Joanna Southcott*. London: Printed by Marchant and Galabin, Ingram-Court, 1812. [British. Against the "third" part of *The Age of Reason* (which is really just the British title for Paine's *Examination of the Passages in the New Testament.*) Southcott (1750-1814) was a controversial English mystic, prophetess and founder of a religious sect, the "Southcottians."]

*Stilwell, Samuel. *A Guide to Reason, or, an Examination of Thomas Paine's Age of Reason : And Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology*. New York: Printed by John Buel for the Author, 1794.[American. Against *AR*1. Stilwell (1763-1848) a New York Methodist (but not a minister) and evangelical activist. His adopted son Samuel D. Doughty wrote a book about Stilwell called *Life of Samuel Stilwell* (New York: Brown & Wilson, 1877).]

*Stokes, Whitley. *A Reply to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason : Addressed to the Students of Trinity College, Dublin*. Dublin: Printed by P. Byrne, 108, Grafton-street, 1795. [British. Against *AR*1. Stokes (1763–1845) was an Irish physician from Dublin, who was briefly a United Irishman until they called for armed insurrection. He later became a senior fellow at Trinity College.]

Summers, Thomas O. *A Refutation of the Theological Works of Thomas Paine, Not Noticed by Bishop Watson in His 'Apology for the Bible'*. Nashville, Tenn.: Published by E. Stevenson & F.A. Owen, Agents, for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South., 1855.[A mid-nineteenth century refutation of *AR*1.]

*Suter, A. *An Humble Attempt to Defend the Bible against the Aspersions of Mr Paine, in His Second Part of the Age of Reason*. Sunderland: Printed for the author by W. Dobson, 1796. [British. Against *AR*2.]

Swift, Zephaniah. *A System of the Laws of the State of Connecticut : In Six Books.* 2 vols. Windham1796. [In volume two, in the section "Crimes Against Religion," Swift (who was himself a Deist), "reprobate[s] the baseness of Thomas Paine, in his attack on Christianity, by publishing his Age of Reason" (vol 2, 323-324).]

*Taylor, Thomas. *An Answer to the First Part of the Age of Reason. Printed in 1794. By Thomas Taylor, V.D.M.* Manchester [England]: Printed at G. Nicholson and Co.'s Office, 1796.[British. Against *AR*1. Although not an ordained minister Taylor (1738–1816), was a Methodist preacher who travelled extensively throughout the British Isles. Although he had little formal education, he taught himself Latin, Greek and Hebrew.]

*———. *An Answer to the Second Part of Mr. Paine's Age of Reason, Printed in London, as It Is Said, from the Author's Manuscript. By Thomas Taylor, V.D.M.* Manchester [England]: Printed at George Nicholson's Office, No. 9 Spring-Gardens, 1796.[British. Against *AR*2.]

*Theocrat. *The Brush of Sound Reason, Applyed to the Cobweb of Infidelity, or, Thomas Paine's Reason Proved False, in Few Words; Being a Brief Reply to the Age of Reason, Part 2d. In a Letter to a Deist. By a Theocrat. To Which Is Added, a Letter to an Arminian, on the Subject of the Divine Decrees. By the Same*. Chambersburg, [PA]: Printed by Dover & Harper, 1796.[American. Against *AR*2.]

*Thomson, Robert. *Divine Authority of the Bible, or, Revelation and Reason, Opposed to Sophistry and Ridicule: Being a Refutation of Paine's Age of Reason, Part First and Second*. London: Highham, 1801.[British. Against *AR*1 and *AR*2. This tract was reprinted in Boston in 1807. A *Biographical Dictionary of the Living Authors of Great Britain and Ireland* calls Thomson a "writer at Edinburgh, and one of the surveyors for that city." This tract also published in Boston (Ephraim C. Beals, 1807).]

†True Baptist. *The Age of Inquiry, or, Reason and Revelation, in Harmony with Each Other, Operating against All Tyranny and Infidelity: Intended as a Clue to the Present Political Controversy in the United States : To Which Is Added, Some Remarks Upon the Report of the Committee of the Legislature of Connecticut Upon the Baptist Petition, Presented at Their Session of May, 1802*. Hartford [Conn]: Printed for the Author, 1804. [American. Against Paine's religious views in general, but the author is also grinding axes against Federalists and church/state union).]

*True Briton. *A Letter to the Analytical Reviewers: Being an Examination of Their Account Of "The Age of Reason"…to Which Is Added an Address to the People of England. By a True Briton…and a Graduate of an English University*. Southampton, 1794.[British. Against *AR*1 and a "favorable" review of it that appeared in the *Analytical Review* (v19, 1794: 159-65).]

Toulmin, Joshua. *The Injustice of Classing Unitarians with Deists and Infidels*. London: printed for J. Johnson, St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1797.

Tyler, Royall. *The Algerine Captive*. New York: The Modern Library, 2002. [Tyler's novel was originally published in 1797. The relevant chapters dealing with Paine an AR, are in the first section of the work, chapters XXVII-XXIX.]

*Tytler, James. *Paine's Age of Reason, with Remarks, Containing a Vindication of the Doctrines of Christianity from the Aspersions of That Author. By a Citizen of the World*. Belfast 1794.[British. Against *AR*1. Tytler (1745–1804) was a fierce Scottish nationalist and radical, but received the nickname "Baloon Tytler" due to his youthful adventures in aeronautics. He was a member of the Society of the Friends of the People and spent a number of years as a writer and journalist in London and Edinburgh. He was indicted for seditious libel in 1793 and fled to Belfast, where he wrote this tract against *AR*1. In 1795 he emigrated to the United States, settling in Salem, Massachusetts. (*Oxford Dict. of Nat. Bio*).]

*———. *Paine's Second Part of the Age of Reason Answered. By James Tytler, Author of the Remarks on Paine's First Part of the Age of Reason, by a Citizen of the World, Published at Belfast in Ireland*. Salem [Mass.]: Printed by Thomas C. Cushing, 1796. [British. Against *AR*2. This work was republished as a lightly expurgated version in Edinburgh as *An Answer to the Second Part of Paine's "Age of Reason"*. (Edinburgh: Printed for and by

Schaw & Pillans, 1797). The Scottish editors noted that while Tytler was an "original thinker, and conversant with the best books" he nevertheless evinced a bit too much "eccentricity, both in opinion and in conduct" and they therefore removed from the text some of his "extraneous" political opinions. I did a comparison of the American and Scottish versions of the text, and the Scottish expurgators mainly took out any disparaging remarks about British leaders (such as Pitt or Dundas) or the general state of politics in Europe.]

†Wait, William. *The Last Days of a Person Who Had Been Thomas Paine's Disciple*. 3rd ed. Bristol [England]: Printed for and sold by J. Lansdown, 1802. [British. Against Paine's religious views in general. Wait was an Anglican minister, who was at Oxford and also a curate of Maryport Church in Bristol. This tract is the supposedly true account of a deathbed conversion of a "gentleman" who was a Deist but was led back to the Christian fold before dying of consumption. This tract went through numerous editions, and it was republished in 1819 in the wake of Richard Carlile's republication of *AR*. Wait was an Anglican minister, who was at Oxford and also a curate of Maryport Church in Bristol.]

*Wakefield, Gilbert. *An Examination of the Age of Reason, by Thomas Paine: The Second Edition, Corrected and Enlarged. With an Appendix of Remarks on a Letter from David Andrews: By Gilbert Wakefield, B.A, Late Fellow of Jesus-College, Cambridge*. London: Sold by Kearsley, and Shepperson and Reynolds, 1794.[British. Against *AR*1. Wakefield (1756–1801) was a biblical scholar, educated in mathematics and classics at Cambridge. He was briefly a deacon and curate in Liverpool. Wakefield translated and published (in 1792) a translation of the New Testament, and in 1793 wrote a work of apologetics, *Evidences of Christianity*. Wakefield also engaged in political controversy, publishing pamphlets supportive of the principles of the French Revolution and critical of the Pitt government, which ultimately led to him being convicted with a two year prison sentence for sedition. (Oxf. Dict of Nat. Biog).]

*———. *A Reply to Thomas Paine's Second Part of the Age of Reason. By Gilbert Wakefield, B.A.* London: Printed for H. D. Symonds, 1795. [British. Against *AR*2. Both of Wakefield's replies to *AR* were published in numerous editions on both sides of the Atlantic.]

§Wallace, Elijah. *Universal Alarm, or Age of Restoration. Wherein Theology Is Unmasked, ... Being a Final Answer to Mr. Thomas Paine's Age of Reason, -- and a Full and Final Refutation of All Atheistical, Deistical or Antichristian Dogmas, Principles or Opinions Whatsoever, That Have Been or May Hereafter by Asserted or Maintained, from Adam Down to the Conclusion of the Millennium. Including Such a Body of Divinity, or System of Christian Doctrine, as Cannot Be Overthrown or Refuted by Mahometans, Pagans, Jews, Infidels, Heathens, or Proselytes of Paine. Vol. I by Elijah Wallace,, of the City of Dublin, School-Master*. Dublin: Printed for the author, 1798.[British. Against *AR1* & *AR2*, although the work is more just a statement about the fundamental truths of Christianity.]

*Wallis, James. *The Bible Defended; Being an Investigation of the Misrepresentations and Falsehoods of Thomas Paine's Age of Reason, Part the Second: Wherein Also, the Evidences of Revealed Religion Are Stated, and the Authenticity and Divine Authority of the Several Books of the Bible Are Vindicated. By James Wallis, Pastor of the Church in New-Providence, in Mecklenburg County, North-Carolina*. Halifax, N.C.: Printed by

Abraham Hodge, 1797.[American. Against *AR*1 and *AR*2. Wallis (1762-1819) was the pastor (ordained 1792) of the Presbyterian Church in Providence (N.C).]

§[Wardrop, James]. *A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of Alexander Christie, Esq. Of Townfield, Late Chief Magistrate of Montrose, Containing Some Observations on the Progress of Religious Knowledge in Scotland, and on Mr. Paine's "Age of Reason." By a Layman*. Glasgow: Sold at the Unitarian Chapel, at the Printing-office of J. Mennons, and at the Shops of the Booksellers, 1795.[British. Wardop a militant Unitarian decrying the state of religion in Scotland (because not enough have come to the rational Unitarian position). Sees Paine as basically an ignorant demagogue in terms of his religious beliefs.]

§Waring, Jeremiah. *Three Letters Addressed to the Readers of Paine's Age of Reason. By One of the People Called Christians*. London: Printed forf Darton and Harvey, No. 55 Gracechurch-Street; J. Matthews, Near Northumberland-House, Strand; and J. Wright, Opposite Bond-Street, Picadilly, 1797.[British. Against *AR1*, although this work is more just a statement about the excellence of the Christian religion. Waring was an English Quaker.]

*Watson, Richard. *An Apology for the Bible, in a Series of Letters, Addressed to Thomas Paine*. London 1796. [British. Against *AR*2. Watson's book was the most frequently republished response to *AR*. Not only did it appeared in numerous editions on both sides of the Atlantic (and even in French as *Apologie Ou Défense De La Bible)*, but it was frequently excerpted in other works, appended to other works, and even offered as a companion-piece to editions of *AR*. Watson (1737–1816) was a church of England clergyman and bishop, after having spent a number of years at Cambridge as a professor of chemistry and then as regius professor of divinity in1771. Named Bishop of Landaff in 1782, and would remain there until his death.]

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Whyte, Samuel. *Hints to the Age of Reason. By a Member of the Rotula*. n.p., [1795?].[British. The Pendleton bibliography lists this as a response to *AR*, but she was basing this on an entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Allibone's *Critical Dictionary of English Literature* lists this under Edward Athenry Whyte (son of Samuel). I have been unable to locate this tract in any library catalogs. It may be that this was not a published work, but was actually just a proposal for debating *AR* in the Rotula literary society. The Whytes were school teachers in Dublin, Ireland.

*Wilmer, James Jones. *Consolation: Being a Replication to Thomas Paine, and Others, on Theologics. By James Jones Wilmer, of Maryland*. Philadelphia: Printed for the author, by William W. Woodward, Franklin's Head, no. 36, Chesnut-Street, South Side, 1794.[American. Against *AR*1. Wilmer an Episcopal minister from Maryland who spent a lot of time in England before and during the American Revolution, where he became attracted by Swedenbourgian theology (which he recanted in 1799). Wilmer became the Chaplain of the Senate in 1809.]

*Wilson, David. *Answer to Payne's Age of Reason. With a Short View of the Obedience Which Christians Are Bound to Yield to the Powers That Be. By David Wilson, V.D.M. Pittenweem*. Perth [Scotland]: Printed by R. Morison Junior. For R. Morison & Son, Perth; John Ogle, Edinburgh; Robert Hutchinson, Glasgow; Edward Leslie, Dundee, and Vernor & Hood, London, 1796.[British. Against *AR*1 and *AR*2.]

*Winchester, Elhanan. *Ten Letters Addressed to Mr. Paine, in Answer to His Pamphlet, Entitled the Age of Reason. Containing Some Clear and Satisfying Evidences of the Truth of Divine Revelation; and Especially of the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus. By Elhanan Winchester*. Boston: Printed and Sold by John W. Folsom, no. 30, Union-Street, 1794. [American. Against *AR*1. Winchester (1751-1797) was a Universalist evangelizer who spent a number of years in England in the 1780s. Winchester's work is the rare American response to *AR* that was reprinted in Britain, where it appeared as *A Defence of Revelation, in Ten Letters to Thomas Paine; Being an Answer to His First Part of the Age of Reason.* (London: Re-printed for the Editor, by T. Gillet, 1796).]

**Wyche, William. *An Examination of the Examiners Examined, Being a Defence of Christianity. Opposed to the Age of Reason, by William Wyche, Author of Several Works, and Citizen of the United-States of America*. New York: Printed by Wayland and Davis, and sold by L. Wayland, no. 151, Water-Street, 1795.[American. Against Palmer's *The Examiners Examined.* Wyche was born in England and was a member of "Honorable Law Society of Grey's Inn, London" where he received his legal training. Wyche emigrated to the United States and was naturalized as a citizen in 1794.]

Yorke, Henry Redhead. *Letters from France, in 1802*. 2 vols. London: H.D. Symonds, No. 20 Paternoster-Row, 1804. [Yorke (1772-1813) had been a radical acquaintance of Paine from the early 1790s, and he relates his re-acquaintance with him in 1802 in France. See pages 337-4, 360-65.]

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