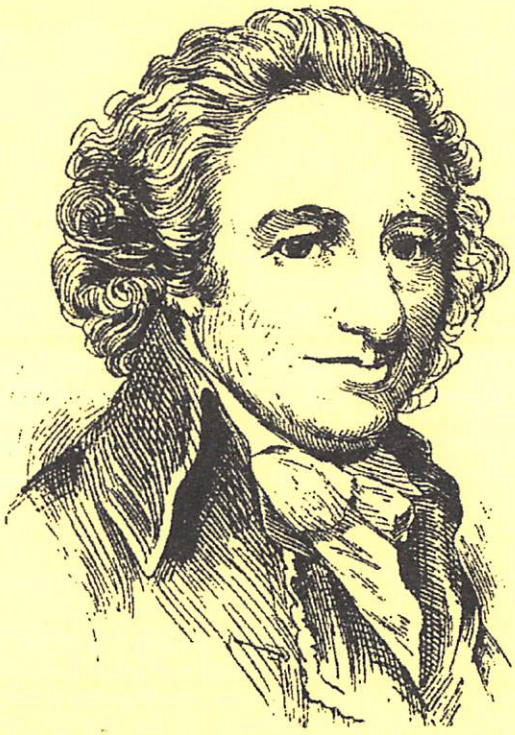
JOURNAL OF RADICAL HISTORY



Vol.11. No.1. 2011

Thomas Paine Society

JOURNAL OF RADICAL HISTORY

Volume 11. Number 1. 2011

ISSN 0040 813

Printed and Publish
by the
Thomas Paine Society
43, Eugene Garden, Nottingham, NG2 3LF, England
r.morrell1@ntlworld.com

Editor: Robert Morrell, F.L.S.
Communications in respect of this journal should be sent to the editor at the address above.

Thomas Paine Society.
Honorary Secretary: Barbara Jacobson.
19, Charles Rowan House, Margary Street, London, WC1X 0EH.
postmaster@thomaspainesocietyuk.org.uk

Any communications in respect of the society, membership details, etc., should be sent to the secretary at the address above.

Membership is open to anyone interested in Thomas Paine and his influence. Membership dues: Ordinary: £15.00 per annum. Students: £5.00 per annum. Senior citizens: £5.00 per annum. Unwaged: £5.00 per annum. Outside if not paid in sterling: USA $35.00. Europe €35.00. These include the bank conversion charge which is levied by the bank not the society. If paid in sterling the British rates apply but exclude all categories except ordinary. All mail sent overseas goes by air.

Society website:
www.thomaspainesocietyuk.org.uk

Journal of Radical History. 11.1.2011

RICHARD PRICE, DD., FSA: CHAMPION OF CIVIL LIBERTY

Derek Kinrade

Dr Richard Price was a man of many parts: preacher, moral philosopher, commentator on actuarial and public finance, and ardent campaigner for civil liberties. This essay focuses, for the most part, on his latter activities.

One of the most influential radical thinkers of his day, though now little known beyond dedicated historians and scarcely quoted, he was a dissenting (non conformist) minister, the son of a dissenting minister, yet thoroughly traditional in his core beliefs in the omnipotence of God, the power of prayer and the rewards of heaven. Brought up and educated in the dissenting tradition, he cut no imposing figure, yet eventually attracted both a worshipful following as well as a coterie of powerful detractors.

He was dissenting, of course, as a Protestant refusing to accept the practice of the established Church of England, and therefore restricted under the harsh laws introduced after the collapse of the Puritan Revolution. The Toleration Act of 1689 provided some easement, but this had excluded Roman Catholics and Unitarians (a word that first appeared in Britain in 1673). Nevertheless, after 1774, Price followed Joseph Priestley and Theophilus Lindsey in avowing a revealed Unitarian theology based on reason and the enlightened conscience. Typically, beliefs were not precisely prescribed, but the emerging Unitarians rejected the doctrine of the Trinity (looking at God as One as distinct from Father, Son and Holy Spirit), the idea of original sin and the threat of eternal punishment (yet fell short of a rational rejection of theism). They held Jesus Christ in the highest regard, but as a mortal man, not an incarnate deity.

Newington Green

Unsurprisingly, some of those of this dissenting persuasion extended their nonconformity into areas of political criticism, with a zeal for social reform. Price was a remarkable example. Born in

1723, and ordained at the age of 21, he spent the first twelve years of his ministry as chaplain to the Streatfield family of London's Stoke Newington, as well as assisting at the Old Jewry Presbyterian Chapel, before moving, with his new Anglican wife Sarah, to the village of Newington Green as minister of its nonconformist church in 1758. The house where they lived, 54 Newington Green, part of a surviving historic terrace, was next door to the banker Thomas Rogers and therefore, from 1763, to a baby, Samuel Rogers, destined to become one of England's leading poets. The area was already established as a centre of non-conformity, home to many well-heeled dissenting families. During the next 30 years no.54 was to extend a welcome to a wide assortment of celebrities, including his close friends Benjamin Franklin, James Burgh (who kept a dissenting academy on Newington Green) and Priestley, along with occasional visitors such as David Hume and Adam Smith, John Howard, Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, John Horne Tooke, Lord Lyttleton, and Earl Stanhope. Allardyce (see sources) describes it as "an important meeting place for the progressive and radical thinkers of the day".

By all accounts Price was not at first a great preacher. Cone (see sources) tells us that "his weak, unpleasant voice accentuated his other shortcomings as a speaker", but that he later gained success "out of the thoughtful content of his sermons, the quiet earnestness of his demeanour, and his sincerity and humility". These were virtues that were also effective in his writings. At least until his final address he was no firebrand; persuasive rather than dogmatic; indeed it was the mildness of his approach and his scholarly, measured discourse which earned respect from his friends and did much to confound those who opposed his views. His first important work was published in 1758 with a forbidding title which I will shorten to *A Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals*. He had perfected this over many years, emphatic that morality should not be divorced from religion. Nature was evidence of God's power and he believed that inconsistencies in such evidence were merely attributable to our inability to comprehend God's design. This is not the place for a detailed analysis of a text running to nearly 500 pages, but it is relevant to bring out his insistence that intelligence is one of the requisites of practical morality, "necessary to the perception of moral good and evil". And that liberty is essential to intelligent morality: "A thinking, designing, reasoning being, without liberty, without any inward,

spontaneous, active, self-directing principle" cannot be conceived (pp 305-6). Thus, he argued, liberty and reason constitute the capacity of virtue.

A call to civil liberty

This passionate advocacy of personal freedom lay at the heart of Price's thinking and found its most positive expression in his *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty*, published in February 1776 (compare Burgh's *Political Disquisitions* (1774)). Here he sets out his concept of liberty as the principle of self-direction or self-government, in contrast to the external conquest of will and private judgement: the difference between freedom and slavery. "To be free," wrote Price, "is to be guided by one's own will, and to be guided by the will of another is the characteristic of servitude." Liberty could be physical, moral or religious, but in relation to civil liberty, it was necessary for governance to be seen as "the creature of the people", originating with them and conducted under their direction, with a single-minded view to their happiness. Thus taxes must be freely given for public services and laws established by common consent; magistrates being merely trustees or deputies for carrying regulations into execution. Price recognised that not everyone could express their views on public measures individually or personally, but they could delegate authority through the appointment of substitutes or representatives. In doing so, he stressed the importance of a rule that people given the trust of government should hold office only for short terms, chosen by the majority of the state and subject to their instructions.

Inevitably, he noticed, the interests of states would clash, but it would be no solution to make one of them supreme over the rest. His solution has a familiar ring: "Let every state, with respect to all its internal concerns, be continued independent of all the rest, and let a general confederacy be formed by the appointment of a senate consisting of representatives from all the different states."

The antithesis of civil liberty, Price contended, was the doctrine that there are certain men who possess in themselves, independently of the will of the people, a God-given right of governing them. Such a view represented mankind as a body of vassals: "to be obliged, from our birth, to look up to a creature no better than ourselves as the master of our fortunes, and to receive his will as our law – what can be more humiliating? ...There is

nothing that requires to be watched more than power. There is nothing that ought to be opposed with a more determined resolution than its encroachment...should any events ever arise that should render the same opposition necessary that took place in the times of King Charles the first, and James the second, I am afraid that all that is valuable to us would be lost. The terror of the standing army, the danger of the public funds, and the all-corrupting influence of the treasury, would deaden all zeal and produce general acquiescence and servility."

The case for American independence

It is irresistible not to see the first part of the pamphlet as a prelude – a setting of the scene – for the slightly better-known Part Two, devoted to Price's observations on the justice and policy of the war with America. He was overtly sympathetic to the cause of the American colonies, in which he had taken a close interest for some years, not least as a consequence of his friendship with Franklin. Stanley Weintraub (see sources) notices that in January 1774, Price, Edmund Burke and Joseph Priestley were among those in the gallery of the Whitehall Palace Cockpit when the 68-year-old Franklin was called to the Privy Council to answer a claim that he had "publicly exposed" private letters from the royal governor of Massachusetts that somewhat exposed the realities of British foreign policy. These, said to have been sent by Franklin in confidence to an old friend in Boston, had subsequently been leaked to the *Boston Gazette.* Though subjected to a long and vitriolic assault, Franklin made no concession, but was eventually stripped of his representative office and obliged to return to America. The humiliation merely served to raise Franklin's reputation in his home country and to reinforce a divide that was on its way to becoming irreconcilable.

Both Price and Franklin had been members of the 'Honest Whigs Club' from at least 1769, along with James Boswell, dissenting clergymen Joseph Priestley and Andrew Kippis, James Burgh, botanist Peter Collinson, and Sir John Pringle (from 1772-78 president of the Royal Society - to which Price had himself been elected in 1765). The club met in a coffee-house on alternate Thursdays, and whilst we cannot now be privy to their discussions it seems clear that for some of them radical political reform was high on the agenda. They must have fed off each other, for obvious similarities are evident in the writings of Franklin, Burgh,

Priestley and Price.

Up to mid-1775, despite military activities, the grain of popular sentiment in America and the perceived colonial objective had generally been one of reconciliation. There was trust in George III and a belief that the British parliament would see sense and be persuaded to restore American rights within an amicable union. Indeed there was a view, especially in the so-called Continental Congress, that independence would not only be disloyal but might lead to mob rule and the loss of relatively safe trading routes. Such faith in the monarchy was, however, soon to be dispelled by a series of repressive royal measures and pronouncements which clearly demonstrated that the king was leading rather than being overruled by parliament, and was deaf to colonial supplications for conciliation and reform. Price had by this time been increasingly drawn into the political arena, both in his campaigning against the continuing intrusion upon the rights of Protestant dissenters and his empathy with the colonial rebellion. His contacts in London and letters from America kept him in touch with the tide of events across the Atlantic and elicited his unequivocal support for the rebels and their cause. There had been little appetite for war among the general populace in Britain, and several prominent people had warned of the futility of attempting to subdue the aspirations of these distant and disparate colonies by military force. But the king and his establishment were fixed on a collision course of crushing the rebellion, maintaining control, order, obedience and the sovereignty of parliament: effectively domination. Towards the end of 1775, Price determined to enunciate his thinking. When his *Observations* were published on 9 February 1776, six years had elapsed since the Boston 'massacre', all but nine months since the attack at Lexington and, crucially, more than a month after the sensational appearance of Paine's *Common Sense* (some three months if one takes account of the time needed for Price's pamphlet to reach America). It is now apparent to us that, although Price's text reinforced the bid for independence and was welcomed, the American Congress was already moving to a separation from Britain: the die was already cast and the rift beyond reconciliation.

Yet Price's work contains some imperishable principles which have since been tested by history and deserve our closer attention. Typically, he began with a barbed olive branch, ready to make great allowances for the different judgments of others, rhetorically

conceding that his words would not have any effect on those who still thought that British claims could be reconciled to the principles of true liberty and legitimate government. He recognised that the idea of America as a subordinate British colony was deeply ingrained, but argued that this was open to a change of heart when the idea of colonists being British subjects, bound by British laws was seen to be unreasonable when tried against the principles of civil liberty.

He pointed out that, although novel, the fact that the colonised state was on its way to becoming superior to its parent state was something that should be considered on the ground of reason and justice, rather than the old rules of narrow and partial policy. Alas, however, he saw that matters had already gone too far and that conflict ("the sword") was now to determine the rights of Britain and America. But he thought it was not too late to retreat; to rely on the king's disposition to "stay the sword".

First, one should consider the justice of the war. This rested upon an act of parliament giving Britain the power and the right to "make laws and statutes to bind the colonies and the people of America, in all cases whatever". A dreadful power indeed, commented Price: "I defy anyone to express slavery in stronger language." It amounted to saying that we had a right to do with them what we please.

Price rejected the argument that there needed to be a supreme right to interfere in the internal legislations of the colonies, "in order to preserve the unity of the British Empire". He pointed out that similar pleas had, in all ages, been used to justify tyranny, citing the example of the Pope as head of the Roman Catholic Church. Such an approach could produce "nothing but discord and mischief".

Nor could it be claimed that Britain was the superior state as the parent state. Parents do indeed have authority over their children, but only until they become independent and capable of judging for themselves. Thereafter only respect and influence is due to the parent. By this measure our authority in relation to the colonies should have been relaxed as they "grew up", whereas we had taken our authority "to the greatest extent, and exercised it with the greatest rigour... No wonder then, that they had turned upon us." The land was not ours simply because we had first settled there; if

anyone could lay such a claim it was first with the natives, and then only with the settlers who cleared and cultivated the wilderness. Had they not, he asked, then established a system of governance similar to our own, with our agreement, for more than a century? Was it any wonder that they should revolt when they found their charters violated, and an attempt made "to force innovations upon them by famine and the sword?"

But aside from charters, Price continued, was it common sense to imagine that when people settle in a distant country those they have left behind should for ever be able to control their property and have the power to subject them to any modes of government they please? To be taxed and ruled by a parliament that does not represent them? And ought we to be angry because the colonies looked for a better constitution and more liberty than that enjoyed in Britain? Rather should it not be wished that there may be at least one free country left on earth to which we might flee when venality, luxury and vice had completed the ruin of liberty here? Imposing taxes without representation, Price suggested, was simply another form of despotism.

Price then turned to the future, with, we can now judge, top marks for foresight. If, he speculated, it was argued that Britain had a supremacy entitling its government to exercise jurisdiction over taxation and internal legislation, should we then be equally entitled in perpetuity? In 1775 the colonists numbered a little short of half the British population, but the probability was that in another 50 or 60 years they would double our numbers, forming a mighty empire, consisting of a variety of states with the same or greater accomplishments and arts "that give dignity and happiness to human life". Would they then have to continue to acknowledge Britain's claim to supremacy, even should our legislature degenerate into a body of sycophants, little more than a public court for registering royal edicts?

These were powerful arguments in favour of self-determination for the American colonies, reinforced by a scarcely concealed scepticism about our own governance and its future. Price went on to discuss specific aspects of the war with America: whether it was justified by the principles of the British constitution, its policy implications, its effect on the honour of the nation and the probability of its success. In its belief that discontent could be quelled by a resort to force of arms, he argued, the government

had massively over-reacted, provoking a shift away from a natural disposition to accept British authority and co-operate in trade to a general exasperation and spirit of revolt.

Divergent reactions

In Britain, Price's *Observations* prompted considerable interest: predictably divided between liberals who generally shared his views and conservative opponents who quickly published a number of angry rebuttals; not least one from John Wesley, who saw Price's work as "a dangerous Tract...which, if practised, would overturn all government, and bring in universal anarchy." But apart from concern raised by his close analysis of the likely financial consequences of war, Price's text had little effect; none at all on Britain's belligerent foreign policy. There were some fears for Price's safety, but in fact no punitive action was taken against him. Ambrose Serle, the secretary to the British Admiral Lord Richard Howe, saw it as evidence of "the mildest & most relaxed Government in the World". In any other state than Great Britain, he argued, the book would have been burned and the author hanged.

In America, unsurprisingly, Price's text was well received and added to the author's already glowing reputation. But whereas Paine's *Common Sense*, made a forceful and unambiguous case for independence and transformed colonial opinion, I think that the response to Price was no more than thoughtful. I think that anyone who reads Price's full text, as against my considerable simplification (indeed over simplification) cannot fail to be struck by the contrast between Paine's plain speaking and concise, straightforward and inspirational prose and Price's lengthy perambulations. This distinction, I believe, similarly accounts for Price's relatively low-key historical reputation. This is unfortunate, because the essence of Price's text is not dissimilar from the second paragraph of the *Declaration of Independence*, adopted only five months after the publication of *Observations*. Price's thinking went to the heart of the values on civil liberty that we now share with the United States. Sagely, Cone titled his biography of Price *Torchbearer of Freedom.*

The *Declaration* itself, written primarily by Thomas Jefferson, further fermented the spirit of rebellion, particularly against the obdurate George III. After its famous opening statement of principle it enumerated the history of the king as one of "repeated

Injuries and Usurpations", all directed to the establishment of an absolute tyranny over the states of the Union, and concluded with a declaration that the united colonies were free and independent states absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown. Readings of the text were organised in various parts of the colonies, prompting demonstrations hostile to the British and its monarch, the most famous of which took place in the evening of 9 July 1776 in New York. When the reading was over, a crowd marched to the Bowling Green, the location of William Wilton's splendid representation of a mounted George III. In a great symbolic gesture, the rebels pulled horse and monarch down from its plinth, an event which now inevitably draws comparison with the fate of Sadam Hussein's statue in Baghdad. In the case of the unfortunate image of George, the insult was intensified when the statue was later melted down and made into musket balls: apart, that it, from its head, which was mounted on a pole and exhibited for a time outside Fort Washington.

Meanwhile, Price's pamphlets continued to make waves at home. In the face of heavy criticism he went on to produce *Additional Observations* in 1777, and to republish a combination of both texts in 1778, attracting still more abuse. In America, by contrast, his popularity continued to grow. On 6 October in the same year, as a mark of the esteem in which he was held in America, Congress wrote to express its desire to consider him a citizen of the United States and to solicit his help in regulating their finances. He could be remunerated both for the move there and his services. But Price, no longer eager or feeling himself sufficiently fit for any such challenge, while gratified, graciously declined. Cone records that in his reply he looked to the United States as "the hope, and likely soon to become the refuge of mankind". In 1781 Yale University honoured Price as a Doctor of Law, and in the following year the American Academy of Arts and Sciences awarded him a fellowship.

Nor was this the only political offer. Lord Shelburne, an old friend, keenly aware of Price's financial expertise and concern for the national debt, had sought to tempt him away from his theological pursuits. When appointed Prime Minister in July 1782, on the death of Rockingham, he promptly asked Price to assist him. Once again, content in the radical milieu of Newington Green and preaching to a full chapel, Price declined, feigning that he did not have much to contribute. As it turned out, the opportunity would

have been short-lived. Shelburne resigned in February 1873, after defeats in the Commons.

Strategies for a blessed peace

The end of the American war brought Price back into the political scene. He was able to correspond more freely with his friends in the new world, and soon started work on a pamphlet which reached the United States in 1784: *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, and the means of making it a benefit to the world.* Though his advice was unsolicited, it was warmly welcomed by Franklin, Jefferson, Adams and other friends, thankfully received by members of Congress (and by George Washington personally), and widely read and admired. He enjoyed a status as a champion of America and in January 1785 was elected into membership of the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia.

In these *Observations,* Price suggested that the American Revolution, next to the introduction of Christianity, might prove to be the most important step in the progressive course of human improvement: a casting off of the shackles of superstition and tyranny. At the end of the pamphlet he conceded that he may have carried his ideas too high and deceived himself with visionary expectations. But there are those who find parallels in Price's *Observations* and the American Constitution of 1788, and a close reading of his remarkable text will certainly reveal some surprising and timeless principles.

Of particular interest are his thoughts on the "supreme importance" of religious and civil liberty, based on truth and reason. He looked for constitutional developments that would make government even friendlier to liberty, as a means of promoting human happiness and dignity; specifically liberty of discussion in all speculative matters and liberty of conscience in all religious matters, subject to restraint only if used to injure anyone in their person, property or good name. In the exercise of liberty of discussion Price included "the liberty of examining all public measures and the conduct of all public men; and of writing and publishing on all speculative and doctrinal points".

Here Price faced a difficulty, for he was aware of a common opinion (then as now) that some matters were so sacred, and

others of so bad a tendency, that no public discussion of them ought to be allowed, and that those in authority should penalise any such discussion. Those, for example, who opposed the Muslim view of the divine mission of Mohamed, the Popish view of worship of the Virgin Mary, or the traditional Protestant view of doctrines of the Trinity or the supreme divinity of Christ. But, argued Price, civil power had nothing to do with such matters, and was not equipped to judge their truth. Would not, he asked, perfect neutrality be the greatest blessing? Different sects were continually exclaiming against one another's opinion as dangerous and licentious. Even Christianity, at first, was so accused in that it ran counter to pagan idolatry; and the Christian religion was therefore reckoned "a destructive and pernicious enthusiasm". Were this kind of judgment the rule there would be no doctrine, however true or important, the avowal of which would not in some country or other be subjected to civil penalties.

Price next turned to liberty of conscience: freedom of religious belief and practice. Here he was on his home territory, and expounded – at length – on the virtues of true religion and their perversion when civil authority was involved. This, essentially, was a statement of the Unitarian position: a blast against slavish adherence to "obsolete creeds and absurdities", imposing boundaries on human investigations and confining the exercise of reason. In some European countries, wrote Price, these dogmas and rituals had been recognised and acknowledged, but had become so entrenched by the state apparatus that it was scarcely possible to get rid of them. In his own country the growth of enlightenment had had no effect on the religious establishment: "not a ray of the increasing light had penetrated it". Price believed that there were lessons here for America, where constitutional examples – while not perfect – encouraged him to think it might be possible that pernicious civil forms of gloomy and cruel superstitious religion might be avoided.

Price's thoughts on education were similarly challenging. He believed that its purpose should be to teach *how* to think, rather that *what* to think. He particularly regretted that people of different faiths, convinced that they alone had discovered the truth, should be confident advocates of education; whereas the "very different and inconsistent accounts that they gave" demonstrated that they were utter strangers to the truth. It would be better to teach nothing, he suggested, than to teach what they held out as truth.

The greater their confidence, the greater the reason to distrust them: "We generally see the warmest zeal where the object of it is the greatest nonsense." Thus, in Price's view, education ought to be an initiation into candour, rather than into any systems of faith. Hitherto, education had been dominated by adherence to established and narrow [formulaic] plans, whereas Price contended that the mind should be rendered free and unfettered, quick in discerning evidence, and prepared to follow it from whatever quarter and in whatever manner it might offer itself.

There were other snares and dangers facing the emerging nation. Price ranged briefly over the need for a just settlement of federal union and the avoidance of internal conflict. He warned of the danger of disputes being settled at "the points of bayonets and the mouths of cannon", instead of relying on the collective wisdom of confederation. He stressed – as he had begun - the perils associated with excessive public debt, and the importance of preventing too great an inequality in the distribution of property. He saw equality in society as essential to liberty and, in this regard, urged that America would do well to avoid the British enthusiasm for hereditary honours and titles of nobility. Let there be honours to encourage merit, he proposed, but let them die with those who had earned them rather than bequeath to posterity a proud and tyrannical aristocracy. America would be better off without lords, bishops and kings, and certainly without the rule of primogeniture.

Price similarly inveighed against excessive love of one's own country, widely applauded as one of the noblest principles of human nature, but in fact one of its most destructive forces. He commended instead the benefits of communication across nations, whence people could see themselves as citizens of the world rather than of a particular state.

But Price saved his most fervent – and controversial – proposition to a final section headed 'Of the negro trade and slavery'. He was not the first writer to point out that slavery was completely at odds with principles of equality. Benjamin Rush had castigated slavery as a national crime, and early in 1775 Thomas Paine had made a spirited attack against the trade in *The Pennsylvania Journal*. Price himself cited Thomas Day's tract *Fragment of an original Letter on the Slavery of the Negroes*, written in 1776, but not published until 1784. Keane (see sources) refers to there having been around half a million slaves working in the 13 colonies during

the Revolution. The system of forced labour was well established and widely seen as legitimate. Price would have none of this. The trade was one that "cannot be censured in language too severe"; a traffic "shocking to humanity, cruel, wicked and diabolical". Until measures were introduced to abolish this odious servitude, the united states would not deserve the liberty for which they had fought. Three years later a certain William Wilberforce would be drawn into the abolitionist cause.

A female protégé

In the year marked by the publication of his observations on the American Revolution, an accident of fate introduced a completely different interest into Price's day job at Newington Green. A young woman, destined famously to assert the rights of women, took a lease on a large house within sight of the church. Mary Wollstonecraft, aged 25, had chanced upon an unexpected inspiration. It is not for this article to set out the complex circumstances that brought Mary, her dearest friend Fanny Blood and her sister Eliza to this part of London; suffice it to say that, led by Mary but lacking adequate resources, each of them was seeking to break out from miserable situations and equally breaking with convention. They remained for a relatively brief period that was in many respects an unhappy one, marked by an unending struggle to make ends meet, the death of Fanny, and the ultimate impracticability of making a success of the school. But it was also a precious time that brought Mary into contact with Price and his circle. Although an Anglican, Mary was also drawn to attend the dissenting church, and was invigorated to experience the support and stimulation of good people whose religion was based on reason rather than a belief in supernatural events. Here, among an assembly of intellectual radicals steeped in a tradition that went back to Defoe, she was exposed for the first time to radical ideas, to the quest for change, seen as a realistic possibility. Here she was introduced to Joseph Priestley and taken to Islington to meet Samuel Johnson (though she preferred the thinking of Price) and, through Price, met her future publisher Joseph Johnson. And she also met women who could hold their own. The dissident aspiration for social reform took Mary in a particular direction in keeping with her personal experience, as a female, of blatant discrimination. We may conjecture that it influenced her in writing her first book, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, which earned her a much needed advance from

Joseph Johnson. Her school survived only until the autumn of 1786, when she moved to Ireland, but her experience at Newington left an indelible impression. Tomalin (see sources) refers to a letter from Mary in which she mentioned the particular friendliness of Dr. Price. Though his wife was dying (Sarah passed away on 20 September 1786 after a long illness), he still had time to think of Mary's welfare. Tomalin comments that Mary learnt a great deal from Price; although she was never tempted to exchange her "easy-going" Anglicanism for his dissenting faith, he "set her on certain paths and prepared her to think critically about society".

Inspired by revolution

The loss of Sarah, advancing age and declining health bore down on Price. He relocated to Hackney and, though continuing to preach, was mindful of retirement. Events, however, were moving in the opposite direction. It is hard to say quite when discontent in France could fairly be called a revolution, but by 1789 the social upheaval there was recognised as a powerful movement that could easily spread abroad; in Britain bringing hope to radicals aching for reform and fear to those attached to the old social order. Price, despite his tribulations, was drawn into the fray. As a leading member of the London Revolution Society, the agitation in Paris excited him and other radical protagonists to think that what had been achieved in America might be transplanted into Europe and give power to the people. The Society had been formed in 1788 to commemorate the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, but inevitably interest was now centred more on the revolution in France. On 4 November 1789 (the anniversary of the birthday of William of Orange), at the annual meeting of the Society held in the Dissenters' meeting house in Old Jewry, Price delivered a daring sermon, quickly published as *A Discourse of the Love of Our Country* (with various appendages). This, of course, was an opportunity to return to some of his most precious themes and stand conventional thinking on its head.

'Country' he said, was not to be thought of as the soil or spot of earth on which we happened to be born, but rather the community of which we were members. Nor should we see 'our' country or its laws and governance as superior to other countries; nor confine wisdom and virtue to the circle of our own acquaintance and party.

Indeed, we should see ourselves as citizens of the world guided by the blessings of truth [enlightenment], virtue and liberty, embracing under God universal benevolence, and loving our neighbours as ourselves. An enlightened and virtuous community must also be a free country; one that did not suffer invasions of its rights, or bend to tyrants. Obedience to just laws was essential to prevent a state of anarchy, but there were extremes of compliance that ought to be avoided: adulation was always odious and, when offered to men in power, served to corrupt them. Price deplored servility, and castigated the crawling homage that had greeted George III's recovery from illness. He would have chosen to wish that the king would henceforth more properly consider himself the servant than the sovereign of his people.

He asked his congregation not to forget the principles of the 1688 revolution, which the Society had held out as "an instruction to the public", notably:

- the right to liberty of conscience in religious matters,
- the right to resist power when abused, and
- the right to choose our own governors; to cashier them for misconduct; and to frame a government for ourselves.

Price rejoiced that the 'Glorious Revolution', which had got rid of James II, had broken the fetters of despotism and saved Britain from the "infamy and misery" of popery and slavery. Yet, he was eager to point out that those events had fallen short of delivering perfect liberty. He lamented in particular continued civil restrictions on dissenters and the gross and palpable inequality of parliamentary representation. (In a footnote added to the version published in 1790 he defined this as "A representation chosen principally by the Treasury and a few thousand dregs of people who are generally paid for their votes.") The state of the country was such as to render it "an object of care and anxiety": a monstrous weight of debt was crippling it, and vice and venality were such that the spirit to which it owed its distinctive qualities was in decline. Every day seemed to indicate that the country was becoming more ready to accept encroachments on its liberties.

But again Price saved his most audacious salvo to the end of his address. He declared that he saw "the ardour for liberty catching and spreading; a general amendment in human affairs; the dominion of kings changed for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priests giving way to the dominion of reason and

conscience." The times were auspicious. People were "starting from sleep, breaking their fetters, and claiming justice from their oppressors." The spirit ("light") that had set America free had reflected to France, and there kindled into a blaze that was laying despotism in ashes, warming and illuminating Europe! He concluded with a warning: "Tremble all ye oppressors of the world! Take warning all ye supporters of slavish governments and slavish hierarchies!...You cannot now hold the world in darkness. Struggle no longer against increasing light and liberality. Restore to mankind their rights; and consent to the correction of abuses, before they and you are destroyed together."

On the same evening, members of the Society met again for their annual dinner at the London Tavern. Price, no doubt weary but still animated, moved an address to the National Assembly of France sending congratulations on the revolution and the prospect it gave "to the first two kingdoms in the world of a common participation in the blessings of civil and religious liberty". As well as adding ardent wishes for the settlement of the revolution, the Society unambiguously and unanimously joined in expressing the particular satisfaction with which they reflected on "the tendency of the glorious example given in France to encourage other nations to assert the inalienable rights of mankind, and thereby to introduce a general reformation in the governments of Europe, and to make the world free and happy."

A mixed response

The radical sermon and the congratulatory message inevitably reignited hostility to Price and provoked a pamphlet war. Price was not without supporters, yet perhaps the most telling reservation came not from an enemy but a valued friend. When John Adams, who was to become the second President of the United States, was appointed the new American minister to the Court of St. James in 1785, he and his family had travelled to Hackney to hear Price preach. But when, five years on, Adams read Price's Old Jewry sermon, his response, while generous, was cautious. He warmed to its principles and sentiments, and recognised the historic importance of the French Revolution, but felt constrained to add that he had "learned by awful experience to rejoice with trembling." He knew that France was not America, and warned that in revolutions "the most fiery spirits and flighty geniuses frequently obtained more influence than men of sense and judgment; and the

weakest man may carry foolish measures in opposition to wise ones proposed by the ablest." He saw France as being in great danger. McCullough (see sources) remarks that ahead of anyone in the government, and more clearly than any, Adams foresaw the French Revolution leading to chaos, horror, and ultimate tyranny.

Mary Wollstonecraft's defence of his *Discourse (A Vindication of the Rights of Men),* published anonymously, was decidedly double-edged, arguing that while his final political opinions were "Utopian reveries" they deserved respect as the product of a benevolent mind tottering on the verge of the grave. The world, she argued, was not yet sufficiently civilised to adopt such a sublime system of morality.

Edmund Burke had been far less kind. As well as being alarmed by Price's discourse he was also aware of Thomas Paine's sympathy for the Revolution, and spent the best part of 1790 preparing his *Reflections on the Revolution in France,* published on 1 November. He wrote of his astonishment on discovering a Society that had devoted itself to consideration of the merits of the constitution of a foreign nation, leading on to sending, as though in a sort of public capacity, a sanction to the proceedings of the National Assembly in France; on its own authority and without the express agreement of the Society's own government. He saw Price's sermon as having been designed to connect the affairs of France with those of England, "by drawing us into an imitation of the conduct of the National Assembly". This had given him "a considerable degree of uneasiness". He had found "some good moral and religious sentiments, and not ill expressed, [but these were] mixed up in a sort of porridge of various political opinions and reflections", of which the French Revolution was the "grand ingredient in the cauldron."

Burke saw the congratulatory message sent to the National Assembly as a corollary of the principles of the sermon, moved by its preacher. Few harangues from the pulpit, he wrote, had ever breathed less of the spirit of moderation. Much as in our own time the Archbishop of Canterbury has been criticised for expressing his political dissent in the pages of the *New Statesman,* Burke observed that "no sound ought to be heard in church but the healing voice of Christian charity." "The cause of civil liberty and civil government," he argued, "gains as little as that of religion by this confusion of duties."

Burke's *Reflections* are well known and need no further elucidation here. The same can be said of Paine's famous rejoinder. The first part of his *Rights of Man* was published on 13 March 1791. Little more than a month later, on 19 April, Price died, having been for some months, as Cone puts it, "a silent spectator to events in France and England". He was buried at Bunhill Fields, after a service led by Joseph Priestley. Allardyce tells us that the funeral route was so crowded by well-wishers that the coffin arrived five hours late for the service.

We, of course, have the benefit of hindsight in knowing that Britain would not take the revolutionary road. But it is important to understand that Price and Paine were writing before the onset of the horrific phase of the French Revolution that came to be known as the Reign of Terror. They believed that the uprising heralded a new dawn. Price knew that there were dangers. In a footnote to the *Discourse* he accepted that countries lacking our "excellent constitution of government" could not achieve liberty without "setting everything afloat, and making their escape from slavery through the dangers of anarchy." But it is reasonable to surmise that the "good Dr Price" – known for freeing birds caught in the nets of local bird-catchers and a hero to poor people in Newington Green - would have shifted his ground in the light of those terrible events. The bloodletting in France (which almost claimed Paine's life) need not be seen as invalidating Price's cherished principles. It is perhaps rather that we British have been slower to act and less inclined to dramatic change and violence. Reform towards Price's Utopia has gradually been conceded, both in Britain and the European Union, but has taken longer. Some may feel that even now we have still some way to go in achieving the goal of "perfect liberty".

Sources

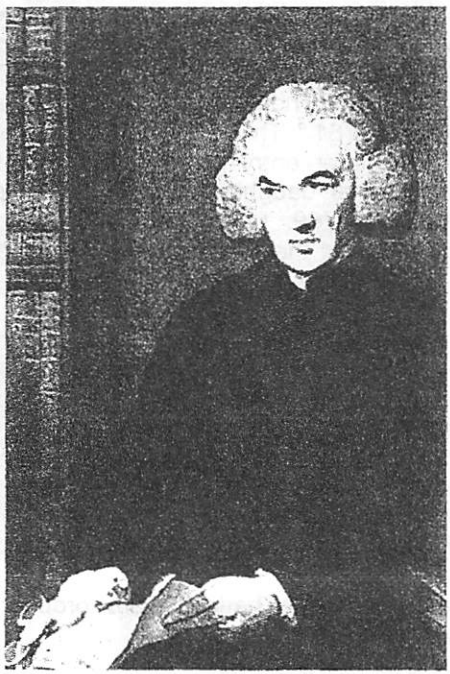
Carl B. Cone: *Torchbearer of Freedom, the influence of Richard Price on eighteenth century thought* (University of Kentucky Press, 1952).

Richard Price: *Observations on the nature of civil liberty, the principles of government and the justice and policy of the war with America* (1776, available as a Google book).

Richard Price: *Observations on the importance of the American Revolution, and the means of making it a benefit to the world* (the edition of March 1785, available as a Google book).

Richard Price: *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country* (T.Cadell, 1790,

available as a Google book).
Edmund Burke: *Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the proceedings in certain societies in London relative to that event* (J. Dodsley, 2nd edition, 1790, available as a Google book).
Alex Allardyce: The village that changed the world (Newington Green Action Group, 2nd ed. 2010).
Stanley Weintraub: *Iron Tears, rebellion in America 1775-1783* (Simon & Schuster, 2005).
Gregory T. Edgar: *Campaign of 1776 – the road to Trenton* (Heritage Books, 1995). Contains a brilliant account of the close-run congressional debate on the Declaration of Independence.
United States *Declaration of Independence* (the first Dunlap broadside version, 4 July 1776).
David McCullough: *John Adams* (Simon & Schuster, 2002).
Claire Tomalin: *Mary Wollstonecraft* (Penguin, revised edition 1992).
John Keane: *Tom Paine, a political life* (Bloomsbury, 1995).
Mary Wollstonecraft: *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790).



Dr. Richard Price

THE FATE OF PAINE'S FIRST WIFE: A NOTE

W. A. Speck

Here has been much speculation on what became of Thomas Paine's first wife, Mary Lambert, after they moved from Sandwich to Margate in April 1760. George Chalmers, in his hostile life of Paine published in 1791, was the first to speculate on it. 'By some she is said to have perished on the road of ill-usage', he asserted, 'and a premature birth'.[1] The inference is that Tom's's wife-beating led Mary to miscarry and this caused her death. Then, without any acknowledgement of the contradiction, Chalmers also retails a rumour 'that she is still alive, though the extreme obscurity of her retreat prevents ready discovery'.[2] Clearly both tales cannot be true.

Hazel Burgess cast doubt on the first with her discovery in the records of St. Lawrence's church Thanet, in Ramsgate, not far from Margate, of entries recording the baptism on 7 December, 1760, of Sarah, daughter of Thomas and Mary Pain, and of her burial on 12 September, 1761.[3] This turns out to have been a red herring, however, for a later entry in the same parish register records the birth of another daughter, Pleasant, to Thomas and Mary Pain on 1 January, 1769. They were clearly not the same couple as Tom and Mary but their namesakes.[4] It still leaves the fate of Toms's wife a mystery.

While Chalmers suggested that she may have survived, he admitted that 'the women of Sandwich are positive that she died in the British Lying in Hospital, in Brownlow Street, Long Acre; but the registry of that charity, which is kept with commendable accuracy, evinces that she had not been received into this laudable refuge of female wretchedness'.[5] 'When Paine's first wife died in childbirth, old women of Thetford' according to another account 'blamed him saying that he had demanded that his wife get out of bed too soon to cook for him.'[6] Although they differed about the circumstances, the women of Sandwich and Thetford were probably right in believing that Mary had died.

End Notes

1. Francis Oldys [George Chalmers]. *The Life of Thomas Paine* (10th edition.

1793), p.13. The 'ill usage' Chalmers refers to he had mentioned previously, alleging that following their marriage 'two months had hardly elapsed when our author's ill usage of his wife became apparent' p.12.
2. Ibid., p.14.
3. Dr Burgess first announced her discovery in 'To Thomas a Daughter, the Thetford Magazine (Summer, 2000), pp.14-17; she published a corrected version in this journal: Hazel Burgess, 'A Small Addition to the Writings of Thomas Paine'. *Thomas Paine Society Bulletin and Journal of Radical History* 5:3 (2001). Pp. 7-10. Cf. George Hindmarch. 'Thomas Paine: Observations on Methodism and his Marriage to Mary Lambert'. *The Journal of Radical History of the Thomas Paine Society* 8:3 (2006). p.22, and Burgess's letter in the following issue, 8:4, p.37.
4. Canterbury Cathedral Archives U3/19/1/5. Registers of St. Lawrence Thanet sub baptisms 1769. Pleasant's death is recorded under burials for 13 October, 1775. Pain was a surname shared by others in the parish. A 'Thomas Pain batchelor' married Ann Pierce on 28 December, 1764.
5. Chalmers, pp.13-14.
6. Fawn Brodie. *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History* (1975), 122-3. Cited by John Keane, Tom Paine: A Political Life (1996). pp.50-1. Brodie cites only James Cheetham, *The Life of Thomas Paine* (1809), who did not mention the old women of Thetford, so her source is unknown.

THOMAS PAINE VERSUS TED VALLANCE
An Academic Salutes the Royal Wedding

Julius Hogben

My first serious secondhand book was the 1791 edition of *Rights of Man* published out of his own pocket by Thomas Paine. It cost me three pounds. A student, I had to pay by instalments, to the bookseller's annoyance. A friend with a similar copy introduced me to the Thomas Paine Society. At the AGM two years ago I was thrilled to hear about a hitherto unknown letter by Paine in 1791, about my book:

"The first and second parts of the *Rights of Man* are printing complete, they will come at nine pence each. As we have now got the stone to roll, it must be kept going by cheap publications. This will embarrass the Court Gentry more than anything else, because it is a ground they are not used to".

This years Esoteric Paine lecture, 'Thomas Paine and Monarchical Republicanism' was meandering, obscurantist, uninspiring and boring. It would certainly put anyone off the TPS. It was of no more interest to TPS members than the hundreds of PhD theses which litter dusty university archives with titles like "Highway Tolls in 13th Century Devon", or, "Incidences of Murrain in the West Riding of Yorkshire in 1842". The lecture was a footnote, marginal to the life and achievements of Thomas Paine. Worse, it was a travesty of Paine's ceaselessly subversive and exiting writing.

Monarchical republicanism never actually existed. It's a purely theoretical construct by a historian which fits some facts but not others. Its contradictions abound - and that's before Ted Vallance even tries to squeeze Paine into this artificial mould. He writes: "The obvious difficulty with seeing Paine as a 'monarchical republican' is his unequivocal attachment to republicanism and his hostility to monarchy". He himself makes so many qualifications to Paine's membership of this hypothetical category, that I was constantly baffled as to why this essay had been written at all. Ted Vallance wrote his excellent Thomas Paine - Made in England essay for the BBC history magazine not as a lecture for the TPS.

Of a seventeenth century someone called Smith, Vallance writes:

"In his analysis of the English state, if not in his assessment of the efficacy of the arrangement, Smith was in agreement with Paine". Well, there's the rub. They're so utterly at odds, that any comparison is futile.

Yes, club and societies showed Paine that people were capable of governing themselves. By slipshod wording, Vallance seems to give the impression that in saying this, Thomas Paine was somehow RESPECTABLE: "Paine was, again, in line with much contemporary polite opinion". Polite opinion! Can this be the man who was prosecuted for sedition and convicted of High Treason in his absence, with crowds paid to burn him in effigy and stone his boat as he left the country? Who wrote accurately enough that "...the Government of England is as great, if not the greatest perfection of fraud and corruption that ever took place since governments began". Merely publishing *Right of Man* put Carlile in gaol, a milestone in our long struggle for freedom of expression, which hasn't ended yet.

In his inauguration speech President Obama harked back to one of Paine's most stirring passages: by his heartening timely pamphlet he almost single-handedly saved the Americans in their War of Independence. He was in the battle with them. Clear analysis went with denunciation of tyranny and corruption - and with prescription. Paine's aims and his writing style were on the march hand in hand.

To appreciate how stunning and unusual this combination was, we have only to dip into the virtually unreadable output of Mary Woolstonecraft. Paine demystified ruling class ideology by casting a fresh and fundamental eye on history, religion, political structure, international affairs. He didn't write "History is lies about crimes", but he could have. When he described William the Conqueror as "A French bastard landing with an armed banditti and establishing himself as king of England against the consent of the natives", it's understood that England has been governed for centuries by hereditary aristocratic thugs. Paine constantly mixed the specific and the general: "There never did, there never will, and there never can exist a parliament, or any description of men, nor any generation of men, in any country, possessed of the right or the power of binding and controlling posterity 'to the end of time.'"

When Paine wrote "Man (were it not for governments) is naturally

the friend of man, and human nature is not of itself vicious", it's plain that no-one is born with Original Sin; no-one needs Christ to save his soul (whatever that was!) from Sin. Friendship crossed national frontiers. "If men will permit themselves to think as rational beings ought to think", he wrote, "nothing can appear more ridiculous and absurd than to be at the expense of building navies, filling them with men, and then hauling them out into the ocean to see which one can sink each other the fastest". Again, "Wars are the means by which non-representative governments maintain their power and wealth". he pioneered the emancipation of the slaves, he advocated an international organisation to outlaw war, care for the poor and aged, to be paid by progressive income tax. My sympathies are deeper still when Paine writes, with the personal feeling that I often share, "I become irritated at the attempt to govern men by force and fraud".

Any member of the TPS can out quote me. I'm writing this simply because after this lecture, it needs to be re-established why we admire Thomas Paine. And yet Vallance's article in the BBC history magazine does this.

No wonder Paine was a bestseller! So far removed from the deservedly obscure forerunners dug up by Ted Vallance for this lecture. Paine never patronised and never divided his readers into those educated, and those for whom the reading of his pamphlets was an education. Ted Vallance's praise of "the distinctive philosophy and style" of Thomas Paine's writings only goes to emphasize his lack of either, in this lecture. From last year's Eric Paine lecture on Cobbett "Two Cocks on a Dunghill", which omitted his Paine-bashing period, we've descended to this. Whatever Paine read, he saw beyond it. TPS members must see beyond academic sterility.

Paine's purposes were close in meaning to a passage such as this written by the seventeenth century Leveller and later Quaker, William Walwyn. We'll never know whether Paine read it, because his autobiographical papers were Destroyed by fire: "He that bade us try all things, and hold fast that which was good, did suppose that all men have faculties and abilities to try all things, or else the counsel had been in vain. And therefore however the Minister may reason of his continual exercise in preaching and discoursing, by his skill in Arts and Languages, by the conceit of the esteem he hath with a great part of admiring people, presume it easy to

possess us, that they are more divine that other men (as they style themselves) yet the people would but take boldness to themselves and not distrust their own imaginings, they would soon find that use and experience is the only difference, and that all necessary knowledge is easy to be had, and by themselves acquirable.

A brief note:
I submitted a brief note to Ted Vallance's website criticising his lecture, asking for explanation. He didn't answer. He suppressed it. That's the sort of censorship we expect from the *Guardian* biogosphere, not from a TPS lecturer.

CITIZEN TOM PAINE

Martin Green

In Thetford Thomas Paine was born
A day that heralded the dawn
Of revolutions that shook the world
When freedom's banner was unfurled
First in America then France
When liberty learned to dance.
For while he plied his trade
Making stays for wife and maid;
He lost a wife and then began
To take the post of excuse man.
He moved to Lewes, found a wife,
Took up another roll in life.
He wrote a paper, cost him dear,
His job, his wife, a bodger's jeer.
Next to America he sailed
Turning his back on what had failed.
Benjamin Franklin was the hand
That sent him to the promised land.
There came the call - 'Independence'.
Which he distilled in *Common Sense* -
'These are the times to try men's souls'
Identified America's goals.
A bridge of iron was his next plan
To aid transport for everyman.
To Europe he returned and where
Revolution was in the air.
In France the Bastille was destroyed
All common people overjoyed.
Edmund Burke's *Reflections* came
Saying the people were to blame
Tom Paine then wrote *Rights of Man*
And from the printing press it ran.
In one lifetime, of honour shorn,
Two Republics had been born,
Tom Paine was midwife to them both
Had witnessed freedom take its oath
In America where he had died
Only two or three there sighed.

William Cobbett stole his bones
An act no memory condones;
We do not know now where they lay
His words will greet each living day.

QUOTATIONS FROM THOMAS PAINE

In the course of his works Thomas Paine included many comments that are relative as much to the present as they were to the century in which he lived. Here are some:

'He that would make his own liberty secure, must guard even his enemy from oppression': *Rights of Man.*

'An avidity to punish is always dangerous to liberty. It leads men to stretch, to misinterpret, and to misapply even the best of laws. He that would make his own liberty secure, must guard even his enemy from oppression; for if he violates this duty, he establishes a precedent that will reach to himself.': *Dissertations on First Principles of Government.*

'It is necessary to the happiness of man he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbelieving, it consists in professing to believe what one does not believe.': *The Age of Reason.*

'I have always strenuously supported the right of everyman to his own opinion, however different that opinion might be to mine. He who denies another this right makes a slave of himself to his present opinion, because he precludes himself the right of changing it.': *The Age of Reason.*

'A man will pass better through the world with a thousand open errors upon his back than in being detected in one sly falsehood. When one is detected, a thousand are suspected.': *Letter to George Washington* (1796).

WHERE THE USA WENT WRONG, A STUDY OF THE UNITED STATES EMPIRE. Joe Hanania. 176pp. Paperback. Privately Published in a limited edition, Nouic, 2011. ISBN 978-2-9532166-3-9. Text in English. No price given Details from the author at 27, Beausejour, 87330 Nouic, France.

This perceptive study of political and social developments from the birth of the USA in 1776 up until the Bush administration is a challenging and controversial being an evaluation of the nation's history and how, as the author sees it, it went wrong and departed from the ideals of some of its founding fathers.

A former American serviceman but now a French citizen, Joe Hanania has over several years delved deeply into his subject and come up with a work that certainly prompts one to think critically of US policies in the past and the motivation behind them, as also the manner they have impacted upon those currently pursued.

Thomas Paine looms large in the book, particularly in its first chapter that is devoted to the issues that culminated in the birth of the nation, and the controversies involved then and in the years following. The author shows how a few "leaders" manipulated matters in order to pursue their imperialistic aims in respect of the new born nation. He observes that while the proposed constitution of the USA "looks like a constitution *for the people*" (his italics), this depends on the interpretation placed upon the meaning of "people". The authors of the constitution were basically the two dozen people who discussed and concocted it behind locked doors, while most of those who signed it were not even present at the Constitutional Convention, they simply passed it and signed on the dotted line, so to speak.

Mr. Hanania has harsh words to say of the attitudes prevailing amongst many in the new nation's political leadership concerning the indigenous native population, the Red Indians, and tellingly cites Washington's contention that they "have nothing human except the shape. The extension of our settlements will certainly cause the savage, as the wolf, to retire, both being beasts of pray though they differ in shape". This view can, in fact, be traced back to the earliest British colonists who considered them to be sub-

human, this despite the assistance rendered at times to the early settlers without which help they would not have survived. The problem with them as far as wealthy slave owning plantation owners like Washington was that the Indians would not readily allow themselves to be enslaved. In Mr. Hanania's opinion, people such as Washington, Jefferson, Adams and others had a vision of an American empire in mind from the outset, differing here from that of Paine, and maintains that the constitutional convention was actually the beginning of what eventually has become "the US Empire".

Where did the USA go wrong, the author asks? He answers this by saying it was when a handful of men were allowed to "pull off what was perhaps the greatest coup d'état in modern history". The implication here is that if those who absented themselves had participated in the deliberations what eventually transpired might have been dramatically different. Indeed, one wonders, what would have occurred had Paine remained in America instead of allowing himself to be encouraged to leave the young nation for France then England. The people who had urged him to go for the most part detested his popular radicalism and feared his abilities, particularly as a pamphleteer. In the event, he remained in Europe far longer than he had planned and during which time he almost lost his life because of the inactivity to assist him on the part of the American minister in France, Gouverneur Morris, a wealthy banker and supporter of Silas Deane, whose financial activities Paine had done much to expose, who hated Paine. But then, had he remained would he ever have written *Rights of Man* or *The Age of Reason*, two of the most influential books in political history, and dare it be said, religion?

The author rounds off *Where the USA Went Wrong* with a biographical appendix on the development of his ideas and the clashes he had with the "powers that be", particularly amongst the military, which was to lead to him re-evaluating his previous opinions, a process that led ultimately to this interesting and intriguing book.

Robert Morrell.

The book may be purchased direct from the author at the address given above.

BRADLAUGH CONTRA MARX, RADICALISM AND SOCIALISM IN THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL. Deborah Lavin. 86pp. Paperback. London, Socialist History Society, 2011. ISBN 9 7809555 13848. £4.00.

This is a fascinating glimpse into socialist and radical politics in the mid-nineteenth century. On the one hand there is Karl Marx, a Communist and political exile in London, on the other Charles Bradlaugh, who rose from humble origins to become the leading nineteenth century advocate of Secularism and a MP for Northampton. Both were political giants. In his day Bradlaugh was far better known than Marx, although while the National Secular Society, which Bradlaugh founded in 1866 is still going there is nothing of his prolific writings in print.* Although the cheap editions of Marx's works produced in Moscow are no longer being printed, his work is still being published and in the light of the current economic crisis, his theories hotly debated.

The First International, albeit short-lived - it lasted less than a decade, was the first attempt by the working class to organise on an international scale. Marx joined almost by accident, being invited to join as a delegate from Germany by Victor Le Lubez, a French exile and close friend of Bradlaugh, who was an active Secularist both in Greenwich and nationally. Marx quickly became a leading figure in the International.

Ms. Lavin is an undoubted protagonist of Marx and seeks to undermine Bradlaugh as an heroic figure, indeed she rather over eggs the pudding and at times comes near to character assassination if not defamation. She shows that Bradlaugh's role in the trial of himself and Annie Besant under the Obscene Publications Act for publishing and distributing the birth control pamphlet *The Fruits of Philosophy* was far less heroic than has been depicted. Besant was related to the Liberal Lord Chancellor, Lord Hatherley, and Ms. Lavin alleges that he used his influence to ensure that Besant and Bradlaugh were not imprisoned. On the other hand, Edward Truelove, a former Chartist and the International's printer, got four months for distributing the pamphlet.

Ms. Lavin decries Bradlaugh and Besant's Neo-Malthusianism which was the sole cause of working class poverty as their prolongation in their reproduction. She accuses Besant of giving incorrect information in her birth control pamphlet, *The Population Question*. She does not mention Dan Chatterton who while working with the rather puritanical Malthusian League, advocated sex for pleasure.

Ms. Lavin describes Bradlaugh's role in the struggle over the oaths question, he wanted to affirm his loyalty to Queen Victoria, her heirs and successors rather than swear a religious oath, as more accidentally than deliberately heroic. Bradlaugh was a leading republican, but Ms. Lavin does not address the conflict between Bradlaugh and John De Morgan, a former member of the Cork branch of the International, in the republican movement of the 1870s.

She writes that Marx's daughter Laura says that he went to hear Bradlaugh speak in the 1850s and seeing him as a muddleheaded radical possibly capable of reform. In any event, Marx did his utmost to keep professional atheists out of the International, in particular the Holyoake brothers who were opponents of Bradlaugh. Here I think he was wrong, George Holyoake was a pioneer co-operator, when he died nearly four-hundred co-operative societies subscribed to erect a building in his memory. He could have brought many co-operators and Secularists into the International.

Bradlaugh was a leading member of the Reform League which had been formed in 1866 to advocate the extension of the franchise to more working class men. It staged some of the most militant demonstrations since Chartist times which Ms Lavin compares to the anti-poll tax demonstrations of the 1990s and more recent student demonstrations against rises in tuition fees. During one, demonstrators tore down the railings in Hyde Park and used them to defend themselves from police baton charges. She shows that the leaders of the League were bought by the Liberals to mobilise newly franchised workers behind Gladstone and keep independent working class candidates out of the contest. Although initially opposed by the Liberals, Bradlaugh eventually became an official Liberal Party candidate.

The first International was wrought with conflict between Marx's communism, English trade unionists who in essence remained Liberals, followers of the French anarchist Proudhon and supporters of the Russian anarchist Bakunin. All of these came together to support the Paris Commune of 1871, which was drowned in blood by the forces of reaction. Although Bradlaugh was a Freemason and the French masons supported the commune, he opposed it. This led to a fierce clash between him and Bradlaugh in the pages of the *Eastern Post*.

The International, however, was in a bad way and by 1872 it was in effect dead. At its Hague conference its general council was moved from London to New York. Bradlaugh now tried to form his own international. From 1877 this was muted in his weekly *National Reformer*. He had wanted to call the new body The International Workingman's Association, the original name of the International, but it was decided to call it the International Labour Union. Among its supporters were the Rev. S. Headlam and the anti-socialist trade unionist Edith Simcox, one of the first female delegates to the Trades Union Congress. The ILU began to slip out of Bradlaugh's control. It supported the cotton workers strike against a pay cut and when George Howell attacked Marx, Harriet Law, who had been involved in the original International, offered Marx space to reply in her *Secular Chronicle*. After that the ILU faded out of existence.

Marx died in 1883 and the following year Henry H7yndman formed the Democratic Federation. He debated with Bradlaugh and while many seem to think Bradlaugh won, but within months two of the triumvirate which led the NSS, Annie Besant and Edward Aveling, had become socialists.

Ms. Lavin has long been working on a biography of Aveling and if it is as good as this work is it will be well worth the wait.

Terry Liddle.

*Several of Bradlaugh's works are available in print to order format - Editor.

Contents