

# NEW LIGHT ON THOMAS PAINE'S FIRST YEAR IN AMERICA, 1775

FRANK SMITH

*George Washington University*

## I

SINCE M. D. Conway's standard biography and edition of Thomas Paine appeared some thirty years ago,<sup>1</sup> there has been virtually no attempt to criticize and supplement that important work. It was but natural that in his heroic endeavor to dispel a century-old tradition of ignorance, misinformation, and abuse, Conway should occasionally gloss over a difficulty and dogmatize without factual basis. Yet recent liberal writers on Paine have all uncritically perpetuated the dicta of Conway, just as the early defamers repeated the figments of Chalmers and Cheetham.<sup>2</sup>

By 1894 Conway had published his final word on Paine's first year in America, 1775, and had offered without explanation a complete list of his writings in that crucial period.<sup>3</sup> This present inquiry derives from a casual but searching footnote remark made three years after Conway by M. C. Tyler:

The new magazine was "The Pennsylvania Magazine, or American Monthly Museum," begun in January 1775. Paine probably had nothing in the first number; and whatever he wrote for subsequent numbers has to be ascertained chiefly on internal evidence, as his name is nowhere attached to any article, and in fact is nowhere mentioned, so far as I can discover, in the magazine at all. The reader should receive with caution the positive statements of later writers as to Paine's authorship of this, that, or the other article in "The Pennsylvania Magazine."<sup>4</sup>

The year 1775 is central in the study of Paine's development. It witnessed his transformation from an obscure and penniless middle-

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Thomas Paine* (2 vols., New York, 1892); *Writings of Thomas Paine* (4 vols., New York, 1894-96).

<sup>2</sup> My comments on Conway will therefore apply with equal force to later writings on Paine, of which the more prominent are those by E. Sedgwick (Boston, 1899); F. J. Gould (Boston, 1925); W. M. Van der Weyde (New Rochelle, 1925); M. A. Best (New York, 1927); and A. W. Peach (New York, 1928), Introduction to *Selections from Paine*.

<sup>3</sup> *Life*, I, IV; *Writings*, I, 1-67.

<sup>4</sup> *Literary History of the American Revolution* (New York, 1897), I, 454.

aged Quaker new to our shores into the foremost popular exponent of the American Revolution. We should like to know with some degree of certainty what he wrote as the American scene unfolded itself before his eyes in that most pregnant year. The result of this quest has been to produce objective evidence nullifying some of Conway's guesses, supporting many of them, and adding hitherto unknown facts.

## II

The fullest account we have yet had of Paine's previous history in England is given by Conway, from whom I take for our perspective these few salient facts. Paine was born into a poor Quaker family of Thetford, Norfolk, on January 29, 1737. He quit school at thirteen. Up to the age of thirty-seven, he fought a bitter failing struggle for a livelihood, buried his first wife and separated from his second, for a few months studied the new science at the Royal Society, and wrote an appeal to Parliament—*The Case of the Officers of Excise*—while a tax collector in Lewes in 1772. This hyper-emotional entreaty failed of its purpose and reaped for Paine his discharge, bankruptcy, and desertion by his second wife. He left Lewes, later met and impressed Franklin in London, and was urged by him to try his fortune in the new world. So the destitute Quaker, thinking by the journey to escape the misery and defeat of his English life, set out on his American adventure.

## III

Conway states, without evidence, that Paine arrived in America on November 30, 1774;<sup>5</sup> and this date was accepted until 1910, when Albert Matthews discovered a new essay by Paine.<sup>6</sup> He showed that in *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* of April 30, 1776, Paine referred to himself as having come "a cabin passenger in Jeremiah Warder's ship, the London Packet, last Christmas twelvemonth." Finding in the weekly Inward Entries printed in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* and *The Pennsylvania Journal* of December 14, 1774, the item "Ship London Packet, J. Cooke, Lewes, on Delaware," Matthews fixed the date of Paine's entry as between December 7 and December 14, 1774. To this reasoning there can hardly be any objection, except that a

<sup>5</sup> *Life*, I, 40.

<sup>6</sup> *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, XLIII, 245, n.

third paper was then extant—*The Pennsylvania Packet*—where the same notice appears in the issue of December 12, 1774.<sup>7</sup> So that the present state of the matter is that Paine landed here no earlier than December 7 and no later than December 12, 1774.

From the time of his arrival to the issuance of the Declaration of Independence, we know very little about Paine's personal history. On his miserable trip across the wintry ocean, he struck up an acquaintance with the captain, John Cooke, and may have spent several weeks of recovery from seasickness with the captain's relatives in Philadelphia.<sup>8</sup> In January, 1775, he presented his testimonial from Franklin to Richard Bache, Franklin's son-in-law.<sup>9</sup> Through this influence he obtained tutoring and editorial work and met the intellectual and political leaders of Philadelphia, whom he readily impressed by his native brilliance and versatility.<sup>10</sup> After the publication of *Common Sense* in January, 1776, Paine became a friend and fellow-worker of the extreme radical party in Philadelphia.<sup>11</sup> The main facts of his life after the formal beginning of the Revolution constitute a familiar story.

In his letter to Franklin, March 4, 1775,<sup>12</sup> Paine stated that he had been approached by the publisher Robert Aitken to edit a new periodical, *The Pennsylvania Magazine*. Paine's connections with this journal are the chief source for reconstructing his intellectual activity in 1775.

Paine had nothing to do with the general scope and business arrangements of the new magazine. These had been defined by the publisher Aitken early in 1774 in a circular *Proposals for printing by subscription The Pennsylvania Magazine, or, The American Repository of Useful Knowledge*. This leaflet is bound into a copy of the magazine at the Library of Congress and is also reprinted in *The Pennsylvania Packet* for November 21, 1774. It does not occur in the Conway bequest copy to the Library, nor does Conway appear to have

<sup>7</sup> *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* did not begin until January, 1775.

<sup>8</sup> G. B. Keen, "Descendants of Jöran Kyn," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (1880), IV, 3, 349; *Calendar of the Papers of Franklin in the Library of the American Philosophical Society* (Philadelphia, 1908), I, 168.

<sup>9</sup> *Calendar*, I, 168.

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Benjamin Rush's letter to James Cheetham, July 17, 1809, printed in J. Cheetham, *Life of Paine* (New York, 1809), p. 34, and partly reprinted in Conway's *Life*, I, 41.

<sup>11</sup> Christopher Marshall's *Diary* (Philadelphia, 1839), pp. 64, 70, 72, 73, 76, 79, 80.

<sup>12</sup> Partly reprinted in Conway's *Life*, I, 40.

seen it. The *Proposals* announced that, if the project was encouraged, the magazine would have seven general divisions: original articles, foreign essays, lists of new books, poetry, news, vital statistics, weather and business information. The original contributions "may extend to the whole circle of science, including politics and religion as objects of philosophical disquisition, but excluding controversy in both"—a whimsical proviso, we think it today, for in these two fields Paine was to write his great polemic pamphlets.<sup>13</sup> The magazine would be offered to subscribers for one shilling, Pennsylvania currency, on the first Wednesday of each month beginning with January, 1775. On September 8, 1774, Aitken issued another announcement *To The Public*, reporting that his proposition had met with favor by "a number of Gentlemen of the first character for genius and liberal sentiment," and that his magazine would begin the next year a "decent repository of useful and ornamental *Science*, excluding from it every indelicate, every party production."<sup>14</sup>

If Conway had turned the pages of the Philadelphia newspapers contemporary with Paine, he would have gathered several details about the history of the magazine and its appeal. He would not have been misled by the date of the editor's preface to fix the first issue as late in January rather than on February 1, 1775.<sup>15</sup> *The Pennsylvania Packet* for Monday, January 30, 1775, bears an advertisement which begins: "The Public will be pleased to take notice that on Wednesday next, and on the first Wednesday of every succeeding month, will be published and ready to be delivered to the subscribers, The Pennsylvania Magazine, or American Monthly Museum. For January 1775." Other notices in the local papers carry out this idea, that the promise of issuance on the first Wednesday of the month meant in practice the first Wednesday of the next month.<sup>16</sup> The sales talk

<sup>13</sup> Paine at first rejected several manuscripts on this account, but the course of events in 1775 made him violate the pledge himself.

<sup>14</sup> By December 2, 1774, general subscriptions were solicited. See the letter of that date from the Reverend Thomas Barton to Colonel James Burd, in Thomas Balch, *Letters and Papers Relating Chiefly to the Provincial History of Pennsylvania* (privately printed, Philadelphia, 1855), p. 241.

<sup>15</sup> *Life*, I, 41.

<sup>16</sup> For instance, *The Pennsylvania Ledger*, March 4, 1775; *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, April 4, 1775. Colonial conditions made it impossible to fulfil even this program, as witness a note in the June, 1775, issue: "*To Our Correspondents*. Our customers will excuse us, though the day of publication be sometimes delayed. The great difficulty we have in procuring printing paper, renders it impossible for us to publish always on the first Wednesday of the month."

in these announcements is of particular interest. To the lusty demand of the infant country for material progress, the practical, scientific genius of Paine was a godsend. A new machine for spinning twenty-four threads of wool at one time, an English method for building frame houses that could not be distinguished from brick, a process for making saltpetre at home—these and similar devices were advertised as the leading attractions of the new magazine.<sup>17</sup> Such utilitarian contributions, along with the more purely literary ones, made the periodical a thriving enterprise, until the Revolution suspended all American magazines.<sup>18</sup>

Conway affirms that Paine edited the magazine for eighteen months;<sup>19</sup> yet again, that he was the first editor;<sup>20</sup> but the project did not last more than eighteen months, from January, 1775, through July, 1776. Dr. Rush, a friend of Paine in his first American period, asserts that his salary was fifty pounds a year.<sup>21</sup> Paine himself is not as certain about these points as his commentators. In his letter to Franklin, March 4, 1775, he asserts that he began the work without entering into terms, and was not concerned in the first number.<sup>22</sup> His letter to Henry Laurens, President of Congress, January 14, 1779, informs us that he edited the magazine for six months without a contract, and that negotiations for definite terms were unsuccessful, but it does not tell what the ultimate arrangement was.<sup>23</sup> In the June, 1776, issue of the magazine, the editor announces that he will soon present his translation of a French book; since Paine was never at ease with that language,<sup>24</sup> it is doubtful if he was editor at this time. This confusion of evidence may be sifted into a general statement that Paine took over the editorship of the periodical without a contract, directed it for most but not all of its eighteen months' duration, and was perhaps staved off from a

<sup>17</sup> *The Pennsylvania Ledger*, May 6, 1775; *The Pennsylvania Journal*, July, 5, 1775.

<sup>18</sup> In his letter to Franklin, March 4, 1775, Paine writes: "He had not above six hundred subscribers when I first assisted him. We have now upwards of fifteen hundred, and daily increasing." (Conway, *Life*, I, 40.)

<sup>19</sup> *Life*, I, 41.

<sup>20</sup> *Writings*, I, 14 n.

<sup>21</sup> Letter to J. Cheetham, July 17, 1809, printed in J. Cheetham, *Life of Paine* (New York, 1809), p. 34, and partly reprinted in Conway's *Life*, I, 41.

<sup>22</sup> "I have not entered into terms with him. This is only the second number. The first I was not concerned in." (Conway, *Life*, I, 40.)

<sup>23</sup> This letter is printed in Conway, *Writings*, IV, Appendix A.

<sup>24</sup> See Franklin's letter to M. Le Veillard, April 15, 1787, in A. H. Smyth's edition of his *Works* (New York, 1906), IX, 562.

profitable contract by the pittance of fifty pounds a year, which his straitened circumstances prohibited him from rejecting.

#### IV

We can now turn to those articles of Paine's writing in the Philadelphia newspaper and *The Pennsylvania Magazine* in 1775 which may be demonstrated to be his on the basis of external evidence.

Of articles in this period bearing the name of Thomas Paine, we have only one.

- I. Experiments for Making Salt-Petre in Private Families. By Thomas Pryor and Thomas Pain [*sic*].<sup>25</sup> *The Pennsylvania Ledger*, February 25, 1775.

Nowhere does Conway mention having referred to the early editions of Paine's collected writings for proof of his authorship. These afford the amplest and firmest fruit of our investigation. While the author was yet embroiled in the French Revolution, an edition of his works in two volumes was printed by James Carey of Philadelphia in 1797. It is not on record that Paine subsequently objected to any attributions in this compilation. More important for our purpose, the "Advertisement" concludes with this revealing statement:

At a time when considerable progress had been made in printing this volume, the editor was informed that Mr. Paine had sent some contributions to the Pennsylvania Magazine.—On which application was made to R. Aitken, the publisher of that work, who very obligingly pointed out the pieces written by Mr. P. It was then too late to give them their chronological precedence, and they were necessarily placed at the end of the volume, under the head of Miscellaneous Pieces. It is necessary to add, that two of those essays, namely, a description of a new electrical machine, then not known in America, and a method of building frame houses in England, are omitted; the former being useless at present, when electricity is so much better understood—and the latter inapplicable in this country.

<sup>25</sup> This gives some color of truth to the statement in that first and worst of Paine biographies, written during his lifetime—F. Oldys (pseudonym for G. Chalmers), *Life of Paine* (London, 1792), p. 2—that Paine changed the spelling of his name from *Pain*. Chalmers observes that there can be no objection to this in a respectable man, but in Paine it is another proof of his perfidious nature.

A few other articles, which (Mr. Aitken says) were merely *handed* by Mr. P. for publication, have not, on so doubtful a claim, obtained a place here. These were historic facts, and he could therefore, at most, have only furnished the language with which they are clothed.

Next to a statement by the author himself, this testimony from his publisher is the best possible evidence for his authorship. We thus acquire the following items:

- II. Description of a New Electrical Machine, with Remarks. By Atlanticus. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, January 1775.<sup>26</sup>
- III. A New Method of Building Frame Houses in England, so as to Represent Brick. Unsigned. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, April, 1775.
- IV. Introduction to *The Pennsylvania Magazine*. Unsigned. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, January, 1775.<sup>18</sup>
- V. To the Publisher on the Utility of Magazines. Unsigned. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, January, 1775.<sup>18</sup>
- VI. Useful and Entertaining Hints on the Internal Riches of the Colonies. By Atlanticus. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, February, 1775.
- VII. New Anecdotes of Alexander the Great. By Esop. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, February, 1775.
- VIII. The Critic and The Snowdrop [poem]. Unsigned. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, February, 1775.
- IX. An account of the Burning of Bachelor's Hall [poem]. By The Old Bachelor. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, April, 1775.
- X. Liberty Tree [poem]. By Atlanticus. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, July, 1775.
- XI. The Farmers Dog Porter [poem]. By Atlanticus. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, July, 1775.

As the editor's foreword tells us, these articles and poems are certified by the publisher Aitken as being entirely from the pen of Thomas Paine. Any additional ascriptions from the magazine are to be questioned as being at most only in part his handiwork.

<sup>26</sup> It will be remembered that Paine wrote to Franklin, March 4, 1775: "This is only the second number. The first I was not concerned in." This is the basis for Tyler's statement (*loc. cit.*) that Paine had nothing in the first number. The publisher's evidence for Nos. II, IV, and V of our list would indicate that although Paine was not concerned as official editor, he contributed these articles to the first issue.

The London edition of 1819 adds to our list:

- XII. A Mathematical Question Proposed. By P. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, January, 1775.
- XIII. Cupid and Hymen. By Esop. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, April, 1775.

These attributions bear their own evidence within them—the initial *P* and the signature *Esop*, which is also appended to “Alexander the Great” in the February, 1775, issue, which we know from the publisher Aitken is Paine’s. Similarly we may include:

- XIV. The Monk and the Jew [poem]. By Atlanticus. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, March, 1775.

“Atlanticus” is Paine’s favorite pseudonym, occurring in four of the articles of the publisher Aitken’s list.

A further source of external evidence is the solitary fragment used by Conway—the letter of Dr. Benjamin Rush to James Cheetham, the first biographer of Paine after his death.<sup>27</sup> It is the only specific and direct account we have about Paine’s early American writings by a contemporary. On July 17, 1809, in response to an inquiry from Cheetham, Dr. Rush sent a letter to be included in the projected biography. An old man writing from memory, he confuses the dates, arrogates to himself nine-tenths of the credit for *Common Sense*, and expresses conventional horror at Paine’s religious heresies. But the recollection of Paine’s first impressive essays need not be impaired by senility. The letter mentions the following items as by Paine:

- XV. African Slavery in America. By Justice and Humanity. *The Pennsylvania Journal*, March 8, 1775.<sup>28</sup>
- XVI. The Death of General Wolfe [poem]. Unsigned. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, March, 1775.
- XVII. Reflections on the Life and Death of Lord Clive. By Atlanticus. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, March, 1775.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> Sedgwick, *Life of Paine*, p. 13, erroneously places this article in *The Pennsylvania Magazine*.

<sup>29</sup> Almost immediately reprinted in *The Pennsylvania Packet*, April 10, 1775.

The early biographies of Paine are the final repositories of external evidence. Owing to their extreme bias pro or con, these books are unsatisfactory evaluations of the man; yet



## V

Before proceeding to consider on the basis of internal evidence what else Paine may have written at this time, let us eliminate the contributions to *The Pennsylvania Magazine* by John Witherspoon and Francis Hopkinson, which have been individually explored.<sup>30</sup> Most of their articles in the magazine are later to be found in their collected works issued under their own direction; and several that are not included may be determined to be theirs by signature identity. Under the pseudonyms *Epaminondas* and *A.B.*, they contributed philosophic and belletristic essays well within the limits of conventional thought and expression, far away from the concentrated challenge which is most characteristic of Paine even at this period.

Any further attributions to Paine are open to cavil on two counts: first, the testimony of his publisher Aitken, as recorded by the 1797 editor of Paine's works, that any articles in *The Pennsylvania Magazine* other than those in the 1797 edition were at most only "handed" by Paine, the materials being given to him; and, second, the general uncertainty of internal evidence. This latter difficulty is the perplexing one. Stylistic tests are always open to criticism, and never more so than when the subject is a new writer still groping for an individual style. Consider two articles which we know from external evidence to belong to Paine—"African Slavery in America" and "Cupid and Hymen." The first is terse, angry, logical; the second, placid, soft-headed, fanciful. The sentences of the one are involved and sinuous with the relations of ideas; of the other, simple and transparent to a fault. When tests of idea and expression would tend to discredit what we are reasonably certain to be true, shall we dare to apply them for establishing the truth in cases of doubt? We must proceed with diffident caution, asserting only what seems possible and likely.

At the outset, we shall have to reject certain constant character-

their appended bibliographies indicate the general conception of the time as to what his writings were. Cheetham (New York, 1809), Rickman (London, 1819), and Sherwin (London, 1819) are in almost perfect accord on Paine's early American work. While they do not add any titles to our list, they serve to corroborate the items we have established on other bases.

<sup>30</sup> V. L. Collins, *President Witherspoon* (Princeton, 1925); G. E. Hastings, *Life and Works of Francis Hopkinson* (Chicago, 1926).

istics of Paine's style which are in no sense peculiar to him. Tricks of capitalization and italics, excessive use of conjunctions for beginning sentences, balanced structure, appeal to natural rights—these are common counters of the age, and distinguish Paine no more than they do Dickinson, Hamilton, or even his subsequent arch-enemy Burke. I venture to assume that Paine may have written in 1775 any articles in which we find Quakerisms, uncommon references to English life and especially to Lewes and London, or figures of speech and turns of thought which are repeated in very much the same words in his known works of this general period—*Common Sense*, *The Forester Letters*, and *The Crisis*. It is a commonplace that a writer can go on for page after page without employing his distinctive mannerisms; hence any clue which the articles in question may offer has extra value because none of them is more than two or three pages long. Even so, my method is vague and inconclusive; I ask for it no credence, but at least tentative acceptance in lieu of more positive external evidence.

Of the seventeen items we have just established, Conway discusses or reprints all but "The Salt-petre Experiment."<sup>31</sup> Conway guessed and Tyler doubted; we know. Conway gives eight other items for which no proof has yet been advanced. But the studious and wellnigh impeccable taste which tallies with the facts in sixteen cases out of seventeen is entitled to some consideration in these eight. Until convincing information to the contrary is forthcoming, Conway must be our guide. I shall list these articles and two others, with internal evidence in behalf of Paine's authorship.

XVIII. A Dialogue between General Wolfe and General Gage in a wood near Boston. Unsigned. *The Pennsylvania Journal*, January 4, 1775.<sup>32</sup>

#### English References<sup>33</sup>

P. 12.<sup>34</sup> I come therefore in the name of Blakeney—Cumberland—Granby—and an illustrious band of English heroes to whom the glory of Old England is still dear, to beg you to have no hand in the execution of them.

<sup>31</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> Immediately taken up and reprinted in *The New York Journal*, January 12, 1775.

<sup>33</sup> Since English and Quaker references are implicit in Paine's background, they will not be here paralleled from his other works. These particular qualities—especially Quakerism in Philadelphia, a Quaker center—are, of course, not alleged as peculiar to Paine.

<sup>34</sup> All page references are to the first volume of Paine's works edited by Conway.

P. 12. If you value the sweets of peace and liberty,—if you have any regard to the glory of the British name, and if you prefer the society of Grecian, Roman, and British heroes in the world of Spirits, to the company of Jeffries, Kirk, and other royal executioners, I conjure you immediately to resign your commission.

Animals for Contemptuous Figures of Speech

P. 12. British soldiers are not machines, to be animated only with the voice of a Minister of State. They disdain those ideas of submission which preclude them from the liberty of thinking for themselves, and degrade them to an equality with a war horse, or an elephant.

*Common Sense*, p. 99. But where, say some, is the King of America? I'll tell you, friend, he reigns above, and doth not make havoc of mankind like the Royal Brute of Great Britain.

*Common Sense*, p. 100. The almighty hath implanted in us these unextinguishable feelings for good and wise purposes. They are the Guardians of his Image in our hearts. They distinguish us from the herd of common animals.

*Common Sense*, p. 113. Here is idolatry even without a mask: and he who can calmly hear and digest such doctrine, hath forfeited his claim to rationality—an apostate from the order of manhood—and ought to be considered as one who hath not only given up the proper dignity of man, but sunk himself beneath the rank of animals, and contemptibly crawls through the world like a worm.

*Crisis V*, p. 233. Enjoy, sir, your insensibility of feeling and reflecting. It is the prerogative of animals. And no man will envy you these honors, in which a savage only can be your rival and a bear your master.

*Crisis VI*, p. 271. But you are probably buoyed up by a set of wretched mortals, who, having deceived themselves, are cringing, with the duplicity of a spaniel, for a little temporary bread.

[See also *Common Sense*, p. 79, p. 80; *Forester Letter I*, p. 128; *Forester Letter II*, p. 138; *Crisis III*, p. 198; *Crisis V*, p. 236, p. 243; *Crisis VIII*, p. 280.]

XIX. Duelling. Unsigned. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, May, 1775.

#### Quaker Opposition to Duelling

P. 40. Gothic and absurd as the custom of duelling is generally allowed to be, there are advocates for it on principle; reasoners, who coolly argue for the necessity and even convenience of this mode of accommodating certain kinds of personal differences, and of redressing certain species of injuries, for which the laws have not provided proper or adequate remedies.

P. 45. From the peculiar prevalence of this custom in countries where the religious system is established, which, of all others, most expressly prohibits the gratification of revenge, with every species of outrage and violence, we too plainly see, how little mankind are, in reality, influenced by the principles of the religion by which they profess to be guided, and in defence of which they will occasionally risk even their lives.

XX. Reflections on Titles. By Vox Populi. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, May, 1775.

#### Vitriolic Language<sup>35</sup>

P. 46. When I reflect on the pompous titles bestowed on unworthy men, I feel an indignity that instructs me to despise the absurdity. The *Honourable* plunderer of his country, or the *Right Honourable* murderer of mankind, create such a contrast of ideas as exhibit a monster rather than a man.

*Common Sense*, p. 80. This is supposing the present race of kings in the world to have had an honorable origin: whereas it is more than probable, that, could we take off the dark covering of antiquity and trace them to their first rise, we should find the first of them nothing better than the principal ruf-

<sup>35</sup> Cf. John Adams, *Works*, II, 508: "the phrases, suitable for an emigrant from Newgate, or one who had chiefly associated with such company."

fian of some restless gang, whose savage manners of pre-eminence in subtilty obtained him the title of chief among plunderers.

*Common Sense*, p. 80. England since the conquest hath known some few good monarchs, but groaned beneath a much larger number of bad ones: yet no man in his senses can say that their claim under William the Conqueror is a very honourable one. A French bastard landing with an armed Banditti and establishing himself king of England against the consent of the natives, is in plain terms a very paltry rascally original.

*Common Sense*, p. 93. No man was a warmer wisher for a reconciliation than myself, before the fatal nineteenth of April, 1775, but the moment the event of that day was made known, I rejected the hardened, sullen-tempered Pharoah of England for ever; and disdain the wretch, that with the pretended title of FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE can unfeelingly hear of their slaughter, and composedly sleep with their blood upon his soul.

*Common Sense*, p. 122. We view our enemies in the characters of Highwaymen and Housebreakers, and having no defence for ourselves in the civil law, are obliged to punish them by the military one, and apply the sword, in the very case where you have before now applied the halter.

*Crisis I*, p. 171. I cannot see on what grounds the king of Britain can look up to heaven for help against us: a common murderer, a highwayman, or a housebreaker, has as good a pretence as he.

[See also *Common Sense*, p. 84, p. 99; *Crisis I*, p. 177; *Crisis III*, p. 215, p. 224; *Crisis IV*, p. 231; *Crisis V*, p. 247.]

#### Rationalistic Aphorisms

P. 46. This sacrifice of common sense is the certain badge which distinguishes slavery from freedom; for when men yield up the privilege of thinking, the last shadow of liberty quits the horizon. P. 46. But the reasonable freeman sees through the magic of a title, and examines the man before he approves him.

*Forester Letter II*, p. 138. A freeman, Cato, is a stranger nowhere—a slave, everywhere.

*Forester Letter IV*, p. 155. When precedents fail to spirit us, we must return to the first principles of things for information; and *think*, as if we were the *first men* that *thought*.

*Common Sense*, p. 84. Of more worth is one honest man to society, and in the sight of God, than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived. *Crisis I*, p. 175. Though the flame of liberty may sometimes cease to shine, the coal can never expire.

*Crisis III*, p. 220. Suspicion and persecution are weeds of the same dunghill, and flourish together.

*Crisis V*, p. 233. To argue with a man who has renounced the use and authority of reason, and whose philosophy consists in holding humanity in contempt, is like administering medicine to the dead, or endeavoring to convert an atheist by scripture.

[See also *Common Sense*, p. 67, p. 79, p. 107, p. 117; *Forester Letter I*, p. 127; *Forester Letter II*, p. 138; *Forester Letter III*, p. 153; *Crisis III*, p. 211, p. 216; *Crisis IV*, p. 231; *Crisis V*, p. 234, p. 249; *Crisis VII*, p. 273; *Crisis VIII*, p. 294.]

XXI. The Dream Interpreted. Bucks County. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, June, 1775.

#### The Nature of Dreams

P. 48. This cooling stream administered more relief than all the wines of Oporto; I drank and was satisfied; my fatigue abated, my wasted spirits were reinforced, and 'tis no wonder after such a delicious repast that I sunk insensibly into slumber. The wildest fancies in that state of forgetfulness always appear regular and connected; nothing is wrong in a dream, be it ever so unnatural. I am apt to think that the wisest men dream the most inconsistently: for as the judgment has nothing or very little to do in regulating the circumstances of a dream, it necessarily follows that the more powerful and creative the imagination is, the wilder it runs in that state of unrestrained invention: While those who are unable to wander out of the track of common thinking when awake, never exceed the boundaries of common nature when asleep.

[See the similar discussion of judgment, imagination, and memory in Paine's "An Essay On Dream" (1807), reprinted in Conway, IV, 360-367.]

Religious Sanction<sup>36</sup>

P. 50. He who guides the natural tempest will regulate the political one, and bring good out of evil. In our petition to Britain we asked but for peace; but the prayer was rejected. The cause is now before a higher court, the court of providence, before whom the arrogance of kings, the infidelity of ministers, the general corruption of government, and all the cobweb artifice of courts, will fall confounded and ashamed.

*Crisis I*, p. 171. I have as little superstition in me as any man living, but my secret opinion has ever been, and still is, that God Almighty will not give up a people to military destruction, or leave them unsupportedly to perish, who have so earnestly and so repeatedly sought to avoid the calamities of war, by every decent method which wisdom could invent. Neither have I so much the infidel in me, as to suppose that He has relinquished the government of the world, and given us up to the care of devils; and as I do not, I cannot see on what grounds the king of Britain can look up to heaven for help against us: a common murderer, a highwayman, or a housebreaker, has as good a pretence as he.

*Crisis II*, p. 188. Britain, as a nation, is, in my inmost belief, the greatest and most ungrateful offender against God on the face of the whole earth: blessed with all the commerce she could wish for, and furnished, by a vast extension of dominion, with the means of civilizing both the eastern and western world, she has made no other use of both than proudly to idolize her own 'thunder,' and rip up the bowels of whole countries for what she could get.

<sup>36</sup> It is a fine example of Paine's practical psychology that he—the cosmic deist—should cater so heavily to the religiosity of his readers. The aristocratic John Adams was annoyed. "His arguments from the Old Testament were ridiculous, but whether they proceeded from honest ignorance or foolish superstition on one hand, or from wilful sophistry and knavish hypocrisy on the other, I know not." (*Op. cit.*, p. 506.)



*Crisis II*, p. 188. These are serious things, and whatever a foolish tyrant, a debauched court, a trafficking legislature, or a blinded people may think, the national account with heaven must some day or other be settled: all countries have sooner or later been called to their reckoning; the proudest empires have sunk when the balance was struck; and Britain, like an individual penitent, must undergo her day of sorrow, and the sooner it happens to her the better: as I wish it over, I wish it to come, but withal wish that it may be as light as possible.

[See also *Common Sense*, pp. 75-79, p. 84, p. 86, p. 92, p. 99, p. 100; *Crisis III*, p. 208, p. 212; *Crisis V*, p. 247, p. 250; *Crisis VI*, p. 262; *Crisis VII*, p. 272.]

This essay is an extended image of the political unrest as a storm. Similar figures are to be found in:

*Crisis XI*, p. 352. It is now the hurricane months of British politics. Every day seems to have a storm of its own, and they are scudding under the bare poles of hope. Beaten, but not humble; condemned, but not penitent; they act like men trembling at fate and catching at a straw.

*Crisis XIII*, p. 370. But to pass from the extremes of danger to safety—from the tumult of war to the tranquility of peace, though sweet in contemplation, requires a gradual composure of the senses to receive it. Even calmness has the power of stunning, when it opens too instantly upon us. The long and raging hurricane that should cease in a moment, would leave us in a state rather of wonder than enjoyment; and some moments of recollection must pass, before we could be capable of testing the felicity of repose. There are but few instances, in which the mind is fitted for sudden transitions: it takes its pleasures by reflection and comparison and those must have time to act, before the relish for new scenes is complete.

XXII. Reflections on Unhappy Marriages. Unsigned. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, June, 1775.

Animal Figure and English Reference

P. 51. But hold, says the man of phlegm and economy, all are not of this hasty turn—I allow it—there are persons in the world who are young without passions, and in health without appetite: these hunt out a wife as they go to *Smithfield* for a horse; and inter-marry fortunes, not minds, or even bodies: In this case the Bridegroom has no joy but in taking possession of the portion, and the bride dreams of little beside new clothes, visits and congratulations.

[See the discussion of “A Dialogue between General Wolfe and General Gage.”]

XXIII. Thoughts on Defensive War. By A Lover of Peace. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, July, 1775.

Rationalistic Aphorisms

P. 55. But we live not in a world of angels.

P. 56. The balance of power is the scale of peace.

[See the discussion of “Reflections on Titles.”]

P. 56. Facts need but little arguments when they prove themselves.

P. 57. Political liberty is the visible pass which guards the religions.

P. 57. Spiritual freedom is the root of political liberty.

Quaker References

P. 55. Could the peaceable principle of the Quakers be universally established, arms and the art of war would be wholly extirpated: But we live not in a world of angels.

P. 55. I am thus far a Quaker, that I would gladly agree with all the world to lay aside the use of arms, and settle matters by negotiation; but unless the whole will, the matter ends, and I take up my musket and thank heaven he has put it in my power.

P. 56. Thus the peaceable part of mankind will be continually overrun by the vile and abandoned, while they neglect the means of self defence. The supposed quietude of a good man allures the ruffian; while on the other hand, arms like laws discourage and keep the invader and the plunderer in awe, and preserve order in the world as well as property. The balance of power is the scale of peace. The same balance would be preserved were all the world destitute of arms, for all would be alike; but since some *will not*, others *dare not* lay them aside. And while a single nation refuses to lay them down, it is proper that all should keep them up. Horrid mischief would ensue were one half the world deprived of the use of them; for while avarice and ambition have a place in the heart of man, the weak will become a prey to the strong.

#### Religious Sanction

P. 55. The reign of Satan is not ended; neither are we to expect to be defended by miracles.

P. 55. I take up my musket and thank heaven he has put it in my power.

P. 56. In the barbarous ages of the world, men in general had no liberty. The strong governed the weak at will; till the coming of Christ there was no such thing as political freedom in any known part of the earth. The Jewish kings were in point of government as absolute as the Pharaohs. Men were frequently put to death without trial at the will of the Sovereign. The Romans held the world in slavery, and were themselves the slaves of their emperors. The madman of Macedon governed by caprice and passion, and strided as arrogantly over the world as if he had made and peopled it; and it is needless to imagine that other nations at that time were more refined. Wherefore political as well as spiritual freedom is the

[See the discussion of "The Dream Interpreted."]

gift of God through Christ. The second in the catalogue of blessings; and so intimately related, so sympathetically united with the first, that the one cannot be wounded without communicating an injury to the other. Political liberty is the visible pass which guards the religions. It is the outwork by which the church militant is defended, and the attacks of the enemy are frequently made through this fortress. . . .

#### Vitriolic Language

P. 55. Whoever considers the unprincipled enemy we have to cope with, will not hesitate to declare that nothing but arms or miracles can reduce them to reason and moderation. They have lost sight of the limits of humanity. The portrait of a parent red with the blood of her children is a picture fit only for the galleries of the infernals.

P. 56. That which allures the Highwayman has allured the ministry under a gentler name.

P. 57. The madman of Macedon governed by caprice and passion, and strided as arrogantly over the world as if he had made and peopled it; and it is needless to imagine that other nations at that time were more refined.

[See the discussion of "Reflections on Titles."]

#### Parent and Child Figure

P. 55. The portrait of a parent red with the blood of her children is a picture fit only for the galleries of the infernals.

*Common Sense*, p. 86. But Britain is the parent country, say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes do not devour

their young, nor savages make war upon their families; wherefore, the assertion, if true, turns to her reproach; but it happens not to be true, or only partly so, and the phrase *parent* or *mother country* hath been jesuitically adopted by the King and his parasites, with a low papistical design of gaining an unfair bias on the credulous weakness of our minds. Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America. This new world hath been the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from *every part* of Europe. Hither they have fled, not from the tender embraces of the mother, but from the cruelty of the monster; and it is so far true of England, that the same tyranny which drove the first emigrants from home, pursues their descendants still.

*Common Sense*, p. 92. Wherefore, since nothing but blows will do, for God's sake let us come to a final separation, and not leave the next generation to be cutting throats under the violated unmeaning names of parent and child.

*Crisis II*, p. 143. We feel the same kind of undescribed anger at her conduct, as we would at the sight of an animal devouring its young; and this particular species of anger is not generated in the transitory temper of the man, but in the chaste and undefiled womb of nature.

[See also *Common Sense*, p. 93; *Crisis VII*, p. 280.]

XXIV. An Occasional Letter on the Female Sex. Unsigned. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, August, 1775.

#### Quaker References

P. 60. Man, in a state of barbarity, equally cruel and indolent, active by necessity, but naturally inclined to repose, is acquainted with little more than the physical effects of love; and, having none of those moral ideas which only can soften the empire of force, he is led to consider it as his supreme law, subjecting to his despotism those whom reason had made his equal, but whose imbecility betrayed them to his strength.

This article appears to have been written by the same hand as "Reflections on Unhappy Marriages." The similarities are in the general attitude of defending women, a novel position for the time; the philosophic discussion, practically altogether in balanced sentences; and the device of the monologist at the end—an Indian criticising marriage, and a woman speaking in behalf of her sex.

XXV. A Serious Thought. By Humanus. *The Pennsylvania Journal*, October 18, 1775.<sup>37</sup>

#### Religious Sanction

The appeal to divine authority permeates the entire brief article, which is reprinted in Conway, I, 65.

#### Analogous Passages

P. 65. The hapless shores of Africa. *Forester Letter III*, p. 154, n. Forget not the hapless African.

P. 65. When I reflect on the horrid cruelties exercised by Britain in the East Indies—How thousands perished by artificial famine—How religion and every manly principle of honour and honesty were sacrificed to luxury and pride—When I read of the wretched natives being blown away, for no other crime than because, sickened with the mouths of cannon and "blowing

<sup>37</sup> F. J. Gould, *op. cit.*, p. 34, misplaces this article in *The Pennsylvania Magazine* as of October 18, 1775.

miserable scene, they refused to fight—When I reflect on these and a thousand instances of similar barbarity, I firmly believe that the Almighty, in compassion to mankind, will curtail the power of Britain.

*them away*" was never acted by any but an English General, or approved by any but a British court. *Crisis II*, p. 188. Britain, as a nation, is, in my inmost belief, the greatest and most ungrateful offender against God on the face of the whole earth: blessed with all the commerce she could wish for, and furnished, by a vast extension of dominion, with the means of civilizing both the eastern and western world, she has made no other use of both than proudly to idolize her own "thunder," and rip up the bowels of whole countries for what she could get: Like Alexander, she has made war her sport, and inflicted misery for prodigality's sake. The blood of India is not yet repaid, nor the wretchedness of Africa yet requited. Of late she has enlarged her list of national cruelties by the butcherly destruction of the Caribbs of St. Vincent's, and returning an answer by the sword to the meek prayer, for "*Peace, liberty and safety.*"

*Crisis V*, p. 248. Her late reduction of India, under Clive and his successors, was not so properly a conquest as an extermination of mankind. She is the only power who could practise the prodigal barbarity of tying men to mouths of loaded cannon and blowing them away.

The quotation from *Crisis II* above is of particular interest. May we not here detect Paine in a reminiscent mood, filling up the void of news with recollections from his essays of two years before? The

first three illustrations are clearly drawn from "New Anecdotes of Alexander the Great," "Reflections on the Life and Death of Lord Clive," and "African Slavery in America." May not the fourth instance come from the essay here in question, "A Serious Thought," England's cruelties to her subjects in the East Indies being repeated to her subjects in the West Indies?

In addition to the eight numbers in Conway for which I have given some internal evidence, I would also include the following items for the same sort of reasoning.

XXVI. A Whimsical Anecdote of the late Duke of Newcastle. Unsigned. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, October, 1775.

This is a humorous story of the duke and a tax collector in Lewes, Paine's own native background.

XXVII. The Dying Negro. Unsigned. *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, January, 1776.

#### Religious Sanction

Among many other passages in this poem, there is one in which the Negro sympathetically describes the accumulated wrongs of his wretched countrymen, betrayed or sold into perpetual slavery, to labour in hopeless misery for the wealth and luxury of CHRISTIANS; who, by this horrible traffic, renounce not only every pretension of humanity, but all plea for acceptance with that *Universal Parent*, 'who hath made one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth,' who is 'no respecter of persons,' any farther, than as they resemble himself, and 'whose tender mercies are over all his works.'

[See the discussion of "The Dream Interpreted."]



Like the essay "Duelling" (both are book reviews), this article distinguishes between the theory and the practice of Christians: "The repugnancy between the divine spirit, and generous precepts of that religion, and the cruel temper and base conduct of its professors."

## VI

This paper is devoted entirely to discovering points of information. With deep respect for a great pioneer scholar, M.D. Conway, I have sought to reveal what are the solid facts—conclusive and otherwise—pertaining to Paine's literary work in America during the crucial year of 1775. It would be tempting to trace in the twenty-seven items thus ascertained the gradual evolution and crystalization of Paine's world view, to see how in a true critical sense America and her Revolution were the parents of this greatest international agitator. But that is another story.