

Ben Franklin Spanks Tom Paine

Dub McClish

Tom Paine was a colonial patriot, credited by some with being the “Father of the American Revolution.” He was given this moniker chiefly for his January 1776 pro-independence pamphlet titled *Common Sense*, which advocated revolution against the British crown. It quickly swept the colonies, selling 100,000 copies in three months’ time and an estimated 500,000 copies during the course of the Revolution (no small feat, given a population of only two million colonists). Several months later he published the first of three tracts, titled *The Crisis*, to inspire the Colonial Army in its battles with the British Red Coats. General Washington was so impressed he had the first of these read aloud to his troops. It began with the famous words, “These are the times that try men’s souls.”

Paine may be better remembered (unfortunately) for his later blasphemous book, *The Age of Reason*, in which he set forth his Deistic infidelity and exalted man’s reason apart from any revelation from God. Accordingly, he viciously attacked the Bible, the Christ, and Christianity. He remains a hero of atheists and humanists to the present.

Paine’s assault on the Bible turned Washington, who believed the Bible to be the Word of God and Jesus to be the Son of God, against him. Not only did *The Age of Reason* alienate Washington, but it also called forth a stern warning from Benjamin Franklin, not exactly known for his piety and faith, as was Washington. Paine sent his manuscript of *The Age of Reason* to Franklin prior to its publication. Upon reading it, Franklin urged him in the following unvarnished message not to publish it:

I have read your manuscript with some attention.... The consequence of printing this piece will be a great deal of odium drawn upon yourself, mischief to you, and no benefit to others. He that spits into the wind, spits in his own face. But were you to succeed, do you imagine any good would be done by it? ...Think about how great a portion of mankind consists of weak and ignorant men and women, and of inexperienced, inconsiderate youth of both sexes, who have need of the motives of religion to restrain them from vice, to support their virtue, and retain them in the practice of it till it becomes habitual, which is the great point for its security. And perhaps you are indebted to her originally, that is to your religious education, for the habits of virtue upon which you now justly value yourself.

Franklin argued only from the practical standpoint that men need an objective standard of conduct, implying that the Bible Paine inveighed against was just that. Whether or not Franklin was aware of it, he basically argued what Jeremiah long before had stated by inspiration: “O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23).

Modern disciples of Paine (Secularists, Humanists, infidels of every sort) who vilify the Bible and despise the Christ and His religion would do well to heed the words of both Jeremiah and old Ben Franklin. The world “unfettered” from belief in the Bible degenerates into the anarchy of “might makes right.” The further our nation drifts into Biblical illiteracy and unbelief, the more evil abounds all about us.

Atheistic and Secularist forces who, through their front men in the American Civil Liberties Union, are seeking to eradicate every vestige of Biblical influence from the public consciousness truly have no concept of the disaster they are promoting. How badly does our nation, yea the world, need God’s Word and the Savior and salvation it reveals!

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Lighthouse*, weekly bulletin of Northpoint Church of Christ, Denton, TX, December 14, 2014, of which I was editor.]

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