

**Thomas Paine and the U.S. Election of 1796:  
In which it is discovered that George Washington was  
more popular than Jesus**

Paper presented at the conference,  
“Thomas Paine and American Civil Liberties,”  
Università degli Studi di Milano, Facoltà di Scienze Politiche,  
Milan, Italy, 20 October 2008

*[BLOGITORIAL NOTE: The following is presented “as is,” with only a few small edits from the text I used at the conference. Some now pleasantly dated political references have been left intact. - JLP]*

One of the most persistent laments in and about present-day U.S. politics is the damage that the boorish unilateralism of the George W. Bush-Dick Cheney administration has done to the moral and political standing of the United States in the world. I am not sure how this development has been discussed abroad, but what Americans often express is a sense of chagrin and disappointment that the country has fallen so far below their own high estimation of its basic purposes and values.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Paine knew exactly how we feel: “There was a time when the fame of America, stood fair and high in the world. The luster of her revolution extended to every individual, and to be a citizen of America, gave a title to respect in Europe.” (We brought our Obama buttons with us for just this purpose.) While George Washington was a consummate gentleman in international politics compared to George Bush, Paine saw Washington’s foreign policy in much the same light as Bush’s critics would two centuries later. He complained particularly about the decision to shrug off the military alliance with France, first by officially declaring neutrality in the French Revolutionary Wars, then by agreeing to a commercial treaty with what Paine and many others saw as the two republics’ natural common enemy, Great Britain. “Meanness and ingratitude” were the

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Glenn Greenwald, “The tragic collapse of America's standing in the world,” *Salon*, 5 July 2007, [http://www.salon.com/opinion/greenwald/2007/07/05/american\\_credibility/index.html](http://www.salon.com/opinion/greenwald/2007/07/05/american_credibility/index.html) .

two words that came to Paine's mind regarding the Washington administration, qualities "so originally vices, that they are generated in the dung of other vices, and crawl into existence with the filth upon their back." These qualities were combined with an unearned arrogance that was even more infuriating to Paine: "The Washington faction having waded through the slough of negotiation, and whilst it amused France with professions of friendship contrived to injure her, immediately throws off the hypocrite, and assumes the swaggering air of a bravado."<sup>2</sup> It is hard to read that passage now and not think of George W. Bush on the deck of that aircraft carrier.

Working on a project about the beginnings of American presidential politics, I was first reminded of Paine during the controversy last spring over the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, pastor of Barack Obama's church. Among many other incendiary statements caught on videotape, Wright had declared "God bless America? God Damn America!," as a way of expressing his frustration that so many social ills were allowed to continue in a country that was so rich – at least we thought we were – and supposedly devoted to liberty and justice for all. Paine's one foray into U.S. presidential politics raises the question of what place extreme rhetoric has in them and what is to be done with potentially embarrassing allies. Obama eventually had to dissociate himself from Wright, but Thomas Jefferson and his allies were able to be a bit more faithful to Paine. But let me not get ahead of my story.

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As most of you may know, the history of U.S. presidential elections essentially begins with 1796. This first contested election did not take the familiar form of candidates criss-crossing the nation making speeches – the two contenders John Adams

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<sup>2</sup> Moncure Daniel Conway, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Paine* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1895), 3: 215-216. 238.

and Thomas Jefferson spent most of the year at home and neither was much in demand as a speaker. Yet in many of its thematic aspects, familiar patterns emerged immediately, with the conservative party in power labeling its challengers dangerous radicals and emphasizing the weight of their candidate's character, and the challengers arguing that this emphasis on character belied a political bankruptcy and corruption that threatened the country's most essential political principles. In the final weeks of this first campaign, Thomas Paine briefly became both a player and a counter in this battle. Paine's intervention in the election may or may not have helped his chosen candidate, Thomas Jefferson. What it certainly did do was damage his American reputation, perhaps irrevocably.<sup>3</sup>

Paine's reappearance in American politics resulted from the convergence of events in his career and that of the adopted country he left behind. Presumably there is no need to rehearse the standard narrative of the rise of American political parties here. Two issues that had divided Americans were of most concern to Paine: The most recent in 1796 was relations with France, whose revolutionary government he had joined only to fall victim to it once the U.S. signed the submissive Jay Treaty with Great Britain. A much older issue, indeed almost the first one that divided the American parties, was what critics saw as a drift toward monarchy in the conduct of George Washington's administration. In 1796, Paine still held to his original opinion that any kind of single

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<sup>3</sup> I am at work on what I hope will be the definitive book on the election of 1796, but the previous works I have found most helpful are: Edmund Berkeley and Dorothy Smith Berkeley, *John Beckley: Zealous Partisan in a Nation Divided* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1973); Noble E. Cunningham Jr., "John Beckley: An Early American Party Manager," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 13 (1956): 40-52; Noble E. Cunningham Jr., *The Jeffersonian Republicans: The Formation of Party Organization, 1789-1801* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1957); Alexander DeConde, *Entangling Alliance: Politics and Diplomacy Under George Washington* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1958); Stephen G. Kurtz, *The Presidency of John Adams: The Collapse of Federalism, 1795-1800* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1961); Richard G. Miller, *Philadelphia -- The Federalist City: A Study of Urban Politics, 1789-1801* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1976); James Roger Sharp, *American Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

executive was too monarchical for a republic: “It is necessary to the manly mind of a republic that it loses the debasing idea of obeying an individual.” Yet even setting aside this ideological opposition to the American presidency, Paine was outraged at what Washington had done with the position that had been created for him:

Elevated to the chair of the Presidency, you assumed the merit of every thing to yourself, and the natural ingratitude of your constitution began to appear. You commenced your Presidential career by encouraging and swallowing the grossest adulation, and you travelled America from one end to the other to put yourself in the way of receiving it. You have as many addresses in your chest as James the II.

Paine clearly got most of his information on Washington’s behavior from the opposition press – Philip Freneau’s *National Gazette* particularly harped on this issue -- but he was even more detailed and literal in his suspicions than most domestic Democratic-Republicans. Paine claimed that John Adams had proposed making the presidency hereditary in the Washington family, suggesting that Adams might have wanted to make the Vice Presidency hereditary in his own family. The great pamphleteer of 1776 described Washington, Adams, and their supporters flatly as “the disguised traitors that call themselves Federalists.”<sup>4</sup>

Paine put all of these sentiments into an infamous, increasingly open letter he wrote to President Washington, expanding on it several times during 1795 and 1796. Originally penned but not sent in February 1795 at the request of U.S. minister to France James Monroe, then revised and actually delivered to Washington and James Madison in September 1795, the version published during the 1796 campaign also incorporated large chunks of the desperate memorial Paine had written to Monroe from inside the Luxembourg Palace prison. Finally released four months after the end of the Reign of

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<sup>4</sup> Conway, ed., *Writings of Thomas Paine*, 3:214n, 217-218. On the opposition press, see Jeffrey L. Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001); and Donald H. Stewart, *The Opposition Press of the Federalist Period* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1969).

Terror, Paine was still seething about his near-death experience as a political prisoner months after that. Though as an associate of the Girondins Paine probably would have come in for persecution anyway, his imprisonment seems to have come largely at the behest of previous American minister Gouverneur Morris, a virtual royalist who was hostile to Paine on many different levels going back to the American Revolution. Robespierre was given to understand that Paine was somehow behind the troubles between Girondist French minister Edmond Genet and the Washington administration, and that throwing Paine in prison might be a way to improve relations. It is not clear that Washington himself understood Paine's situation or how powerfully some friendly signal from him might have affected it, but in any case the signal never came. Paine's health turned dire, and the continued silence from Washington was construed by Robespierre as approval of the detention and authorization for a death sentence that Paine was certain he had avoided only because Robespierre fell from power a few days before it was to be carried out.<sup>5</sup>

The raw anger Paine felt at his abandonment was intensified by the fact that he had once had a fairly close personal relationship with Washington. As respectively chief propagandist and military leader of the American Revolutionary cause, Paine and Washington had spent much time together socially and professionally during the war. Despite this, Paine believed, the "cold blooded traitor" Washington had tried to sacrifice him for political purposes, either "to gratify the English government" or else to provide another excuse to complain about the bloodthirstiness of revolutionary France. Paine

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Paine to James Madison, 24 Sept. 1795, William T. Hutchinson, et al, eds., 27 vols. *The Papers of James Madison* (Chicago & Charlottesville: University of Chicago Press & University Press of Virginia, 1962-1991), 16:91-92; John Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995), 382-419, 429-430. The campaign edition of Paine's letter was Thomas Paine, *Letter to George Washington, President of the United States of America, on Affairs Public and Private* (Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin Bache, 1796).

also psychoanalyzed Washington a bit, rendering a devastating judgment on the president's aloof personality. Washington was "incapable of forming any" real friendships, his former compatriot concluded: "It is this cold hermaphrodite faculty that imposed itself on the world, and was credited awhile by enemies, as by friends, for prudence, moderation, and impartiality." Yet Washington's air of dignity and disinterestedness, Paine believed, masked a narcissistic lack of interest in anyone but himself.<sup>6</sup>

Paine's drive to express his personal anguish dovetailed with the political needs of the more radical leaders of the Democratic-Republican opposition, clustered around the Philadelphia *Aurora* and a few other newspapers. By late 1795, having lost the battle to stop the hated Jay Treaty, they concluded that the only way to change the pro-British, quasi-monarchical tilt of government policy was to elect a new president. George Washington was their biggest obstacle, not only in terms of his sheer popularity but even more importantly in the way his image as "Beloved Father of his Country" placed him above ordinary political debate and suspended any serious efforts to replace the men who guided American measures. Beginning in the fall of 1795, Philadelphia radicals attached to the *Aurora* newspaper set out to desanctify the name of "Saint Washington," hoping either to embolden Washington's potential competitors or convince him to retire.<sup>7</sup>

Since Washington owed his iconic status to his role in the American Revolution, one of the many tactics that the *Aurora* writers tried was reevaluating the general's

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<sup>6</sup> Conway, ed., *Writings of Paine*, 3:220.

<sup>7</sup> The cult of Washington and the subsequent attacks on it have been covered by countless scholars, but perhaps the most useful treatments for present purposes are Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 519-536; James D. Tagg, "Benjamin Franklin Bache's Attack on George Washington," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 100 (1976): 191-230; Simon P. Newman, "Principles or Men? George Washington and the Political Culture of National Leadership, 1776-1801," *Journal of the Early Republic* 12 (1992): 477-507; Alexander DeConde, *Entangling Alliance: Politics and Diplomacy Under George Washington* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1958), 459-467; Barry Schwartz, *George Washington: The Making of an American Symbol* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 13-80.

revolutionary record, questioning his levels of both political commitment and military competence. Having long argued that they were defending the true spirit of 1776 against the Washington administration's monarchical heresies, the Democratic-Republican opposition needed another revolutionary hero they could put up against Washington. Thomas Jefferson might have worked, but it was well known in Philadelphia that the prospective opposition presidential candidate would never have allowed his name to be used against Washington that way. Under the political mores of the time, it was too risky to promote Jefferson as even a possible candidate until Washington stepped aside.<sup>8</sup>

Tom Paine had no such compunctions. One of the primary architects of the attack on Washington happened to be the grandson of Paine's original American benefactor, Benjamin Franklin. Paine had remained a friend of the family, and thus it was almost automatic that printer Benjamin Franklin Bache, editor of the *Aurora*, became Paine's primary American publisher. When he first printed an excerpt from Paine's letter to Washington in a mid-October 1796 issue of the *Aurora*, Bache let the reader assume that the missive had just recently arrived, but he had actually been the conduit for the delivery of the September 1795 version of the letter, so in all likelihood he and Paine had been planning its publication just before the election for some time.<sup>9</sup>

Bache was not afraid of political brinksmanship, and some of his tactics were deplored even by allies: around the same time as Paine's letter was published, he eagerly cooperated in disseminating and highlighting the public letters of French minister Pierre Adet, who attempted to influence the American elections by threatening war if the Jay Treaty was vindicated by the election of another Federalist president. Some of the attacks

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<sup>8</sup> Cunningham, *Jeffersonian Republicans*, 85-91.

<sup>9</sup> James D. Tagg, *Benjamin Franklin Bache and the Philadelphia "Aurora"* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 124-127, 282-283.

Bache wrote or published also drew on forged letters created by the British secret service to smear Washington as a secret loyalist during the Revolution. His publication of Paine's letter to Washington fell into this same "anything goes" pattern.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, Paine's letter to Washington was a serious effort to draw from a different, less conservative well of historical prestige than the military one that Washington provided. (Finding a radical past in the American Revolution has been a sub-project of the American left ever since.) Paine was game on both fronts. Never one to be shy regarding his own importance, Paine had no qualms about pitting his revolutionary credentials against Washington's: "Mr. Washington has not served America with greater Zeal, nor with more disinterestedness than myself, and I know not that he has done so with better effect." His letter corroborated the ongoing critique of Washington with the eyewitness counter-testimony of a fellow Founder of the United States, speaking, he claimed, "the undisguised language of historical truth."<sup>11</sup>

While better than its reputation, Paine's letter to Washington admittedly makes for rather unpleasant reading and is far from the author's most effective piece of political rhetoric. Some of its text vividly conveys the frightening, frustrating tale of Paine's imprisonment and the Washington administration's unwillingness to help him, and for readers already committed to the proposition that signing the Jay Treaty was an egregious crime, the linkage Paine's letter made between Washington's untrustworthiness in large and small matters was undoubtedly powerful. However, the private affairs mentioned in the title of the first pamphlet version, *Letter to George Washington . . . on Affairs Public and Private*, really do overwhelm the public part. The piece is more deeply concerned

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<sup>10</sup> Tagg, "Bache's Attack on Washington"; DeConde, *Entangling Alliances*.

<sup>11</sup> Conway, ed., *Writings of Thomas Paine*, 3:231, 217; Thomas Paine to James Madison, 24 Sept. 1795, Hutchinson, et al, eds., *Papers of James Madison*, 16:91-92.

with the mistreatment of Thomas Paine, political celebrity, and taking revenge, than with indicting Washington's ideas or policies.

On the other hand, and contrary to what historians have often said, Paine's letter probably was quite effective as short-term politics. His American allies were heartened by it. Madison had been impressed with Paine's "keen observations on the administration of the Government here" when he first saw an earlier version of the letter in 1795, although he liked it better when Paine's blast was a secret that was useful in encouraging Jefferson to stand for the presidency. Jefferson eagerly requested that Madison send him a copy of the pamphlet version, putting his friend at some pains to do so.<sup>12</sup>

Most importantly, Paine's letter seems to have helped Jefferson win the one full-scale popular election campaign that was actually conducted in 1796, in Pennsylvania. In most of the other states, presidential electors were still chosen by the state legislature, and even in most states that chose electors by popular vote, there was public campaigning only in scattered localities. Then, as now, Pennsylvania was a "swing state" that decided elections, so the Republicans made their big push there. Paine had briefly been a highly influential man in Pennsylvania back in 1776, and the loss of the unicameral constitution written under his influence still embittered many of the state's Democratic-Republicans. Voters had no experience of a true national election, so thousands of handbills were printed announcing that on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, "the important question is to be decided, whether the Republican Jefferson, or the Royalist Adams" was to be the next president. The pro-Jefferson elector candidates were then listed – voters had to write them all on the ballot themselves if their votes were to be counted – and below that was some text documenting the opposition's argument that the election was one between monarchy and

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<sup>12</sup> Boyd, et al, eds., *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 28:577, 29: 224, 256

republicanism. Half of the handbills led off this section with the passage from Paine's *Letter to Washington* about the alleged Adams proposal to turn the Washingtons into a royal family. Readers were invited to apply to the editor of the *Aurora* if they wanted to see the original.<sup>13</sup>

At least some Pennsylvanians must have been prepared to trust Paine, because Jefferson carried their state, winning all but one of the presidential electoral voters and riding a landslide 2000-plus margin over Adams in the city and county of Philadelphia to an edge in the statewide popular vote as well. Pennsylvania's electoral votes were not enough to win the national election outright, but they did raise Jefferson to a second-place finish that, under the party-unfriendly rules then in place, made the challenger his opponent's vice president. In gratitude for this and many other good turns, Jefferson remained a loyal friend to Paine throughout his life. As president, he allowed the old radical back into the country and hosted him at the White House even after Paine had become a pariah.<sup>14</sup>

The Pennsylvania victory was a costly one for many of its promoters, and Paine was among them. It was significant that the passage quoted on the handbill was one that criticized John Adams rather than Washington himself.

While it is often assumed that Paine's 1795 anti-Christian tract *The Age of Reason* sparked the collapse of his American reputation, in fact it was the letter to Washington that seems to have been the turning point. Many American printers had published

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<sup>13</sup> Cunningham, *Jeffersonian Republicans*, 94-109; Jeffrey L. Pasley, "'A Journeyman, Either in Law or Politics': John Beckley and the Social Origins of Political Campaigning," *Journal of the Early Republic* 16 (1996): 531-569. An image of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's copy of the handbill, taken from the American Antiquarian Society and Readex/Newsbank's Early American Imprints series, is appended to the end of this document.

<sup>14</sup> For the Pennsylvania totals from the New Nation Voters project sponsored by the American Antiquarian Society, see [http://elections.lib.tufts.edu/aas\\_portal/view-election.xq?id=MS115.002.PA.1796.00061](http://elections.lib.tufts.edu/aas_portal/view-election.xq?id=MS115.002.PA.1796.00061). On Jefferson's relationship with Paine, see Keane, *Tom Paine*, 455-456, 462, 469, 471, 474, 485; Dumas Malone, *Jefferson the President: First Term, 1801-1805* (Boston: Little Brown, 1970), 192-200.

responses to Paine's deist tract, but before October 1796 the American press generally treated him as a serious, respectable thinker. A false report of Paine's death circulated widely earlier in the year, and in most cases his memory had been honored. His pamphlet against the British financial system, published in mid-1796, was widely discussed and cited. During the same period, prints of Paine's likeness were offered for sale, and British songs and even a joke-book celebrating Paine were re-published in America. The tendency was to wall off Paine's religious views from the rest of his public career. So, in responding to the false death reports, a central Massachusetts writer could salute Paine's intrepidity in castigating the British monarchy, while ending with sentiment that, as to religion, "every friend of Paine is sorry he did not die a few years sooner."<sup>15</sup>

All this began to change after Paine took on George Washington. John Adams won the election of 1796 despite Paine's intervention, and it was in the aftermath of that failure that the writer's reputation began to sour. More vitriolic and dismissive assaults on Paine began to appear literally alongside reports of the voting results. One early response proclaimed Paine's letter "the most extraordinary composition of abuse, petulance, falsehood, and school-boy vanity, that ever came from Grub-Street, a prison or a garret." The Boston *Columbian Centinel* joked mirthlessly that Paine should be identified in future publications as the man who "ridiculed Jesus Christ, blackguarded the Bible, and vilified George Washington." The *Centinel* reassured readers that "Centuries after the name of *Paine* shall be forgotten that of *Washington* will live in the hearts of posterity," inserting two different poems on theme:

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<sup>15</sup> James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 10 Jan. 1796, Boyd, et al, eds., *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 28:577; New York *American Minerva*, 5 January 1796; "Character of Thomas Paine," *Leominster Rural Repository*, 28 Jan. 1796.

**'SUBLIME' IDEA.**

"OH! WASHINGTON! shouldst thou descend,  
 'Till Earth's millennial day shall end;  
 And PAINE and Hell like lightning rise,  
 'Till Time shall cease and Nature dies,  
 A space between you would remain,  
 Too vast, too boundless to explain."  
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"Oh WASHINGTON! *Columbia's* boast,  
 Thy head a *Senate*—arm an *host*,  
 Enjoy in *VERNON's* happy shade  
 (Which faction's fiends can ne'er invade)  
 The holy raptures of a *mind*  
 With ev'ry noble gift refin'd:  
**THY LIFE IN RETROSPECT SURVEY,**  
**RECAL THE ACTIONS OF EACH DAY;**  
 So shalt thou feel of joy a glow,  
 Which myriad *Paines* can never know."  
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These are only a few examples that could be cited, as William Cobbett and many others soon got into the act.<sup>16</sup>

Republicans noted that Washington suddenly seemed to rank above the Almighty himself in the Federalist pantheon. Several opposition journals printed an item purporting to recount a drawing room conversation in which a gentleman denounced Paine's criticism of Washington. A young lady replied, "When the Age of Reason appeared, you were not offended with the freedom with which Paine treated Jesus-Christ; but you are so good a man you cannot bear the least reflection on George Washington."<sup>17</sup>

The origins of this sudden change can be found in the ways that Federalists were just learning to use religion in their political battles. Though there is little evidence to

<sup>16</sup> New York *Herald*, 28 December 1796; Baltimore *Federal Gazette*, 3 Jan. 1797; Boston *Columbian Centinel*, 14, 18 January 1797.

<sup>17</sup> "From a George-Town Paper," Newark *Centinel of Freedom*, 25 January 1797.

suggest that Federalist leaders were any less deist in their personal religious views than Republican leaders were, they were keenly devoted to a certain idea of social order and the role religion could play in maintaining it. They also saw an opportunity to appeal to the presumed devoutness of the common voters whom many party leaders -- on *both* sides -- believed to be natural Jeffersonians. At any rate, in late 1796 Federalist writers suddenly began linking Thomas Paine with Thomas Jefferson and other Democratic-Republicans in a religious context. According to the Hartford *Connecticut Courant*, Paine was a religious teacher “whom Jefferson and his disciples exalt above Moses or Jesus.” Federalist congressman and pamphleteer William Loughton Smith of South Carolina claimed that “the late impious and blasphemous works of Thomas Paine . . . have been very industriously circulated by all that class of people, who are friendly to Mr. Jefferson’s politics, and anxiously desirous of his election to the presidency.”<sup>18</sup>

The aftermath of the 1796 campaign was only the beginning. Over the next few years, drawing heavily from the British press’s onslaught against Paine, the Federalist press converted the author of *Common Sense* into a laughable yet dangerous figure whose views fell far outside the imagined mainstream of American political thought and tarred anyone or anything he supported or allied himself with, even implicitly. Just a few years later, even allowing Paine to return to the United States was controversial, and he found he could not move around the country safely without attracting mobs, glares, and snubs.<sup>19</sup>

Here emerged one of the key patterns in American national politics, from that day to this: the drive to create boundaries defining a consensual American political culture and then to push opponents across them. As Barack Obama discovered in the cases of his

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<sup>18</sup> “The People’s Answer,” reprinted in Worcester *Massachusetts Spy*, 23 Nov. 1796; “Phocion, No. X,” *Philadelphia Gazette of the United States*, 27 October 1796. On Federalist use of religion, see David Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution of American Conservatism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

<sup>19</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine*, 479-482.

former minister and a man he barely knows, former Weather Underground leader William Ayers, highlighting unsavory or extreme associates remains a popular way of accomplishing this goal.

Turning Tom Paine into a fit subject for guilt-by-association attacks was part of a larger process of ideological narrowing in the cultural memory of the American Revolution. Retroactively, Paine's freethinking religious writings and the cosmopolitan notions of citizenship he represented were made to seem deeply troubling departures from American norms. Along with Paine, the figure of the political radical was read out of the public memory of the Revolution – Samuel Adams went with him – in favor of military leaders and a general conflation of the political revolution with national independence and the Revolutionary War. Washington and his supporters had built the image of patriotic statesmanship around him too well. American political movements would continue to invoke the Revolution as a precedent for their demands, but they were able to do so much less effectively and convincingly once the memory of it had been narrowed to General Washington and the Minutemen.

Paine's American reputation, and the revolutionary radicalism it stood for, was never the same after its encounter with Washington.

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Published at the *Common-Place* blog, "Publick Occurrences 2.0," <http://www.common-place.org/pasley/>, 4 July 2009.

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**Public Notice. Friday the Fourth Day of November next, is the Day Appointed by Law, for the People to ... Choose ... Electors ... of a President ... of the United States....Extract of a Letter from Thomas Paine [ Philadelphia, 1796. ] Broadside.**

**HSP copy.**

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# Public Notice.

Friday the Fourth day of November next,

IS the day appointed by law, for the People to meet at their respective places of election, to choose by *written tickets*, fifteen electors on behalf of this State, of a President and Vice-President of the United States. Citizens attend! On that day the important question is to be decided, whether the republican JEFFERSON, or the royalist ADAMS, shall be President of the United States. Subjoined is a list of fifteen good republicans, friends of the people, who love liberty, hate monarchy, and will vote for a republican President. Remember Friday the fourth of November!

## Electors.

John Whitehill, Lancaster county.

William Irwin, Cumberland.

Abraham Smith, Franklin.

William Brown, Millin.

John Pifer, Bedford.

John Smilie, Fayette.

James Edgar, Washington.

Thomas Paine, dated Paris, July 30th, 1796.—The original may be seen by applying to the Editor of the Aurora, Philadelphia.

JOHN ADAMS has said, (and John it is known, was always a speller after places and offices, and never thought his little services were highly enough paid). John has said, that as Mr. WASHINGTON had no child, that the Presidency should be made hereditary in the family of LUND WASHINGTON. John might then have counted on some sinecure for himself, and a provision for his descendants. He did not go so far as to say also, that the Vice Presidency should be hereditary in the family of John Adams. He prudently left that to stand upon the ground, that the good of the world is another's.

ADAMS is one of these men, who never contemplated the origin of government, or comprehended any thing of first principles. If he had, he must have seen that the right to set up and establish hereditary government, never did and never can exist, in any generation, at any time whatever; that it is of the nature of treason, because it is an attempt to take away the rights of all the minors living at that time, and of all succeeding generations. It is of a degree beyond common treason. It is a sin against nature. The equal rights of generations, is a right fixed in the nature of things. It belongs to the son when of age, as it belonged to the father before him. John Adams would himself deny the right, that any former deceased generation could have, to decree authoritatively

a succession of governors over him, or over his children; and yet he assumes the pretended right, treasonable as it is, of acting it himself. His ignorance is his excuse.

JOHN JAY has said, (and this John was always the sycophant of every thing in power, from Mr. Gerard in America, to Grenville in England). John Jay has said that the Senate should have been appointed for life. He would then have been sure of never wanting a lucrative appointment for himself, nor have had any fears about impeachments. These are the disguised traitors that call themselves federalists.

*Two persons to whom John Adams said this, told me of it. The secretary of Mr. Jay was absent when it was told to me.*

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