

JOURNAL
OF THE
AMERICAN
REVOLUTION

ANNUAL VOLUME 2018



WESTHOLME
Yardley

Thomas Paine, Deism, and the Masonic Fraternity

✽ SHAI AFSAI ✽

Thomas Paine's close associations with famous Freemasons in America, England, and France have frequently been taken as evidence that he was a Freemason himself, and have been seen as explaining his sudden rise to literary and political prominence after arriving in the American colonies from England. Likewise, his writing of an essay "On the Origin of Free-Masonry" several years before his death has been interpreted as a confirmation that he was a committed member of the fraternity.

However, a close reading of "On the Origin of Free-Masonry" shows that Paine was not a Freemason at the time of its composition and that the essay's purpose is to attack organized religion as much as to explicate Freemasonry's beginnings. "On the Origin of Free-Masonry," which posits a druid origin to the Masonic fraternity, is of a piece with the confrontational religious approach Paine embraced in his later works, where he denounced revealed religion and endorsed deism. Freemasonry and deism intersected often in revolutionary America and France, and due to Paine's associations with members of the fraternity in both places and sympathy with certain of its beliefs and aims, he devoted an essay to Freemasonry's origins, while simultaneously attacking revealed religion in his exploration of the subject.

Biographer Jack Fruchtman notes that there are no records pointing to Paine's membership in the fraternity: "It has long been questioned whether Paine was a member of the Masons. There is no definitive proof either way. There is no specific date known on which he joined

This article expands upon my prior surveys of the topic, including most recently "Thomas Paine, Freemasonry, and Deism," *Heredom* 22 (2014): 95-106.

nor a specific lodge to which he was attached."¹ Nonetheless, Masonic membership has regularly been ascribed to him. This is seen, for example, in the tendency of some American Masonic Grand Lodges to publish informational brochures that have placed Paine on the roster of famous Freemasons.² One such brochure, "The Real Secret of Freemasonry," claims that "the pantheon of Masons holds George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine, among others."³ Masonic websites have also continued to make similar assumptions about Paine and Freemasonry,⁴ as have articles in Masonic journals.⁵

A chapter of Bernard Vincent's *The Transatlantic Republican: Thomas Paine and the Age of Revolutions* is devoted to Paine and the Masonic Order,⁶ and Vincent focuses on a predominant reason for the tendency to consider him a Freemason:

While working on my Tom Paine biography, I was intrigued from the outset by the fact that all of a sudden, within just a few weeks or months, and as if by magic, Paine leaped from his obscure humdrum existence in England—where he had worked as a corset-maker and Excise officer—onto the American literary and political stage, there to become, at the age of almost forty, one of the leading lights of the Revolutionary movement.

How was it that a man who was little short of a failure in his native country became acquainted so rapidly with the most prominent figures in the Colonies, even becoming a friend of theirs in many cases? How can one account for the quickness of his ascent and the suddenness of his glory?

One way of accounting for this, one hypothesis (which has several times been made), is to consider that Paine became a Freemason and that, as such, he enjoyed, first in America, then in England and

1. Jack Fruchtman, Jr., *Thomas Paine: Apostle of Freedom* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1994), 491, note 28.

2. See the paragraph on Paine in the list of "Famous Non-Masons" at the website *Anti-Masonry: Points of View*, masonicinfo.com/famousnon.htm.

3. "The Real Secret of Freemasonry," published by authority of the Trustees of The Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of Oregon (U.S.A.: Still Associates, 1990).

4. See, for example, the website of the Scottish Rite Valley of Albany, New York [<http://banyscottishrite.org>], where the opening sentences of Paine's *The American Crisis* are attributed to "Bro. [i.e., Brother] Thomas Paine."

5. See, for example, James W. Betess, "Thomas Jefferson, Freeman," *Scottish Rite Journal* (March 1998), available at sjararchives.tripod.com/1998-03/beless.htm.

6. Bernard Vincent, *The Transatlantic Republican: Thomas Paine and the Age of Revolutions* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 35-58, with a selected bibliography on 59-64.

France, the kindly assistance of certain lodges or of certain individual Masons.⁷

Vincent rejects this hypothesis, however, due to a lack of corroborative evidence. While it is certain that George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, for instance, were Freemasons, there is no equivalent support for such a claim about Paine. (Franklin, who provided Paine with a letter of introduction before the latter departed England for the American colonies,⁸ is discussed in greater detail below.)

Assertions of Paine's Masonic membership also rest on the fact that between 1803 and 1805, after returning to America from England and France, he penned "On the Origin of Free-Masonry."⁹ For some, Paine's curiosity about Freemasonry and his decision to write about it have been, in and of themselves, sufficient proof that he was a Freemason. However, Vincent dismisses this line of reasoning as well:

Paine's interest in Freemasonry was such that toward the end his life, in 1805, he wrote a lengthy piece entitled *An Essay on the Origin of Freemasonry*. . . . But this does not prove, any more than any other detail or fact that we know of, that Paine was a Mason. There is indeed no formal trace of his initiation or membership in England, none in America, and none in France. Questioned about Paine's membership . . . the United Grand Lodge of England had only this to answer: "In the absence of any record of his initiation, it must, therefore, be assumed he was not a member of the order."¹⁰

Paine's well-known Masonic associations have also been a source for conjecture about his relationship to the fraternity. It has often been pointed out that Paine had several close friends who were members of the Order, including Nicolas de Bonneville. In his Paine biography, Samuel Edwards depicts Bonneville as an active Freemason who "was convinced that the principles and aims of Masonry, if applied to the world's ailments, would bring peace and prosperity to all nations."¹¹

7. Vincent, *Transatlantic Republican*, 35.

8. Dixon Wecter, "Thomas Paine and the Franklins," *American Literature* 12 (1940): 306; and Vincent, *Transatlantic Republican*, 36.

9. Jennifer N. Wunder, *Keats, Hermeticism, and the Secret Societies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 37. Vincent (*Transatlantic Republican*, 36) cites 1805 as the year "On the Origin of Free-Masonry" was written, as does Fruchtman (*Thomas Paine*, 491, note 29; and 535). In contrast, William Van der Weyde places its writing in 1803.

10. Vincent, *Transatlantic Republican*, 36.

11. Samuel Edwards, *Rebel! A Biography of Tom Paine* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), 227.

bunk the Bible in his later writings, including *The Age of Reason*.²⁰ The removed passages were soon obtained by *The Theophilanthropist*, which supplied them alongside Bonneville's censored version when the essay was reprinted there in 1810.²¹ Most of Bonneville's omissions were reincorporated into "On the Origin of Free-Masonry" itself in a subsequent printing of the essay, in 1818,²² and this version, with an array of editorial notes, is one that readers are likely to encounter today.

Paine's central premise in "On the Origin of Free-Masonry" is that the Order "is derived and is the remains of the religion of Heliopolis in Druids; who, like the Magi of Persia and the Priests of Heliopolis in Egypt, were Priests of the Sun."²³ The idea that Freemasonry developed from druidism did not begin with Paine and has been advanced by others after him. According to Paine, however, this druid origin is the deepest secret of Freemasonry, from which stem its unique fraternal concealments and rituals:

The natural source of secrecy is fear. When any new religion over-runs a former religion, the professors of the new become the persecutors of the old . . . when the Christian religion over-ran the religion of the Druids . . . the Druids became the subject of persecution. This would naturally and necessarily oblige such of them as remained attached to their original religion to meet in secret, and under the strongest injunctions of secrecy. Their safety depended upon it. A false brother might expose the lives of many of them to destruction; and from the remains of the religion of the Druids, thus preserved, arose the institution which, to avoid the name of Druid, took that of Mason, and practiced under this new name the rites and ceremonies of Druids.²⁴

Masonic scholar Albert Gallatin Mackey quips in his 1898 *History of Freemasonry* that Paine "knew, by the way, as little of Masonry as he did of the religion of the Druids."²⁵ He calls the essay "frivolous" and Paine

20. See Vincent, *Transatlantic Republicanism*, 10, 89, 99, 145.

21. *Theophilanthropist*, 370-372. Bonneville's earlier published shortened version of Paine's essay appeared in the last thirty pages of the volume.

22. Thomas Paine, *The Theological Works of Thomas Paine* (London: R. Canile, 1824), 287. The inclusiveness of this 1818 printing is apparently what is intended by Fruchtmann when he describes "Origin of Freemasonry" as being "first published in 1818" (*Thomas Paine*, 535), even though he previously states (510) that it was published in 1810.

23. Paine, "Origin of Free-Masonry," 293.

24. Paine, "Origin of Free-Masonry," 303.

25. Albert Gallatin Mackey, *The History of Freemasonry* (New York: The Masonic History Company, 1898), vol. 1, 199.

Paine resided at the home of Bonneville and his family while living in France, and Fruchtmann proposes that it was Bonneville who introduced Paine to the philosophies of Freemasonry and Theophilanthropism.¹² The bond between the two men was quite strong, with Bonneville's wife—Marguerite—and three sons (one named Thomas Paine Bonneville)¹³ eventually following Paine to America.¹⁴

However, as with Paine's sudden rise to prominence and his composition of an essay on Freemasonry, such friendships do not prove Masonic membership. Rather, as Moncure Daniel Conway contends in an editorial note to *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, "Paine's intimacy in Paris with Nicolas de Bonneville and Charles Françoise Dupuis, whose writings are replete with masonic speculations, sufficiently explains his interest in the subject" of Freemasonry, though he himself was not a Freemason.¹⁵ Similarly, William M. Van der Weyde, in *The Life and Works of Thomas Paine*, mentions Paine's Masonic acquaintances, while at the same time emphasizing that Paine's friendships do not constitute evidence of his belonging to the fraternity: "Paine was the author of an interesting and highly instructive treatise on the *Origin of Freemasonry* . . . but, although many of his circle of friends were undoubtedly members of that order, no conclusive proof has ever been adduced that Paine was a Mason."¹⁶ Vincent offers a long list of Paine's Masonic associates, but his conclusion is similar to that of Conway and Van Der Weyde: they do not prove he was a Freemason.¹⁷

Marguerite de Bonneville published Paine's "On the Origin of Freemasonry" in 1810, after his death.¹⁸ She chose, however, to omit certain passages from it that were critical of Christianity.¹⁹ For despite using the Bible to support his arguments in such works as *Common Sense*, *The American Crisis*, and *Rights of Man*, Paine was in fact strongly opposed to Christianity—and to revealed religion in general—and sought to de-

12. Fruchtmann, *Thomas Paine*, 275, 379-380. Paine was among the founders of the Society of Theophilanthropists (Friends of God and Man) in Paris. See Harry Harmer, *Tom Paine: The Life of a Revolutionary* (London: Haas Publishing, 2006), 99.

13. Harmer, *Tom Paine*, 99.

14. Fruchtmann, *Thomas Paine*, 275, 394-395.

15. Thomas Paine, "Origin of Free-Masonry," in *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Moncure Daniel Conway (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896), vol. 4, 290, note 1.

16. William M. Van der Weyde, *The Life and Works of Thomas Paine* (New York: Thomas Paine National Historical Association, 1925), vol. 1, 171. Most Masonic writers, in contrast, have not shared this high opinion of Paine's essay.

17. Vincent, *Transatlantic Republicanism*, 36.

18. Fruchtmann, *Thomas Paine*, 510.

19. *The Theophilanthropist*, *Containing Critical, Moral, Theological, and Literary Essays, in Monthly Numbers* (New York: 1810), 370-371.

"a mere sciolist in the subject of what he presumptuously sought to treat."²⁶ Mackey is only slightly more charitable toward Paine in the entry on him in *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences*, allowing that "for one so little acquainted with his subject, he has treated it with considerable ingenuity."²⁷ Echoing that verdict, Masonic historian Joseph Fort Newton writes in *The Builder Magazine* (1915): "The notion that he was a Mason is probably due to the fact that he wrote an essay on Freemasonry, but the essay, while ingenious in its argument, betrays a vast incomprehension of the Order."²⁸

Indeed, it is evident from "On the Origin of Free-Masonry" that Paine was not very knowledgeable of Freemasonry, though this does not in itself prove he was not a Freemason when he wrote it. Paine's general tone, however, discloses him as an outsider trying to assess what is in the Order, rather than a member of it, and indicates that he was not a Freemason when he composed the essay. For instance, after referring to certain statements about Freemasonry in Captain George Smith's *The Use and Abuse of Free-Masonry* (1783), Paine declares:

It sometimes happens, as well in writing as in conversation, that a person lets slip an expression that serves to unravel what he intends to conceal, and this is the case with Smith, for in the same chapter he says, "The Druids, when they committed any thing to writing, used the Greek alphabet, and I am bold to assert that the most perfect remains of the Druids' rites and ceremonies are preserved in the customs and ceremonies of the Masons that are to be found existing among mankind." "My brethren" says he, "may be able to trace them with greater exactness than I am at liberty to explain to the public."

This is a confession from a Master Mason, without intending it to be so understood by the public, that Masonry is the remains of the religion of the Druids.²⁹

Those are not the words of a man who is himself a Master Mason, but rather of one who is guessing at what secrets a Master Mason knows and may be inadvertently revealing. Paine mistakes the conjectures found in Smith's work for an unintended admission on his part about Freemasonry's concealed origins. As it happens, Smith, a Provincial Grand Master of Kent, actually plagiarized the passages that Paine considers his confession. These passages, along with entire sections of

26. Mackey, *History of Freemasonry*, vol. 1, 216.

27. Mackey, *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences* (Philadelphia: Moss and Company, 1874), 559.

28. Joseph Fort Newton, "Who's Who," *The Builder Magazine* 1 (1915), 276.

29. Paine, "Origin of Free-Masonry," 294-295.

Smith's chapter on "Antiquity of Free-Masonry in General," are lifted word for word from William Hutchinson's *The Spirit of Masonry in Moral and Elucidatory Lectures* (1775).³⁰ Smith mentions in *The Use and Abuse of Free-Masonry* that he made it his business "for many years to collect a great number of passages from writers eminent for their learning and probity, where I thought they might serve to illustrate my subject. The propriety of such proceeding is too obvious to need any apology."³¹ The propriety of also ascribing these passages to their respective writers, rather than narrating them in the first person, was apparently not as obvious to the unapologetic Smith.

Appropriately, the anonymous author of an 1818 editorial preface to "On the Origin of Free-Masonry"³² determines that Paine had, despite his best efforts, overreached in attempting to demystify the "abstruse subject"³³ of Freemasonry's beginnings: "Various speculations . . . continue to be made respecting the origin of the society, and its views at the time of its formation; and Mr. Paine, among the rest, with all his sagacity, has suffered himself to be most egregiously deceived by such writings of the masons as had fallen into his hands."³⁴

If he was not a Master Mason when he wrote the essay, could Paine have been an Entered Apprentice or a Fellow-Craft? It is difficult to argue—especially given the absence of any records of a Masonic initiation—that Paine was curious enough about Freemasonry's origin and philosophy to write seriously about the fraternity, and also to begin the Masonic degrees, but that he did not wait until completing the first three degrees before concluding his essay. In fact, Paine opens his essay by contending that Master Masons are privy to information on the fraternity's origins that other Freemasons are ignorant about:

The Society of Masons are distinguished into three classes or degrees. 1st. The Entered Apprentice. 2d. The Fellow Craft. 3d. The Master Mason.

The Entered Apprentice knows but little more of Masonry than the use of signs and tokens, and certain steps and words by which Masons can recognize each other without being discovered by a person who is not a Mason. The Fellow Craft is not much better in-

30. See "Lecture I: The Design" in William Hutchinson, *The Spirit of Masonry in Moral and Elucidatory Lectures* (London: J. Wilkie and W. Goldsmith, 1775), 1-22.

31. George Smith, *The Use and Abuse of Free-Masonry* (London: 1783), 22.

32. Paine, "Origin of Free-Masonry," 290, note 1.

33. "Preface by the Editor to the Origin of Free-Masonry," *Theological Works of Thomas Paine*, 293.

34. "Preface by the Editor to the Origin of Free-Masonry," 287.

structured in Masonry, than the Entered Apprentice. It is only in the Master Mason's Lodge, that whatever knowledge remains of the origin of Masonry is preserved and concealed.³⁵

Had he begun the Masonic degrees, Paine would have likely sought all the first-hand knowledge they offered, and would have waited until he had gained access to it before finishing "On the Origin of Free-Masonry." A close reading of "On the Origin of Free-Masonry" makes it apparent that Paine, although he had companions within the Order, was not himself a member of the fraternity prior to or during the essay's composition. While he did have access to texts relating to Freemasonry, he was prone to misinterpreting them.

In an article on Paine and Freemasonry in the English quarterly *Freemasonry Today*, David Harrison speculates that "if Paine did enter into Freemasonry, it would have been during the period of the American Revolution, his life being at the epicentre of the social elite at that time, his closeness to Franklin, Washington, Lafayette and Monroe suggesting that he was undoubtedly aware of their Masonic membership."³⁶ "On the Origin of Free-Masonry," however, indicates that despite Paine's closeness to these men, he did not enter into Freemasonry during the period of the American Revolution. Years after the revolution, he wrote about the fraternity as an outsider and not as an initiate.

Still, facets of Paine's thought may be said to correspond to certain Masonic principles. In *The Age of Reason*—which Paine may have initially intended "On the Origin of Free-Masonry" to be a part of³⁷—he expounds his religious beliefs: "I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life. I believe the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy."³⁸ Such statements, which Joseph Fort Newton felt had a Masonic ring to them, prompted him to write of Paine in *The Builders: A Story and Study of Masonry*:

Thomas Paine . . . though not a Mason, has left us an essay on The Origin of Freemasonry. Few men have ever been more unjustly and cruelly maligned than this great patriot, who was the first to utter the name "United States," and who, instead of being a sceptic, be-

35. Paine, "Origin of Free-Masonry," 290-291.

36. David Harrison, "Thomas Paine, Freemason?" *Freemasonry Today* 46 (Autumn 2008), freemasonrytoday.com/46/p11.p1p.

37. "Preface by the Editor to the Origin of Free-Masonry," 287.

38. Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason: Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (Boston: Josiah P. Mendum, 1852), part 1, 6.

lieved in "the religion in which all men agree"—that is, in God, Duty, and the immortality of the soul.³⁹

Similarly, Vincent maintains in *The Transatlantic Republican* that while Paine "probably never belonged to any specific fraternity, he nevertheless actively sympathized with the Masonic movement and the philosophy it espoused." In Vincent's view, "Masonic thought had much in common with [Paine's] own deistic outlook and his own cult of reason."⁴⁰ The movements of deism and Freemasonry often intersected in revolutionary France—where Fruchtmann believes Paine was introduced to the fraternity's philosophy—and in revolutionary America, where as Herbert Morais argues, the "growth of deistic speculation was stimulated, not only by the spirit of the times, but also by the development of Freemasonry"⁴¹ and the infiltration of French culture.⁴² According to Morais, although "the American Masonic movement was . . . distinctly Christian both in tone and deed . . . nevertheless, its prayers, addresses, and constitutions were written in such a manner that its members were unconsciously familiarized with deistic phraseology . . . [and] with deistic expressions."⁴³

Paine's deistic-sounding creed in *The Age of Reason* (and this creed as masonically paraphrased by Joseph Fort Newton) is quite similar to one articulated by Franklin—a self-described deist⁴⁴ as well as a prominent Freemason⁴⁵—in his *Autobiography*: "That there is one God who made all things. That he governs the World by his Providence. That he ought to be worshipped by Adoration, Prayer & Thanksgiving. But that the most acceptable Service of God is doing Good to Man. That the Soul is immortal. And that God will certainly reward Virtue and punish

39. Newton, *The Builders: A Story and Study of Masonry* (Iowa: The Torch Press, 1916), 225-226, note 3.

40. Vincent, *Transatlantic Republican*, 35.

41. Herbert M. Morais, "Deism in Revolutionary America (1763-89)," *International Journal of Ethics* 42 (1932): 437.

42. Morais, "Deism in Revolutionary America," 436-437, 442, 452.

43. Morais, "Deism in Revolutionary America," 438-440.

44. David T. Morgan argues in "Benjamin Franklin: Champion of Generic Religion," *The Historian* 62 (2000): 723, that "no one to this very day is quite sure of Franklin's religious beliefs." He suggests that Franklin may be described as a deist, but that his views included "personally tailored modifications of the Deist creed" (728). See also Morais, "Deism in Revolutionary America," 448-449; and Harold E. Taussig, "Deism in Philadelphia During the Age of Franklin," *Pennsylvania History*, 37 (1970): 217-218.

45. See Julius F. Sachse, "The Masonic Chronology of Benjamin Franklin," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 30 (1906): 238-240.

Vice either here or hereafter."⁴⁶ Although, as Robert Falk notes, Paine "nowhere states outright, as Franklin does, that he was a 'thorough Deist,' [he] speaks of the religion always in terms of intimate sympathy,"⁴⁷ and "it seems safe to conclude that 'the creed of Paine' was . . . 'the purest deism.'"⁴⁸ Indeed, in his conclusion to the second part of *The Age of Reason*, Paine writes:

If we consider the nature of our condition here, we must see there is no occasion for such a thing as revealed religion. . . .

[Deism] teaches us, without the possibility of being deceived, all that is necessary or proper to be known. The creation is the Bible of the Deist. He there reads, in the hand-writing of the Creator himself, the certainty of his existence, and the immutability of his power; and all other Bibles and Testaments are to him forgeries. . . .⁴⁹

The only religion that has not been invented, and that has in it every evidence of divine originality, is pure and simple Deism.⁵⁰

Unlike Franklin, who was usually careful not to offend prevalent eighteenth-century religious sensibilities, focusing instead on what he held to be the beliefs common to all faiths,⁵¹ Paine was not aiming for generic religious doctrine. Forgoing what Vincent terms "the discreet Deism of leaders like Franklin or Jefferson," Paine was vocal in his opposition to organized religion.⁵² In *The Age of Reason*, Paine follows his above-quoted statement on his central beliefs with an attack:

I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church. . . . All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolise power and profit.⁵³

46. Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography and Other Writings*, ed. Kenneth Silverman (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 104.

47. Robert P. Falk, "Thomas Paine: Deist or Quaker?" *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 62 (1938): 55.

48. Falk, "Thomas Paine: Deist or Quaker?," 60.

49. Paine, *Age of Reason*, part 2, 194.

50. Paine, *Age of Reason*, part 2, 196.

51. Morgan, "Benjamin Franklin: Champion of Generic Religion," 723-729.

52. Vincent, *Transatlantic Republican*, 15.

53. Paine, *Age of Reason*, part 1, 6.

These declarations brought Paine many enemies, including among those who were formerly his friends.⁵⁴ The difference in Paine and Franklin's approaches to writing about the sensitive subject of theology can be seen as an extension of the difference in their characters. As Dixon Wecter describes it:

At his best a Cromwell in the realms of thought, and at his worst a gadfly to Church and State, Paine was a man whose keen though superficial genius included a rare personal gift for irritating all save a minority of kindred souls. Franklin's deeper and more stable character radiated a characteristic serenity; he was a master in the art of mollifying, with a pervasive charm as well as an essential common sense which Paine—despite his *nom de plume*—conspicuously lacked.⁵⁵

Paine's confrontational religious approach is evident in "On the Origin of Free-Masonry," as well, where he writes that "the christian religion is a parody on the worship of the Sun, in which they put a man whom they call Christ, in the place of the Sun, and pay him the same adoration which was originally paid to the Sun."⁵⁶ Further on, he depicts druidism as a "wise, elegant, philosophical religion. . . the faith opposite to the faith of the gloomy Christian church."⁵⁷ Such sentiments, which had aroused so much resentment while Paine lived, were what Madame Bonneville sought to remove from "On the Origin of Free-Masonry" when she published it after his death, but as mentioned, she did not succeed in suppressing them for long.

When Augustus Arnold published his *Philosophical History of Free-Masonry and Other Secret Societies* in 1854, he reproduced Paine's entire essay, adding his own notes to it,⁵⁸ with the aim of, among other things, correcting what he considered to be Paine's erroneous assertions about the fraternity.⁵⁹ As with later Masonic writers, such as Mackey and Newton, Arnold concluded that Paine was not "a member of the brotherhood."⁶⁰ Unlike them, he interpreted Paine's essay as a careful attack on both Christianity and Freemasonry.⁶¹

54. Harmer, *Tom Paine*, 92; and Vincent, *Transatlantic Republican*, 16, 90, 153.

55. Wecter, "Thomas Paine and the Franklins," 307.

56. Paine, "Origin of Free-Masonry," 293.

57. Paine, "Origin of Free-Masonry," 296.

58. Augustus C. L. Arnold, *Philosophical History of Free-Masonry and Other Secret Societies* (New York: Clark, Austen, and Smith, 1854), 204-222.

59. Arnold, *Philosophical History of Free-Masonry*, 204, first note.

60. Arnold, *Philosophical History of Free-Masonry*, 204, second note.

61. Arnold, *Philosophical History of Free-Masonry*, 204, first note; 213, second note; and note on 222.

As he evidently was not a Master Mason when he wrote "On the Origin of Free-Masonry"—and as there is no suggestion he joined the fraternity in the interval between composing the essay and his death a few years later, in 1809—it may be concluded that Paine was not a Freemason. Still, though the "pantheon of Masons" does not include Thomas Paine, he remains connected to Freemasonry, if only due to his close friendships with members of the fraternity, to an affinity between his own outlook and deistic aspects of its philosophy, and to his having written an imaginative, if less than accurate, essay on its origin.