

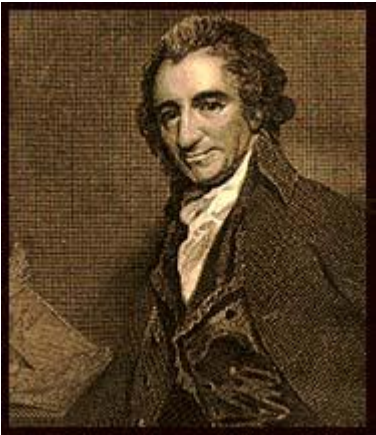
# The First Boston Edition of The Rights of Man

## A Political Pamphlet by Thomas Paine Published in 1791

The Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr. Burke's Attack on the French Revolution....Third Edition. Boston: I. Thomas and E.T. Andrews, 1791. The edition runs 79 pages. It has marginal browning but is in very good condition.

This is the first edition printed in Boston (the third American edition). The Rights of Man was published in two parts. This edition — Part The First — was printed in 1791 and dedicated to George Washington. The second part, entitled Part The Second, followed in 1792. The front of this edition contains an extract of a letter from Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson: "I am extremely pleased to find this will be reprinted, and that something is at length to be publicly said against the political heresies which have sprung up against us." This was a direct slap at the Vice-president John Adams.

### Abstract



Thomas Paine  
From an engraving by W. Sharp. Published  
February 1794, London.

After the war Thomas Paine returned to England in 1787. Soon after the opening phase of the French Revolution, Britain's foremost statesman, Edmund Burke, wrote *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, a scathing denunciation of the people's movement in France. Burke's attack infuriated Paine, who promptly set out to write his defense of the French Revolution. In so doing he produced one of the finest statements of eighteenth century democratic philosophy ever formulated.

When *The Rights of Man* was printed in America, it created a new sensation. Not because of the principles outlining American Jeffersonian democracy, but because the publisher had printed in the front of the book remarks from a letter from Thomas Jefferson, in which Jefferson pointed a finger at Vice-president Adams.

In England *The Rights of Man* encountered a response like no other in English publishing history. The poor pooled their pennies, supplementing it with meager savings to buy the book. *The Rights of Man* became an underground manifesto, passed from hand to hand, even when it became a crime to be found with it in one's possession.

The book became a bible to thousands of citizens who dreamed of a free England. Time after time, when men were tried for treason, invariably the Crown offered as evidence to the jury the fact that these men possessed a copy of The Rights of Man.

Outlawed for treason, Paine fled to France in 1792, never to return to England again.

And what of the revolution that Paine had started in England? Three generations would pass before even a small part of the things Paine pleaded for in his book would see fruition. Observed biographer Howard Fast:

"Yet one cannot say that the book had no effect. It shook the government; it set thousands of people to thinking. It stirred the currents in what had been placid water, and once stirred, those currents never stilled themselves. And not only in England, but everywhere men longed for freedom, Rights of Man became an inspiration and a hope."

All of Paine's works reflected his belief in natural reason and natural rights, political equality, tolerance, civil liberties, and the dignity of man.

Paine has been described as a professional radical and a revolutionary propagandist without peer. Born in England, he was dismissed as an excise officer while lobbying for higher wages. Impressed by Paine, Benjamin Franklin sponsored Paine's emigration to America in 1774.

In Philadelphia Paine became a journalist and essayist, contributing articles on all subjects to The Pennsylvania Magazine. After the publication of Common Sense, Paine continued to inspire and encourage the patriots during the Revolutionary War with a series of pamphlets entitled The American Crisis. Eventually, Paine went on to write The Rights of Man.

When Paine wrote Common Sense he was venturing into uncharted waters. By the time he settled into writing The Rights of Man, he did so with hindsight and deliberately set out to write a document that would shake the whole fabric of England.

The Rights of Man has stood for more than two centuries, pointing out paths in democratic government. Even today, it would be considered radical by many.

It is one of history's ironies that the volume written by one of England's greatest statesman is by and large forgotten....while Thomas Paine's answer to it has become a classic.

7218

# RIGHTS OF MAN:

BEING AN

ANSWER TO Mr. BURKE'S ATTACK

ON THE

FRENCH REVOLUTION.

BY THOMAS PAINE,

SECRETARY for FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO CONGRESS in the American WAR,  
and AUTHOR of the Work entitled COMMON SENSE.

THIRD EDITION.

---

PRINTED AT BOSTON,  
BY I. THOMAS AND E. T. ANDREWS,  
FAUST'S STATUE, No. 45, Newbury Street.

MDCCXCL

GEORGE WASHINGTON  
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AFTER some prefatory remarks, the Secretary of State, Mr. *Jefferson*, in a note to a Printer in Philadelphia, accompanying a copy of this Pamphlet for republication, observes:

"I am extremely pleased to find it will be reprinted here, and that something is at length to be publickly said against the political heresies which have sprung up among us.

"I have no doubt our citizens will rally a second time round the *standard* of COMMON SENSE."

TO  
GEORGE WASHINGTON,  
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES of AMERICA.

SIR,  
I PRESENT you a small Treatise in defence of those Principles of Freedom which your exemplary Virtue hath so eminently contributed to establish. That the Rights of Man may become as universal as your Benevolence can wish, and that you may enjoy the Happiness of seeing the New World regenerate the old, is the Prayer of

SIR,  
Your much obliged, and  
Obedient humble Servant,  
THOMAS PAINE.

---

---

## RIGHTS OF MAN, &c.

---

AMONG the incivilities by which nations or individuals provoke and irritate each other, Mr. Burke's pamphlet on the French Revolution is an extraordinary instance. Neither the people of France, nor the National Assembly, were troubling themselves about the affairs of England, or the English Parliament; and why Mr. Burke should commence an unprovoked attack upon them, both in parliament and in public, is a conduct that cannot be pardoned on the score of manners, nor justified on that of policy.

There is scarcely an epithet of abuse to be found in the English language, with which Mr. Burke has not loaded the French nation and the National Assembly. Every thing which rancour, prejudice, ignorance or knowledge could suggest, are poured forth in the copious fury of near four hundred pages. In the strain and on the plan Mr. Burke was writing, he might have wrote on to as many thousands. When the tongue or the pen is let loose in a phrenzy of passion, it is the man, and not the subject, that becomes exhausted.

Hitherto Mr. Burke has been mistaken and disappointed in the opinions he had formed of the affairs of France; but such is the ingenuity of his hope, or the malignancy of his despair, that it furnishes him with new pretences to go on. There was a time when it was impossible to make Mr. Burke believe there would be any revolution in France. His opinion then was, that the French had neither spirit to undertake it, nor fortitude to support it; and now that there is one, he seeks an escape by condemning it.

Not sufficiently content with abusing the National Assembly, a great part of his work is taken up with abusing Dr. Price, (one of the best hearted men that lives) and the two societies in England, known by the name of the Revolution and the Constitutional Societies.

Dr. Price had preached a sermon on the 4th of November, 1789, being the anniversary of what is called in England the Revolution which took place 1688. Mr. Burke, speaking of this sermon, says, "The political Divine proceeds dogmatically to assert, that, by the principles of the Revolution, the people of England have acquired three fundamental rights:

- " 1. To chuse our own governors.
- " 2. To chastise them for misconduct.
- " 3. To frame a government for ourselves."

Dr. Price does not say that the right to do these things exists in this or in that person, or in this or in that description of persons, but that