

The Development of Thomas Paine's Religious Views

1737 (Thetford): Born to Anglican Mother and Quaker Father

-mixed religious household, baptized Anglican, Anglican school, learned tolerance
yet saw the often tense relationship between Quakers and Anglicans

1757 (London): Drawn to the ideas of Newton and other scientists who described the natural order of the universe using natural laws and Reason (God a prime mover)

1758 (Sandwich): Converted to new, radical faith called Methodism, became a preacher;
attracted to Methodism's emphasis on commoners, self-governing, self-reliance and spiritual equality;
he learned the art of public communication (writing/speaking)

-we could say he was in a religious sandwich

1766 (Diss): Staying in Diss he worked as a staymaker, writing notes for a study of organized religion

1775 (Philadelphia): Essay against Slavery published in the Pennsylvania Journal (signed, "Justice and Humanity")
Writes poem, "Liberty Tree" ("Goddess of Liberty")

1776 (Philadelphia): Writes "Common Sense," considers the need for a "second revolution" in Religion

1774-1787 (America): Growing skepticism about organized religion, settles into a belief in Deism,
committed to separation of Church and State with freedom for all faiths

1793 (Paris): Publishes first part of "The Age of Reason" in French
("The Century of Reason, or the Common Sense of the Rights of Man")

1795 (Paris): Publishes second part of "The Age of Reason"

1797 (Paris): Discourse on "The Existence of God" (Society of Theophilanthropists)

1804 (New York): *Prospect* articles in defense of Deism

Considered an "atheist" and "infidel" until the end of his life ... and 200 years beyond!