The American Deists
Walters, Kerry S.

Published by University Press of Kansas

Walters, Kerry S.
The American Deists: Voices of Reason and Dissent in the Early Republic.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/94120

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=3009810
Sources and Permissions

Benjamin Franklin


Selections from Franklin’s *Autobiography*, *Works*, vol. 1: 74–77 (selection 1); 102–8, 114–16 (selection 2); 119–20 (selection 3); 136–38, 139 (selection 4); 155–56 (selection 5).
Sources and Permissions

The Levee (1779?), Works, 2:164–66.

Letter to Joseph Priestley (8 February 1780), Works, 8:418.

Letter to _______ (?) (3 July 1786?), Works, 10:281–82.

Motion for Prayers in the Convention (28 June 1787), Writings, 9:600–601.

Letter to Ezra Stiles (9 March 1790), Works, 10:423–24.

Thomas Jefferson


Letter to Peter Carr (10 August 1787), Writings, 6:257–61.

Letter to the Rev. Isaac Story (5 December 1801), Writings, 10:298–99.

Letter to Joseph Priestley (9 April 1803), Writings, 10:374–76.

Letter to Benjamin Rush (21 April 1803), Writings, 10:379–85.


Letter to Thomas Law (13 June 1814), Writings, 14:138–44.

Letter to Charles Thomson (9 January 1816), Writings, 14:385–86.


Letter to Margaret Bayard Smith (6 August 1816), Writings, 15:59–61.


Ethan Allen

*Reason the Only Oracle of Man, or a Compendious System of Natural Religion* (Bennington, Vt.: Haswell & Russell, 1784).

I. The Duty of Reforming Mankind from Superstition and Error and the Good Consequences of It, 23–25

I. 2. Of the Being of a God, 25–35

III.1. The Doctrine of the Infinite Evil of Sin Considered, 110–14


VII.5. Miracles Could Not Be Instructive to Mankind, 267–69

IX.1. Of the Nature of Faith and Wherein It Consists, 330–35

X.3. The Imperfection of Knowledge in the Person of Jesus Christ . . . , 352–56

XII.6. The Person of Jesus Christ, Considered in a Variety of Different Characters . . . , 411–22

XIV.2. MoralityDerived from Natural Fitness, and Not from Tradition, 466–72.

XIV.3. Of the Importance of the Exercise of Reason . . . , 472–77

Constantin François Chasseboeuf, Comte de Volney

*Volney's Ruins; or, Meditation [sic] on the Revolutions of Empires* (1791), no translator cited (Boston: Charles Gaylord, 1835).

Problem of Religious Contradictions, 93–112

Solution of the Problem of Contradictions, 170–74


Thomas Paine

*The Age of Reason* (New York: D. M. Bennett, 1878). (Headings mine.)

The Author's Profession of Faith, 5–6

Of Missions and Revelations, 6–8, 13

Of Jesus Christ, 9–10

Of Scripture, 19–21

Of Redemption, 22–23

Of Miracles, 49, 50–51, 52

Of the Immorality of Christianity, 143–46
372 Of Christian Theology and True Theology, 28, 29–32
Of True Revelation; and of God, 24–27
Conclusion, 146–51


My Private Thoughts on a Future State, in Great Works, 270–71.

Elihu Palmer

Principles of Nature; or, A Development of the Moral Causes of Happiness and Misery among the Human Species, 3d ed. (New York: 1806). (Headings mine.)

- Critique of Christianity
  - Ignorance and Christianity, 18–19
  - Sacred Scripture and Revelation, 25–29
  - Original Sin, Atonement and Faith, 35–48
  - Eternal Damnation, 175–77
  - Miracles, 79, 81–85
  - The Immorality of Christianity, 52–56, 110, 115–18

- Natural Morality
  - The Origin of Moral Evil, 126–30, 134–36
  - Morality Is Not Based on the Divine, 191–94
  - Universal Benevolence, 194–99
  - Moral Principle, 212–20

“Principles of the Deistical Society of the State of New York,” Posthumous Pieces. By Elihu Palmer, being three chapters of an unfinished work intended to have been entitled “The Political World.” To which are prefixed a Memoir of Mr. Palmer by his friend Mr. John Fellows of New York, and Mr. Palmer’s “Principles of the Deistical Society of the State of New York,” edited by John Fellows (London: R. Carlile, 1828), 11–12.

Philip Freneau

Poems Written and Published during the American Revolutionary War . . . (Philadelphia: Lydia Bailey, 1809).

“On the Powers of the Human Understanding”
“Reflections on the Constitution, or Frame of Nature”
“Science, Favourable to Virtue”
“On a Book Called Unitarian Theology”

A Collection of Poems, and a Variety of Other Subjects, Chiefly Moral and Political; Written between the Year 1797 and the Present Time (New York: David Longworth, 1815).
"On False Systems of Government, and the Generally Debased Condition of Mankind"
"The New Age: or, Truth Triumphant"
"On Superstition"
"On the Abuse of Human Power, as Exercised over Opinion"
"On the Uniformity and Perfection of Nature"
"On the Universality, and Other Attributes of the God of Nature"
"On the Religion of Nature"
"On the Evils of Human Life"
"Belief and Unbelief: Humbly Recommended to the Serious Consideration of Creed Makers"
"On Happiness, as Proceeding from the Practice of Virtue"
"The Millennium—To a Ranting Field Orator"

"Letter 13" (originally appeared in the 8 August 1799 issue of the *Aurora*), *Letters on Various Interesting and Important Subjects... by Robert Slender* (Philadelphia, 1799).


*The Temple of Reason*
"To the American Reader" (8 November 1800)

"The Deists Creed" (8 November 1800)

"A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God" (8 and 15 November 1800)

"An Ode to Reason" (8 November 1800)

"Christian Morality Compared with That of the Pagan Philosophers" (29 November 1800)

"A New Hymn for the Temple of Reason" (16 September 1801)

"Natural Ideas Opposed to Supernatural" (30 December 1801)

*Prospect; or View of the Moral World*
"Competency of the Human Powers" (10 December 1803)

"Explanation of the Principles of Deism" (17 December 1803)
"Aphorisms" (17 December 1803)

"Moral Philosophy" (31 December 1803)

"Religious Self-Conceit" (21 January 1804)

"On the Christian Religion" (28 January 1804)

"Communication on Science from 'A Subscriber'" (25 February 1804)

"Miracles" (31 March 1804)

"Revelation" (7 April 1804)

"Laws of Nature" (28 April 1804)

"On Christian Faith" (12 May 1804)

"More of Human Reason" (28 July 1804)

"Superstition" (24 November 1804)

"The Indian Student; or, Force of Nature" (24 November 1804)

"Remarks" (26 January 1805)

"Enthusiasm" (2 February 1805)

"For the Prospect" (30 March 1805)

*The Theophilanthropist*

"Prospectus" (January 1810)

"Introductory Address" (January 1810)

"Character of Jesus Christ" (February 1810)

"Intercourse between Intelligent Beings" (March 1810)

"Humanity" (April 1810)

All three deistic newspapers are available on microfilm in Lamont Library, Harvard University.