

on the subject. He did not bother to use diplomatic language in expressing the things he did not believe and the reasons for his disbelief in them. As he himself said, he went "marching through the Christian forest with an axe." And as he marched through the Christian forest he destroyed with his axe the stories of creation, the garden of Eden, the Resurrection, Mysteries and Miracles, prophecies and Prophets, and everything else through to Revelation, basing all his arguments on science and reason. After completing his journey through the forest, he concludes: "Of all the systems of religion that ever were invented, there is none more *derogatory to the Almighty*, more unedifying to man, more repugnant to reason, and more contradictory to itself than this thing called Christianity." All this does not mean, however, that Paine denies the greatness of Jesus as a man. "Nothing that is said here can apply," he writes, "even with the most distant disrespect, to the real character of Jesus Christ. He was a virtuous and amiable man. The morality that he preached and practised was of the most benevolent kind . . ."

Paine's entire religious creed is put quite simply. By unaided reason man could know that there is a God, that he has certain duties toward Him and his fellow-man, and that the performance of these duties made for his welfare in the present life and hereafter. He ends his work on a note of hope: "Certain . . . I am that when opinions are free, either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail." He could not foresee that there were those who were not interested in allowing opinions to be free and, because he transformed Deism from an aristocratic into a popular movement, would make life miserable for him.

In the winter of 1795-96, shortly after he completed the second part of *The Age of Reason*, and while he was still at the home of Monroe in Paris, Paine wrote his last great pamphlet, *Agrarian Justice*. The work resulted from two separate motivating factors. Paine wished, in the first place, to answer a sermon printed by the Bishop of Llandaff, on "The wisdom and goodness of God in having made both rich and poor." He dismissed this remark with the statement that God "made only male and female, and gave them the earth for their inheritance." He was also moved to write his pamphlet by the struggle in France over the confiscation of *émigré* property. After the local communes had initiated a campaign to enforce the laws calling for the confiscation of such property, the Directory, representing the bourgeoisie who had engineered the overthrow of Robespierre, put a stop to this procedure. At the same