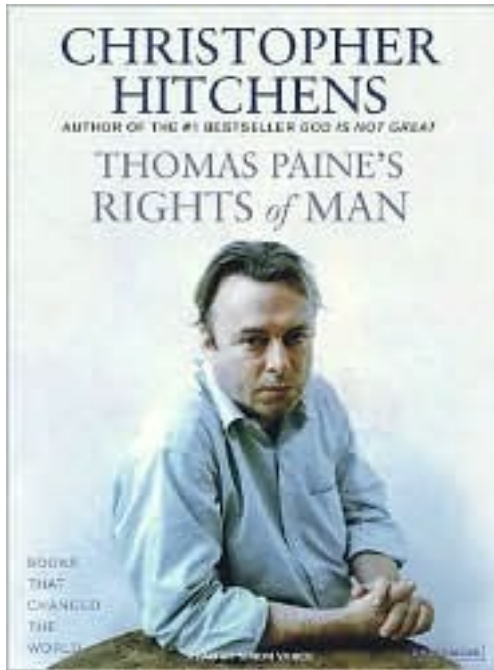

Christopher Hitchens

Thomas Paine's Rights of Man (Books That Shook the World)



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Author: Christopher Hitchens

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Description

Thomas Paine was one of the greatest advocates of freedom in history, and his *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, first published in 1791, is the key to his reputation. Inspired by his outrage at Edmund Burke's attack on the French Revolution, Paine's text is a passionate defense of man's inalienable rights. Since its publication, *Rights of Man* has been celebrated, criticized, maligned, suppressed, and co-opted. But in *Thomas Paine's Rights of Man*, the polemicist and commentator Christopher Hitchens, "at his characteristically incisive best," marvels at its forethought and revels in its contentiousness (*The Times*, London). Hitchens is a political descendant of the great pamphleteer, "a Tom Paine for our troubled times." (*The Independent*, London) In this "engaging account of Paine's life and times [that is] well worth reading" he demonstrates how Paine's book forms the philosophical cornerstone of the United States, and how, "in a time when both rights and reason are under attack," Thomas Paine's life and writing "will always be part of the arsenal on which we shall need to depend." (*New Statesman*)

Insightful reviews

Sheila Rucki: He smokes and drinks, is an atheist and actually seems to care about the debate between that old buzzkill Ed Burke and Thomas Paine. Wow.

Plus he writes like a magnificent wreck of a genius with the voice of a sardonic angel. I love this man. I'd read his grocery list.

Jeremy: Apparently Thomas Paine was the man. This one is a little more straightforward and easier to read than the Jefferson book by Hitchens.

Quotes:

"Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly."
Thomas Paine

In the United States, he had sought to make the revolution more radical, especially with respect to slavery and freethinking and the extension of democracy, and had been on the 'Left' side of the debate. In France, he had sought to make the revolution more temperate and humane, taking his place to the 'Right' of the chair.

He admired enterprise and distrusted government, and often wrote of economic inequalities as if they were natural or inevitable.

"The aristocracy are not the farmers who work the land, and raise the produce, but are the mere consumers of the rent; and when compared with the active world are the drones, a seraglio of males, who neither collect the honey nor form the hive, but exist only for lazy enjoyment." Thomas Paine

Paine wanted to prevent the French Revolution from becoming a full-blown instatement of atheism. Much as he may have welcomed the end of the rotten alliance between the pulpit and throne, he was dismayed by the violent rush towards godlessness.

“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 monopolize power and profit.” Thomas Paine

Even as late as my own childhood, the Church of England hymnal included as one verse in ‘All Things Bright and Beautiful’:

The rich man in his castle
The poor man at his gate
God made them high and lowly
And ordered their estate.

In a time when both rights and reason are under several kinds of open and covert attack, the life and writing of Thomas Paine will always be part of the arsenal on which we shall need to depend.

K.J. Wetherholt: One of Hitchens' most earnest and least pompous works. His style at times can be irritating and prohibitive, as though needing to flash his intelligence so distinctly as though to belabor its presence. Many times, my response is to silently admonish him and say, "Quit showing off and say what you mean."

This is not the case here. His prose was clear, intelligent, and unadorned with unnecessary verbiage. This is either a testament to his profound respect for Paine, or an editor took one hell of a scythe to his usual style. But I'm guessing he felt the need to be earnest and even perhaps idolizes Paine enough so that Paine's words are not outshone. Instead the real sense of Paine's character, intellect, and no-nonsense sensibilities are profound, indicating truly why his work was so influential in Enlightenment thought. You can tell, too, that Hitchens is proud that like him, the man who is clearly one of his greatest heroes was born in England but was distinctly an American by the end of his life, enough to fight for the soul of the new republic, much like Hitchens did in his own life, and for his adopted country, the United States, two hundred years later.

A.J.: there is no greater candidate to jot down a biography of Thomas Paine than Christopher Hitchens. If no longer for only educational reasons, they've got a lot in common. either have been usual born Englishmen who wandered to the U.S. and beloved it rather a lot that they determined to stay. either are global recognized for the arcane paintings of polemics. Even their careers surprisingly replicate one another, marking an evolution from politics to religion, even though by no means surrendering either. And lastly, either made it their life's ambition to pursue freedom at nice own cost. I've learn a lot of Hitchens' work. He hardly ever is over excited via ardour until through design, yet right here you will truly see the markings of an excellent appreciate and reverence for his subject. Thomas Paine was once imperfect. He had his blunders, own and political. actually he nearly misplaced his position one of the founders whilst

his critiques on faith (specifically the bible) turned too radical for his followed American native land to stomach. In a few respects this injustice nonetheless stands, yet many efforts were made in recent years to work out that he's rightly put one of the Jeffersons and Madisons of the Yank Revolution. Paine used to be an abolitionist and a vocal one. He went to where Thomas Jefferson observed dimly in the course of the fog yet by no means dared to move himself. whereas France used to be within the throes of its personal revolution he instructed that they execute the monarchy, now not the monarch--one wonders how background may have replaced if they might listened to him. His prose used to be by means of the criteria of the day coarse, virtually barbaric, anything I think Hitchens additionally contends with whilst his type of demystification gouges the topic of readers' such a lot sacred beliefs. but Paine's skill to arrive the typical guy in universal language with out sacrificing the muscle and brute strength of his argument should, as i have pointed out in past stories of his work, be the blueprint for written argument. In an odd manner now we have Paine to thank for a couple of things, now not the least of that's his an important position within the American Revolution. His long-fought conflict for the sake of cause and Enlightenment rules has in simple terms turn into extra worthy as time is going on; and, of course, his quest to safeguard the Rights of guy within the Age of Reason.

Matthew King: As an excellent enjoyer of Hitchens's work, I sympathise with the numerous who've saw his, maybe unnecessarily grandiloquent, style, and bold arsenal of literary references; a lot of which obscure, I hope, for these additionally born sooner than the millennial generation. This quantity deals i think things, past the eponymous topic matter: a reprieve from the crimson prose, and a greater realizing of Hitchens during the existence and writing of Thomas Paine, a guy whom Hitchens tremendously admired, and by means of whom were tremendously influenced. This quantity primarily is a dialogue round 'The Rights of Man,' and its socio-political context. we've got additionally supplied with a succinct biography of Paine's early life, the occasions which introduced him to America, his participation in revolutions, his good fortune as a pamphleteer, and the book of his contentious 'Age of Reason.' it is not tricky to attract parallels here: either Hitchens and Paine have been Anglo-American, either loved prolific good fortune performing as polemicists, and either exhibited related contempt for the religious, and the pacifistic alike. Nevertheless, i feel Hitchens needs to be congratulated, the above aside, in maintaining as a lot objectivity as he did, no matter if such a lot concessions chanced on listed below are a bit of tacit in nature. The significant clash this booklet expounds upon is among Paine and Edmund Burke, a hugely esteemed conservative whose reflections at the French Revolution galvanised Paine's writing. The background and context are certain admirably good for those, like myself, who're woefully under-read in this interval of history, as are the details of Paine's painful disenchantment, incarceration, and eventual go back to what might develop into the United States. it truly is transparent with whom Hitchens has his sympathies, yet he's nonetheless speedy to congratulate Burke on his prescience on how the occasions in Paris could culminate, and Mary Wollstonecraft, whose proposed rights for girls have been a innovative aspect Paine didn't grab and proffer along his define for a Welfare state. the ultimate chapters take care of Paine's 'Age of Reason.' while being in topic with, and maybe appearing as a provider to Hitchens's repertoire relating to vicarious redemption, we are however handled to a couple of its inconsistencies, and commonest critique: particularly that if Paine had consistently felt this way, why had he so lavishly hired scripture as a trope in his prior work? The absence of observation right here leads one to visualize the author's disgruntled acquiescence. As a publication on a book, it succeeded in recommending to me the original,

however it additionally serves as a way to raised figuring out its author. A tetchy denunciation of up to date literary criteria possibly supplies a clue to the character of Hitchens's oft-discussed eloquence, yet extra pressing, I found, was once his remedy of Paine's latter years, of decline, bitterness and recourse to the bottle. the image of Paine's lifestyles is that of an unsatisfied man, marred by means of romantic tragedy and private betrayal, which, regardless, did not triumph in constricting his revolutionary, before-his-time disposition. It makes me ponder whether Hitchens, who is been recognized to opine that the pursuit of happiness isn't really one he meant to embark upon, saw, or stumbled on facts for soreness and unhappiness as an important concomitant to greatness in a freethinker.

Dana Stabenow: Hitchens restores Tom Paine to his rightful position one of the Founders. a few extraordinary stuff right here for the scholar of the democratic scan and the yank Revolution that resonates as strongly this present day because it did centuries ago, as inPaine was once a number one member of that British radical culture that observed wars and armies as extra burdens at the people, and as reinforcements of present autocracies. What larger means for a ruling category to assert and carry strength than to pose because the defenders of the nation? And what greater solution to continue unschooled and unemployed serfs in line that to provide them the king's shilling and placed them into uniform below aristocratic commanders?Snap, anyone? what percentage contributors of Congress have childrens within the armed services? In 2003, three. effortless to shed the blood of somebody else's child. individuals of our executive could have performed larger by way of their state and their nation's kids to have reread Tom Paine prior to signing off at the invasion of Iraq.During the innovative War, Paine wrote a sequence of broadsides or pamphlets to rally the troops. "The Crisis," Hitchens writes, was...one of the best campfire and eve-of-battle orations due to the fact that Agincourt:'These are the days that attempt men's souls: The summer time soldier and the light patriot will, during this crisis, curb from the carrier of his country, yet he that stands it NOW, merits the affection and thank you of guy and woman. Tyranny, like hell, isn't really simply conquered; but we've got this comfort with us, that the tougher the clash the extra wonderful the triumph. What we receive too cheap, we esteem too evenly - 'Tis dearness purely that provides every thing its value.'As Hitchens issues out, Paine knew his Shakespeare. you'll realize a minimum of a few of these phrases at the present time simply because they have been quoted by way of presidents Lincoln and FD Roosevelt and Reagan, let alone the Kingston Trio. Tom Paine lives!

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