

Tom Paine and Revolutionary America (Updated Version with a New Preface)

Eric Foner



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Tom Paine and Revolutionary America (Updated Version with a New Preface) Eric Foner Since its publication in 1976, Tom Paine and Revolutionary America has been recognized as a classic study of the career of the foremost political pamphleteer of the Age of Revolution, and a model of how to integrate the political, intellectual, and social history of the struggle for American independence. Foner skillfully brings together an account of Paine's remarkable career with a careful examination of the social worlds within which he operated, in Great Britain, France, and especially the United States. He explores Paine's political and social ideas and the way he popularized them by pioneering a new form of political writing, using simple, direct language and addressing himself to a reading public far broader than previous writers had commanded. He shows which of Paine's views remained essentially fixed throughout his career, while directing attention to the ways his stance on social questions evolved under the pressure of events. This enduring work makes clear the tremendous impact Paine'swriting exerted on the American Revolution, and suggests why he failed to have a similar impact during his career in revolutionary France. It also offers new insights into the nature and internal tensions of the republican outlook that helped to shape the Revolution. In a new preface, Foner discusses the origins of this book and the influences of the 1960s and 1970s on its writing. He also looks at how Paine has been adopted by scholars and politicians of many stripes, and has even been called the patron saint of the Internet.

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