

**REMARKS, ON THE FIRST
PART OF A
BOOK, ENTITLED
"THE AGE OF REASON"**

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Remarks, on the First Part of a Book, Entitled "The Age of Reason" by S. Drew

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S. DREW

**REMARKS, ON THE FIRST
PART OF A
BOOK, ENTITLED
"THE AGE OF REASON"**

Mr. Kirk

From his Friend

REMARKS,

W. Cadell

ON THE

First Part of a Book,

ENTITLED

“THE AGE OF REASON,”

ADDRESSED TO

THOMAS PAINE,

ITS AUTHOR.

— 14 - 1354

By **S. DREW,**

OF ST. JUSTICE, CORNWALL.

“ It were to be wished, that the enemies of religion would at least bring themselves to apprehend its nature, before they opposed its authority.”

ADDISON.

“ The good and evil of eternity, are too ponderous for the wings of wit; the mind sinks, under them in passive helplessness, content with calm belief and humble adoration.”

JOHNSON.

Second Edition,

REVISED, AND CONSIDERABLY ENLARGED.

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PREFACE.



WHEN civilized nations adopt a profaneness of manners, under a pretence of throwing off mental restraints, it is but natural for a thinking mind to inquire into the occasion, on a larger scale than the mere action presents. The deeds which we perceive, confine our observations; but a retrospection on the past, and a calculation on the future, will open sources of information, on human conduct, which the visibility of things cannot afford. Between the past, the present, and the future, in every thing of a moral nature, there is a close and an intimate connexion; for, as future events are, in a great degree, produced by present

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actions, so present actions are occasioned by causes, which, from their relation to their own results, may be known with a tolerable degree of certainty.

When we behold the profaneness of manners, and the contempt of things sacred, which prevail; and notice that practical disregard of every moral principle, which, in many instances, is but too conspicuous; we cannot but inquire into the cause or causes, which have conspired to produce these effects, and into the consequences, of which they seem to be the ominous presages. The former, no doubt, are variously combined; but, how diverse soever they may be in their operations, they all unite to establish mental anarchy, and to prepare the mind for the reception of principles correspondent with that practice which is already established.

To this practice, the nature of which is too conspicuous, great pains have lately

been taken, to add the establishment of infidelity in theory. To these attempts, the dominion of vice gives but too many facilities, of which those, whose aim is to disseminate the fatal opiate, know but too well how to avail themselves. How far they have been successful, on this wicked errand, I take not upon me to determine. I can, nevertheless, easily satisfy myself, that, in proportion as infidelity takes root in the mind, those principles, by which vice is counteracted, will be eradicated, and iniquity, founded upon sanctions of public opinion, like a destructive torrent, will inundate the civil and the religious world.

I would not, however, insinuate from hence, that every Deist in theory must be immoral in practice; because I frequently observe the contrary: but I am satisfied, that morality cannot arise from principles of infidelity. It is possible for men to derive a practice from principles which Deism derides, and to attribute the effect to causes

which are incapable of producing it; but, in proportion as infidelity gains dominion over the human mind, these restraints will lose their influence on practice; and, as immoral actions can be supported by custom, or rendered familiar by repetition, sophistical reasoning will be sufficient to preserve its abettors from conscientious remorse.

As the interests of morality are made the sole pretence for the propagation of Deism, it is a question, which I would seriously propose to all its advocates,—*Whether it should not be propagated on those principles which it affects to recommend.* That this is not the case is attested by fact. And hence it affords room for something more than mere suspicion, that its primary design is to annihilate Revelation, without giving to mankind a substitute in its stead. Of this fact, the “Age of Reason” furnishes but too many proofs; and it is this circumstance that

has partially induced me to make some Remarks on the first part of that book. My aim, in the following pages, has been, to point out such principles as I conceive to be evidently false; to detect some conclusions which are clearly erroneous; and to animadvert on some sophisms, on which much of its popularity is founded. How far I have succeeded in my attempt, those who read this little Volume must decide. I am not conscious of having been actuated by selfish or interested views; and I leave the rectitude of my intentions to that God, from whose judgment there is no appeal.

Deism appears to me to have but little to recommend it. It claims its existence on the fancied inconsistencies which it discovers in religious creeds, without having one original virtue to entitle it to respect. It is a system of negatives, if system that may be called, whose only boast is, that it discovers errors in Revelation; and hence it assumes a title to credit, by instructing its votaries

to disbelieve. Under the influence of this pure negation of excellence, it promotes its interests on the irritation of those passions which it should be the business of our lives to subdue, and fortifies itself in the strange commotions which it contributes to raise. These are some of the errors which I have designed to meet. But I am not warranted in commenting on my own Observations. Such as they are, I commit them to the world, and earnestly recommend them to the candour and attention of those to whom I now appeal. It is the first time that I ever attempted to assume the character of Author; and, without dedication or patron, I abandon these Remarks to their fate.

S. DREW.

September, 1799.