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C A U T I O N

TO THE

R E A D E R S

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Mr. P A I N E's

A G E O F R E A S O N.

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C A U T I O N, &c.

THE rational faculty, or mind of man, is subject to be biaſſed by bodily weakneſs, appetites and paſſions; he ought therefore ſtrive to keep his reaſon free of any biaſs from them, as far as he is able; becauſe, in ſome caſes of bodily imperfection, ſickneſs, or madneſs, his reaſon has not power to command, and therefore is not accountable: but where thoſe caſes are not, and it com-plies with carnal appetites, contrary to its

conscience of righteousness, it then becomes corrupt, accountable, and thence uneasy in conscience ; but if unwilling to repent, through its love of the body, it frames excuses, and applies all its ingenuity against the religion that rebukes its behaviour, and sets up a new one more complaisant to bodily lusts. The Heathen mythology, after the flood, was a complicated corruption of the patriarchal religion. This corruption began at Babel, not only in the manner of sacrifice, but also chiefly in the objects they sacrificed to, which the increase of human vices in time exceedingly multiplied.

God, it is credible, having created many worlds, and rational beings in each, with intent that they should be instrumental in advancing their own happiness by virtue,
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to which a free will, and some temptation to try their virtue, was necessary; which free will implicated a possibility of forfeiting their happiness.—Satan, and his associates, fell; and man, we hear, was created to replace them. Satan petitioned to have liberty to try his rival, as, it seems, he was himself, and, as in Job 1. 12. obtained it, which making an unfair use of, he caused the fall of man. Divine Wisdom, in his government of the universe, could not rationally forgive man, without an equivalent atonement, which human reason knows may be justly applicable to criminal, though denied by Mr. Paine, as well as to mercantile affairs. His essence consisting of a Trinity, confessed by Trismegistus long before the christian æra, and concileable to reason by only considering the nature of a lighted candle,

candle, in infinite mercy agreed, that the second person, because man was treacherously deceived, should take human nature upon him, and in that nature fulfil the equivalent atonement, and give man, weakened by his fall, sufficient ability to wrestle with his enemies, Satan and corrupt appetites.

This wrestle became serious at Babel, when Satan instigated Nimrod, the Titan of the fable, to set up the worship of the sun and planets, till the confusion of speech, for the assistance of the righteous, defeated Satan. Yet indefatigable Satan so wrought with human corrupt appetites, that God, to give some check, in defence of the righteous, to their vicious progress, overthrew Sodom, and smartly punished Egypt, and

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gave Moses the knowledge of literal writing to make a book of his laws, to prevent the farther growth of biased reasoning; which laws were till then only conveyed by oral tradition or hieroglyphics, both liable to be misrepresented. This book, though the first ever written, and fully authenticated, God hath preserved against all the efforts of Satan to destroy it by Manasseh or Roman Emperors. That it was divinely inspired is clear from itself, as Aristotle confessed, when he read it, that it was worthy of a god. Such of the early and the later prophets as are allowed by the Jews to be inspired, though the most severely reprimanded in them, and the Psalms, and Daniel, and the whole New Testament, are worthy of equal credit, being alike rational, and containing no contradictions, though written in different

ferent ages of the world, and by men of different conditions in life, from the prince to the poorest.

It is most rational to believe that God granted the power of miracles to the first preachers of his gospel, and as he intended to introduce Man's Redeemer to the world meek and in low circumstances, to inspire prophets to foretell so, that men may know him from his doctrine, miracles, and exemplary conduct in those low circumstances, which God so ordained, that future generations may have no handle to say, had he come in pomp and glory, that it was human power, not the finger of God, established his doctrine. To the same purpose the prophecies were mysteriously dictated, that they may come to pass in the seeming
natural

natural course of things, to save a miracle to fulfil them, if thwarted, as they would if clearly known, by the contrivances of Satan, or of the wicked under his influence. Therefore the readers need no great caution against Mr. Paine's blasphemous stuff in these articles, as they may see, since he believes not Moses and the prophets, neither would he believe though one rose from the dead. Strange that this champion of reason won't believe what is most rational!

This man thinking his writings might rise into repute, by aping Voltaire's, and be answered, raised such a fog (like the animal that emits a fog to evade its pursuers) in a multitude of words, as he thought would puzzle to answer. If he could prove his associates are better moral men than

sincere

sincere christians, he would have some excuse for his infidelity; but unhappily an immoral life is the chief source of infidelity. When the mind complies with carnal appetites, that the rules of both the inspired old, Moses, Psalms, and 22 prophets, and the new testament, command to govern and restrain their excesses, he bends all his ingenuity against these holy books, and charges upon them the errors of some of the churches. He picks at the uninspired which are unhappily mixed with the inspired, then levels at all as a composition of priest-craft, that, by laying them aside, he may introduce his glossing sophisms, that human reason is a sufficient guide, &c. and then twisting their instructive truths into ridicule, as the libertine Athenians did the instructive orations of Socrates,

Socrates, goes blindly on in darkness and the shadow of death, till when it approaches (like Voltaire, who it is said, when dangerously sick, used to send for all the priests near him, to pray for him) it stares him in the face, and affrights him with the dreadful vortex before him.

He owns that he believes in a God infinitely powerful, just, wise, and good, Creator of the worlds, and of rational beings in them; he must therefore allow him to be a most rational God. He cannot deny that there exist virtue and vice; that vice must be displeasing to God, and therefore he cannot deny that it is reasonable to punish vice, yet he sees it prosper in this life, therefore it is rational to think God hath appointed another life for that punishment.

It

It is rational, when the vicious were not restrained by the natural law that God implanted in them, to give them a book of laws, to preclude all excuse for their vices, and to record therein his severe punishments of vice, to deter mankind from it, and his affording miracles to draw sinners to repentance, (1 Kings 18. 38.) and encourage the righteous, are both reasonable and gracious. So Mr. Paine's charges of cruelty, and his witticisms on Sampson, Jonah, and our Saviour's passion, &c. are both daring and wicked. Is it not both reasonable and instructive, that God, to rebuke the Philistines, who had such confidence in the strength of their giants, gave such strength in the weak hair of one man's head, as surpassed all their strength. It is a pity one of so fluent a genius should abuse it

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to impious purposes. The holy scripture nowhere records Satan omnipresent, yet he to forward his vein of ridicule, says we make him so. He so clearly shews his ignorance of the wisdom of God in the scheme of human redemption, though it contain some things, to the Jews a stumbling block (1 Cor. i. 23. 24.) and to the Greeks foolishness, which yet are to sincere christians, the power and wisdom of God, that his ridiculing blasphemy would be as disgraceful to answer by a sober rational being, as if he answered the reveries of a man deranged in his mind.

He clips the text in the second commandment, leaving out “of them that hate me”—is not it merciful to wait three or four generations for their repentance? See Ezek.

18th. chap.—he denies the Hebrew language having even a name for poetry, when no tongue has more names, to wit, Ode for smooth flowing song, Rannan for rapid heroic, keen for mourning song, Syr for exhilarating song, Zamar, for a song of regulated syllables, &c. but by his denial he thought he may say, a prophet was only a songster, Balaam and Caiaphas were no more good men than Saul, yet they prophesied. Does not it shew the infinite power of God, to make the wicked prophesy?

To conclude—What sort of communities would we have, if every man's private reason were to be his judge? Robin Hood may rob the bishop, and every rich man without remorse; he shewed a genius in

common sense. But here he kicks against the pricks, and sports with his life (Spec. N^o) fulfilling the scripture (Luke 9. 24) he that will save his life shall lose it, for it is credible he wrote this in Jail, under apprehensions from the then bloody infidel rulers in the convention, to appease their wrath, with incurring his only Saviour's, who, it is rational to think, will call spectators from many systems of the universe, to view at the great day of judgment the final issue of his wisdom, in the redemption of mankind, by the glorious host of worthies raised thereby from all the nations of this world, and his justice on the wicked (who trampled on his love) except they timely repent, to escape the general conflagration, that will then come to pass, a just judgment upon them; then will they
 wish

wish they had revered and obeyed the holy Scriptures, which have these 3300 years past been honoured by the righteous, and will whilst this world holds.

Page 38, Baltimore Edition—from the fluctuation of the sense of words of languages in common use, the hebrew and greek were permitted to be disused to preserve their meaning at the time the holy Scriptures were written, therefore should be now studied.

Page 54—It is irrational to think the apostles would bear distresses, persecutions, and death, to propagate a fraud.

F I N I S.

