

THE NATURE AND
DANGER OF INFIDEL
PHILOSOPHY,

*Exhibited in Two Discourses,
Addressed to the Candidates for the
Baccalaureate, In Yale College,*

By the
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President of Yale College;
September 9th, 1797.

RDMc
Publishing
Fort Worth, Texas

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Advertisement.

In Yale College it is customary for the President, or the Professor of Divinity, to address a discourse to the Candidates for the Baccalaureate, on the Sabbath, preceding the public Commencement. The following Discourses were delivered, on this occasion, to the class which was graduated the last year, and are now published at their request. They were originally long, perhaps longer than the reader would have wished. I have, however, considerably enlarged them. For this I have no other apology, than, that the method, in which the subject is pursued, appeared to me the best, which presented itself at the time. If this apology should in the judgment of the Reader be insufficient, I submit cheerfully to his censure.

Yale College, March 4th, 1798.

The Nature and Danger of Infidel Philosophy.

Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Colossians ii. 8.

When the Gospel was published by the Apostles, it was, according to the prophetic declaration of its Author, vigorously opposed by the world. This opposition originated from various sources; but, whencesoever derived, wore one uniform character rarer of industry, art, and bitterness. The bigotry of the Jews, and the sword of the Gentiles, the learning of the wise, the persuasion of the eloquent; and the force of the powerful, were alike exerted to crush the rising enemy.

Among the kinds of opposition, which they were called to encounter, not the least laborious, malignant, or dangerous, was the Philosophy of the age. A large number of their first converts lived in countries, where the language of the Greeks was spoken, and their Philosophy received. The things, which

this Philosophy professed to teach, were substantially the same with those which were taught by the Apostles; viz. the Character and Will of God, and the Duty and Supreme Interest of Men. Hence it naturally became an object of veneration, assumed the Ration of a rival to the Gospel, and exhibited an imposing aspect, especially to young and unsettled converts.

The doctrines, and the spirit, of the Philosophers were, however, generally direct counterparts to those of the Apostles. Some truths, and truths of high importance, they undoubtedly taught; but they blended them with gross and numberless errors. Some moral and commendable practices they, at time, inculcated; but so interwoven with immoralities, that the parts of the web could never be separated by the common hand. Covetous, self-sufficient and sensual, they looked down with supreme contempt on the poor, self-denying, and humble followers of Christ, and on their artless, direct, undisguised, and practical preaching. Notwithstanding this contempt, it, however, prevailed against all their specious logic, pompous eloquence; and arrogant pretensions. Their Philosophy, enveloped in fable and figures, perplexed with sophistry, and wandering with perpetual excursion round about moral subjects, satisfied, in no permanent degree the understanding, and affected in no useful degree the heart: while the Gospel simple, plain; and powerful, gained the full assent of common sense, and reduced all the affections under its controul. Of course, the

Mr. Hume's Doctrines

+The following summary of Mr. Hume's doctrines, published some years before his death, Bishop Horne says, was never, so far as he could find, questioned, as to its fidelity or accuracy, either by Mr. Hume, or his friends.

A Summary of Mr. Hume's Doctrines, Metaphysical and Moral

Of the Soul

That the soul of man is not the same this moment, that it was the last: that we know not what it is; that it is not one, but many things, and that it is nothing at all.

That in this soul is the agency of all the causes that operate throughout the sensible creation; and yet that in this soul there is neither power nor agency, nor any idea of either.

That matter and motion may often be regarded as the cause of thought.

Of the Universe

That the external world does not exist, or at least, that it's existence may reasonably be doubted.

That the universe exists in the mind, and that the mind does not exist.

That the universe is nothing but a heap of perceptions, without a substance.

That though a man could bring himself to believe, yea, and have reason to believe, that every thing in the universe proceeds from some cause; yet it would be unreasonable for him to believe, that the universe itself proceeds from a cause.

Of Human Knowledge.

That the perfection of human knowledge is to doubt.

That we ought to doubt of every thing, yea, of our doubts themselves, and therefore, the utmost that Philosophy can do, is to give as a doubtful solution of doubtful doubts.

That the human understanding, acting alone, does entirely subvert itself, and prove by argument that by argument, nothing can be proved.

That man, in all his perceptions, actions and volitions, is a mere passive machine, and has no separate existence of his own, being entirely certain; and yet, that the nature of all things depends so much upon man, that two and two could not equal