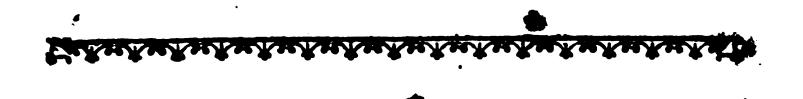
Wr. Foster's Hermon

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COLOSSIANS II. 8.



IN A

SERMON

DELIVERED TO THE

FIRST SOCIETY IN CAMBRIDGE,

ON LORD'S DAY,

APRIL 11, 1802:

BY JOHN FOSTER, A. M.

Pastor of the Third Church in that Town.

Keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain bablings, and oppositions of science falsely so called; which some professing, have erred concerning the faith. St. Paul.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE HEARERS.

CAMBRIDGE:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM HILLIARD .-- 1802.

Several notes are inferted in an appendix, containing quotations from some sexual the many writers, who have advanced the impious and dissolute opinions alluded to in the following pages; together with other statements evincing the existence of the dangers, egainst which the reader is

cautioned. These notes correspond to the numbers, which

are placed as references, in the course of the Sermon.

COLOSSIANS ii. 8.

Bervare lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and net after Christ.

PHILOSOPHY, in its genuine import and tendency, is friendly to revealed religion. When applied to the material fystem, by disclosing the nature and properties of things, it not only leads to many important discoveries in the useful and ornamental arts of life; but is calculated to fill the mind with the most exalted conceptions of the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Divine Architect. When conversant with the moral world, it explains the character, attributes, and will of God; points out the relation in which we stand, and the obligations which we owe to Him and each other; and as far as it extends, inculcates the same doctrines and precepts which the Gospel contains.

Unhappily, however, a pernicious sophistry, the effepring of depravity, and parent of mischief, has sprung sorth, and assumed the same appellation. Of this vain, and deceitful philosophy, the apostle exhorts us to beware. Its nature and essential therefore, I shall First consider: Secondly, exhibit in contrast with it, the purity and excellence of Christian principles: Whence, Thirdly, will appear the necessariance.

fity and duty of a watchful obedience to the injunction in the text.

In former times, the enemies of revelation feemed to have no other object in view than to undermine the Christian faith. To this point they directed all their wit and subtilty, without bringing forward any definite substitute. The reason probably is, that conscious of the disingenuity and turpitude of their designs, they were ashamed explicitly to avow them. They had not the assurance to own that their principal wish was to be freed from the restraints of religion; and that they neither knew nor cared what scenes of disorder and wickedness ensued, if they could only walk in the imagination of their hearts with impunity and without reproach.

But in latter days, this relic of ancient modesty has grown into disuse. Modern philosophists speak with less reserve, and tell us plainly what that ameliorating system is, which they would establish on the ruins of Christianity. Among those who admit the existence of a God (for many of them reject this sundamental truth) the obligation, and even the propriety and utility of paying Him any external homage is positively denied. Consequently, the Sabbath is to be abolished, and houses of worship destroyed, neglected, or converted to other purposes. (1)

In our social intercourse, it is laid down as a primary maxim that every one is invincibly and necessarily impelled to the precise mode of conduct, which he pursues. The doctrine of responsibility is therefore

exploded. If a man injure his neighbour, it is indeed unfortunate; yet he is neither blameworthy nor punishable. (2) The end, too, sanctifies the means; and if the end be good, it is deemed of little, or no consequence at whose expence it is achieved. The more intimate connections of tise are to be dissolved at pleasure. Marriage is pronounced "a monopoly, and the worst of monopolies"; (3) and an indiscriminate intercourse between the sexes is contended for as more consistent with the laws of nature! (4)

Some plausible pretence was found expedient for letting loose those turbulent passions, which from time immemorial have been reputed hostile to the fafety and order of society. Otherwise, every mind, not totally abandoned, would revolt at the very Hence a specious, but visionary and imthought. practicable philanthropy is pathetically recommend-We are called upon to extend an undistinguishing affection to all mankind; and, at the same time, forbidden to cherish and express any appropriate kindness for our parents, our children and other relations, beyond what we feel for utter strangers, unless they happen to be more deserving. Their confanguinity entitles them to no preference in our esteem. (5) Thus by detaching our hearts from those with whom we are most intimately connected, and who fall within the sphere of our immediate influence; and by directing our good will to indefinite, distant, and unapproachable objects, a foundation is laid for the extinction of all the tender charities of our existence; while, under the idea of exercising a diffusive and sublime benevolence to the whole species, we are encouraged in the most contracted and criminal self love.

In futurity we are destined to perpetual insensibility; for death is proclaimed an eternal sleep! (6) So that the awful and commanding apprehension of a retribution to come, which tends, above all things, to check the devices and perpetrations of iniquity, is to be eradicated from the human breast; and every one is to "walk in the way of his heart and in the sight of his eyes," unawed by the solemn admonition that "for all these things God will bring him into judgment."

Such, without the least exaggeration, is the moral code which according to its authors and abettors is to superfede the Bible, and perfect our nature. Not a single article is here exhibited but has its advocates in print.

Now, it must be obvious to every honest mind, that in a community actuated by such sentiments and views, selfishness, cruelty, and unrighteousness would predominate to the exclusion of every social and divine virtue. The value which is now set upon life would be no more! Not only that solicitude for self preservation; but that tender regard to the health and safety of others, which the doctrines of immortality and a suture retribution inspire, would be annihilated; and all the cruelties of pagan darkness

would revive! The disappointed would have little to restrain them from self-murder; nor could the ambitious seel more reluctance at imbruing their hands in the blood of an adversary or rival, than at the destruction of a noxious animal for safety; or a harmless one for subsistence!

Yet these sensiments, horrible and rainous as they are. have been, and are still propagated with astonishing art and industry, in almost every part of Christ-Under the imposing name of philosophy, endom. they are fometimes unequivocally advanced and defended; but more frequently incorporated and difguised with other matter. For this purpose, all the ulages of antiquity are infidioufly represented as a fystem of tyranny, calculated to enslave both the minds and bodies of men, and deprive them of that freedom, to which they have a natural claim. institutions of religion, and those of government too, fo far as Christianity derives any support from the civil arm, are painted as engines of the most intolerable oppression; and we are advised to burst these chains afunder, and affert and enjoy the privileges of our being! That is, in plain and explicit terms to renounce the gospel, and live as we list! For who does not see, that this must be the final end of relinquishing the means of moral instruction; or even of neglesting to enforce them by law? I readily concede that particular creeds and forms of worship ought never to be prescribed. But does it hence follow that no attention to the Christian Sabbath, and no visible adoration of the Deity should be required? Are not

that sense and awe of God which these are calculated to excite and preserve, obviously necessary to a cheerful and conscientious submission to human rulers; and, of course to the security and welfare of society? Who, then, that is willing to selead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty himself, can object to their legal establishment?

It is immaterial which is first corrupted, our principles, or our habits. These different species of corruption are mutually cause and effect. Infidelity produces vice, and vice reforts to infidelity in its own defence. Another class of champions, therefore, constantly assail the public with romances, plays, and "cunningly devised fables," in which the hero, tho' drawn as extremely amiable ir his manners, benevolent in his disposition, and attached to the rights of man, is sure to be an infidel; and in the course of his career, to be guilty of adultery, fight a duel, or commit suicide, under such peculiar and interesting circumstances as are evidently intended to diminish our natural horror of such vile perpetrations! By these arts, the minds of many are imperceptibly unhinged; their sympathy transferred to sicilious or desormed objects; and their hearts steeled against real woe, till "they are led captive of the deceiver at his will." These and other similar modes of attacking our holy faith, are the "vain deceit," of which the inspired penman speaks.

The spirit of prophecy, long since foretold the workings of this "mystery of iniquity", and characterized its abettors. "As there werefalse prophets of old, a-

mong the people; so also there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable herefies, even denying the Lord that bought them. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetoulness shall they, with feigned words, make merchandize of you. They walk after the flesh, in the lusts of uncleanness, and despile go-Presumptuous, self willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. As natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, they speak evil of things which they understand not. They count it a pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are, and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while they feast with you. Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling, unstable fouls. An heart they have, exercised with covetous practices. They have forfaken the right way, and are gone aftray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bozor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried about with a tempest. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure thro' the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them that live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption."*

Nothing can be more apparent, than the utter impossibility that such persons should be friendly to the virtue, or happiness of mankind. Self indulgence is their only aim; and they care not whom they sa-

^{* 2} Peter 2 chap.

only thing that can give them ascendency, and facilitate the accomplishment of their wishes, is the misapprehension of their character. And this, strange as it may seem, is predicted by Omniscience itself. Pursuant to this prediction thousands of honest men have doubtless been decoved by false colors to engage in their cause; and, like Paul of old, when persecuting the church, have "verily thought they did God service," and were pleading for a spirit of Christian candour, charity, and toleration; while, in fast, they were inconsciously lessening the importance of revelation in their own, and the minds of others; and, by giving it no decided preference to opposing systems, were aiming a deadly blow at the gospel itself!

It is a matter quite indifferent to the infidel philofophers of the age, whether our motives be good or bad; and whether we mean fo in our hearts or not, if we will only co-operate with them in their favorite design. They know persectly well, that if they can once draw us into the fnare, we shall in any event lend them our aid for a while; and, probably, be more and more entangled, till we give up both the expectation and the wilh of deliverance, and become wholly devoted to their interest. Here our chief danger lies. I do not belive that a very considerable portion of my countrymen have any disposition to discredit or discard the religion of their fathers: but I do verily believe, that they are in great hazard of being unwarily seduced and led afray. For the apostles of infidelity are indefatigable in their exer-

Vain writers, and vain talkers in abundance are employed. Those leading proselytes who have had access to the fountain head, and imbibed their opinions from the distinguished high priests of skepticism, whether of ancient or modern date, are eager, either by the humbler vehicles of pamphlets, or in their daily conversation, to display their knowledge, and communicate their discoveries to their neighbours: These again to others; and thus the same demoralizing principles, for substance, have been transmitted, repeated, and circulated, from the commencement of the Christian Era, down to the present day. Multitudes have received and spread them, without sufpecting the antiquity of their origin; and have ignorantly claimed originality, while they were the mere retailers of profane jests, and sophistical arguments, long fince refuted. The dissolute and vicious, of every age and country, have had some traditional acquaintance with them, and have endeavoured, to the utmost of their power, to give them credit and currency. Indeed, the whole scheme of modern infidelity is but a transcript, or rather combination of the most corrupt and extravagant theories of paganism, modified by the existing state of the world. The shades of difference, which appear in the opposition it now makes to human laws, are easily account-The religion of the heathen gave full scope to licentious inclinations; and, therefore, no objection was felt, or made to its receiving the countenance of the magistrate. But the religion of Christians is totally opposed to "these vanities," and strictly forbidsevery impure desire, and prossigate practice. For this reason, every government which sanctions its institutions and duties, must either withdraw its patronage, or be demolished! Even the boasted refinement of the new philosophy is more in pretence than reality. For though it be exempt from the gross-er absurdities of polytheism, it might easily be proved that this exemption is owing to the light of that very revelation with which it militates. In its nature and tendency, it still bears a striking resemblance to the old. (7) Hence it is said to be "after the tradition of men"; while on account of its sensual and earthly complection it is pertinently added, "after the rudiments of the world, and notaster Chriss."

This reminds me, secondly, to exhibit in contrast with it, the purity and excellence of Christian principles.

The disgusting spectacle, which has passed in review before us, will serve, it is hoped, to endear to our hearts the sublime and salutary doctrines of holy writ. Here the great Jehovah is presented to the mind, in the majestic and amiable character of the Creator, Preserver, and Lawgiver of the world. As the creatures of his power, the pensioners of his bounty, and the subjects of his government, our homage, affection, and obedience are claimed. In our individual, domestic and social capacities, we are required to cherish and express the sentiments of devout adoration; and "in all things by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving and praise, to make known our requests unto God"; reposing an unshaken trust in his mercy, and yielding an unreserved submission

to his providence. To encourage our approaches to the throne of grace, and to animate our hopes of acceptance, a glorious Mediator, " who loved us and gave himself for us," is announced. In him, we are commanded to believe and confide, as " our Strength and our Redeemer"; and through him, to implore the forgiveness of our past offences, and supplicate the aids of the Holy Spirit to direct our future conduct. Taking for a model, the "great Captain of our falvation," who has not only given us precepts, but "left us an example, that in all things, we should walk in his steps"; while we constantly aspire to personal purity, we are to cultivate meekness, justice, equity and kindness, in our treatment of all with whom we converse. No doing of evil, that good may come; no visionary cosmopolitism is allowed. We are to accommodate our feelings and pursuits to the situation, in which God and nature have placed us. The ties of wedlock are to be held sacred, and in no instance dissolved, "except for the cause of fornication." Our respective families, without enquiring whether they have more intrinsic merit than others, demand our first attention; next our relatives and friends; then our neighbours and countrymen; and then, as we have opportunity, the whole human race.

In discharging these duties, we are to look for our ultimate reward, not to the honors, emoluments, and pleasures of time; but to the more permanent glory and blessedness of the heavenly state; and are, therefore, to have a prevailing respect to the divine authority and law; to live "as seeing Him that is in-

wishle"; and to act, in all cases and circumstances, as those who expect to give an account." For we are taught to believe, that the great Sovereign of the universe "fearches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men, even to render to every one, according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings"; that "he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given affurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead"; and that "all who are in their graves shall come forth, they that have done good to he resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation."

To engrave these awakening truths on our hearts, and induce correspondent sentiments and manners, beside the perusal of the sacred oracles in retirement, one day in seven is appointed to the special purpose of instruction and worship; when people of every age, sex, and condition, may assemble, and unite in rendering thanks to the Most High, for the mercies of their lives; in supplicating his blessing upon their various concerns, both temporal and spiritual; and in receiving those counsels, admonitions, and encouragements from the holy scriptures, which tend to increase their virtue, usefulness, and happiness in life, and are able to make them wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus."

Compare this system with what the pen and tongue of unbelief have offered in its room. How conspicuous its superiority! In itself considered, how worthy of God; and how important and necessary to man! It is visibly adapted to our situation and wants; and, in every view, conducive to our improvement and felicity. Considered in its tendency and effects, it must command the assent and veneration of every unbiassed mind.

From the first general notification of Christianity to the present day, there have been in every age millions whose names are unknown to history, made better by it, not only in their conduct, but in their difpolition; and happier too, not so much in their external circumstances, as in that which alone deserves the name of happiness, the tranquility and consolation of their thoughts. In addition to the unobserved fruits, which it has produced in the obscurest shades of retirement, its aspect on the character of nations, intelligibly proclaims its worth. It has mitigated the conduct of war, and the treatment of captives. It has softened the administration of despotic govern-It has abolished polygamy. It has restrained the licentiousness of divorces. It has put an end to the exposure of children and the immolation of It has suppressed the combats of gladiators, and the impurities of religious rites. It has banished, if not unnatural vices, at least the toleration of them. It has greatly incliorated the condition of the laborious part of every community, by procuring for them a day of weekly rest and instruction. countries, in which it is professed, it has given rise to numerous establishments for the relief of sickness and poverty; and, in some, especially in ours, to a regular and general provision by law. It has triumphed

over the flavery established in the Roman empire; and may we not hope it will, one day, prevail against the worse slavery in the West-Indies; and I blush to add, in some parts of the United States. It has also obtained a sensible, though not a complete influence upon the public judgment of morals. And this is very important; for without the occasional correction which public opinion receives by referring to some fixed standard of morality, no man can tell into what extravagancies it might wander. In this way, it is very possible that many may be kept in order by Christianity, who are not themselves Christians. They may be guided by the rectitude which it communicates to public opinion. Their consciences may suggest their duty truly, and they may ascribe these suggestions to a moral sense, or the native capacity of the human intellect, when in fact they are nothing more, than the public opinion reflected from their own minds; an opinion, in a confiderable degree, formed and modified by the lessons of Christianity. Certain it is, and this is a great deal to fay, that the generality of the most vulgar and ignorant people have truer and worthier notions of God, more just and right apprehenftons concerning his attributes and persections, a deeper sense of the difference between good and evil, a greater regard to moral obligations and to the plain and most necessary duties of life, and a more firm and universal expectation of a future state of rewards and punishments, than in any heathen country, any considerable number even of the learned were ever found to possess. (8)

Whence, in the third place, appears the necessity and duty of a watchful obedience to the apostolic injunction in the text. This, you may fay, would be clearly indispensable, were we exposed to the perils which have been described. But whatever may be the case of the old world, our favored land, happily disjoined Tom those degenerate and luxurious regions, has little to fear from their apollacy. I answer-While we maintain an uninterrupted commerce with that quarter of the globe; while, in many respects, we adopt their customs and imitate their manners, can we be absolutely insured against the contamination of their vices? Let facts determine. We import, reprint, and read their books. One, for instance, to which I have already alluded, (9) declares in so many words, (10) that "marriage is a fystem of fraud"; that it is "a question of no importance, to know who is the parent of each individual child"; that "it is aristocracy, self-love, and family pride that teach us to fet a value upon it at present"; and that a person "ought to prefer no human being to another because that being is his father, his wife, or his son." Yet this publication, which beside the preceding, contains many other passages of a similar description and tendency, (11) has already gone thro' one edition in America; and is now receiving another impression. While such authors find readers, admirers, and advocates among us; while they are even put into the hands of our youth, and the principles they contain instilled into their susceptive minds, as the ground work of their future character and conduct, (12) have we no reason to take alarm; no call to exert ourselves to stem the torrent; no inducement to guard and fortify against the spreading contagion?

Other writers of the fame class have been officiously excused and commended. Even Thomas Paine, who has published to the world his hatred of the Bible, as a book tending to brutalize the human race, (13) has been repeatedly eulogized! (14)

At the same time that such men are extolled for their benevolence, humanity and patriotism, those who are "set for the desence of the gospel," are often vilified and decried; charged with superstition, bigotry and party-zeal!(15) This is an insidious mode of assailing and undermining Christianity itself. It tends to no other iffue, and if it produce any effect at all, this must be its end. For whatever be the pretext or design, if the enemies of revelation be raised into general esteem, and its friends degraded in the public mind, the neglect and contempt of religion must be the consequence.

But not to enlarge here. Where is the person who has not heard similar sentiments advanced in private circles? How frequently do we meet with professed unbelievers, who treat every thing serious and sacred with levity and redicule; depreciate those opinions, usages and institutions which have been sanctioned by the experience of ages; paint our pious ancestors, as an ignorant, fanatical and cruel race of men, at a very small remove from a state of barbarism; describe all who venerate their memory and

maxims as servile dupes to imposture; and triumph antly affert their superiority to such vulgar prejudices, and their determination to resist and counterast them! Instances of a correspondent practice are not wanting. Such are the growing disregard to the sabbath and neglect of public worship, with their attendant train, impiety, profaneness, intemperance, and dissipation, which are visible to every eye!

With these evidences of the existence and operation of a skeptical, unbelieving spirit in view, we can no longer doubt the importance of taking heed, "left any man spoil us through philosophy and vain deceit." Inundated with publications whose contents, and conversant with persons whose words and actions are hostile to "the faith once delivered to the faints," we have every conceiveable inducement to be constantly on our guard against the assaults of our enemies. We are exposed to assailants on every side. Even in retirement, where we may think ourselves most safe and invulnerable, books under the titles of history, travels, biography, philosophical discussions, poetical effusions, and even moral essays, without the utmost caution on our part, may intensibly infuse the poison of infidelity!(16) Convinced that familiarity diminishes disgust, and frequently ends in attachment; aware too, that when the reader can be induced to approve and applaud the general strain of a work, he has, for the most part, committed himself, and may easily be converted into an advocate and partizan of the whole, the most artful and successful adversaries of the gospel, commonly interweave with

speculations, otherwise brilliant and interesting, if not useful, those unprincipled sophisms which tend, first to weaken, and afterwards to destroy its authority. Hence, in the perusal of many writings, in almost every branch of science, perpetual care to discriminate between the good and the evil is indispensably requisite.

Nor should we be less circumspect and vigilant upon other occasions. For, upon other occasions, we are in equal jeopardy. In our social intercourse; yea, in the transaction of necessary business, we often find men who embrace every opportunity, either directly or indirectly, to traduce the gospel and its ad-Now, if these men happen to think with us upon other subjects, or in any way, to be agreeable and useful to us, there is the utmost danger of our palliating their infidelity, till we gradually lose our accustomed abhorrence of it, and are eventually drawn into the vortex ourselves. By this mean, many an honest mind has been estranged from the virtuous part of the community, and by affociating principally, with the vicious and dissolute, has incautiously furnished them with additional weapons for its own destruction. Here is developed the true reason why those, of whom better things might be expected, are fometimes transformed into the apologists and defenders of profligate characters; and here, I scruple not to add, is disclosed the frequent cause of that apostacy from the faith, which so often astonishes and grieves the friends of goodness. "Enter not," therefore, "into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall." Shun, as the worst of all infections, the haunts of riot and excess; where the votaries of unhol, pleasure celebrate their midnight and abominable orgies! There the name of God is blasphemed—There the Saviour of the world is vilified—There the word of truth is ridiculed and contemned—There virtue is laughed out of countenance—And there impurity and vice are exemplified and applauded! If you once contract a fondness for fuch fociety, your degeneracy and ruin are inevitable! Nay, if you so far suspend your wonted detestation of their "filthy communications," as to acquiesce in complacent silence, or betray the approving smile, you are enlisted in their cause! And think not that your discharge will be optional, or easy! For if reason and conscience are, now, insufficient to restrain you, your escape will hardly be practicable, when thus entangled in the toils! Resolve then, with the devout Pfalmist of old, to be "companions of those that fear God and keep his precepts." Let no coincidence of subordinate opinions and views lead you to withdraw your affection from the friends of religion, or to repole your confidence in its foes. This is not to "account all things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ." It is to "worfhip and serve the creature more than the Creator," and by giving weight and afcendency to the wicked, to aid and abet their cruel exertions for the extirpation of piety and good morals from the world!

I am aware that the idea, here suggested, has been treated as a chimera. It has been afferted by the defigning; and believed, and repeated by the unwarv, that human nature, depraved as it is, is incapable of such extreme degeneracy, as deliberately to feek the demoralization of mankind. To refute this affertion, I will not again appeal to infidel writers. though it would be easy to multiply quotations from them, directly in point. I will only ask, what is their object, and that of their numerous coadjutors in all the pains they take to bring Christianity into difrepute? Is it to differinate principles, and fanction practices, fimilar to those which the gospel inculcates? Certainly not. Is it not then to different principles and fanction practices, opposite to those which the gospel inculcates? Most clearly. What, then, are the description and tendency of these opposite principles, and practices? Impiety, profligacy, felfishness, " confusion, and every evil work." Say, if you please, that they themselves have no conception or defire of such a deplorable issue to their theories. Perhaps charity requires the concession. For that "they know not what they do;" our Saviour long fince declared. Nevertheless, as their theories apparently tend to this point, neither their ignorance of the result, nor their supposed aversion to it, will remedy the mischiefs of success! The madman, posfessed with the wild imagination, that burning your houses would cause others more convenient and comfortable, spontaneously to arise from their ashes, might neither expect, nor intend to expose you defenceless to all the inclemencies of the atmosphere!

Yet his expectations and intentions of good, would, by no means, reconcile you to the experiment; or relax your zeal to counterast and prevent it.

How various and invincible are the motives, which here rise into view, and urge us to action! If, my brethren, you regard your own welfare, as individuals, as families, or as citizens; if you would lay a folid foundation for the honor and happiness of your posterity; if you love the pleasant and peaceful paths of wildom; if you wish to answer the end of your creation, and rife to a glorious immortality beyond the grave, "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." "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Form no intimacies, and, if possible, avoid all intercourse with ungodly men. When you accidentally, or necessarily fall into their company, "be not partakers of their fins"; but uniformly discover your utter abhorrence of their hostility to religion, and your decided attachment to its doctrines, laws, and institutions. Let them know, once for all, that you have taken your ground, and are resolved to maintain it; that you "are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," but esteem it the " power of God unto falvation to every one that believeth." In every condition and relation of life, be watchful and active. Are you parents and heads of families? "Walk bebefore your households with a perfect heart." While you "keep yourselves unspotted from the world,"

train up your children and domestics "in the way in which they should go." Regulate their defires and pursuits, and indulge them not to their hurt. Direct their thoughts and attention to useful and important fubjects. Be careful what books, and what affociates you allow them, in this forming period of their lives. Realize that the sentiments which they now imbibe, and the habits which they now contract will probably give complection to their character in time, and their fate in eternity! Labour, therefore, to give them an early relish for virtuous conversation and fociety; and to inspire them with a just aversion to those " evil communications which corrupt good manners." Let the Bible occupy a conspicuous place in your houses; nor suffer it to be banished from your schools. Accustom them to revere and obey its facred contents, as the great charter of their falvation, and the only guide to true respectability and happiness.

Are you children and youth? "Remember now your Creator." Pay a becoming deference to the opinion and advice of those, whom nature and Providence has constituted your guardians and counsellors. "Hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." Listen to the warning voice of their superior wisdom and experience; and yield not to the impulse of blind, impetuous passion. Cherish the impressions and restraints of virtue. Innure yourselves, betimes, to self-denial. Consent not to the inticements of sinners; nor "follow the multitude to do evil." Guard against profaneness and

train up your children and domestics "in the way in which they should go." Regulate their defires and pursuits, and indulge them not to their hurt. Direct their thoughts and attention to useful and important fubjects. Be careful what books, and what affociates you allow them, in this forming period of their lives. Realize that the sentiments which they now imbibe, and the habits which they now contract will probably give complection to their character in time, and their fate in eternity! Labour, therefore, to give them an early relish for virtuous conversation and fociety; and to inspire them with a just aversion to those " evil communications which corrupt good manners." Let the Bible occupy a conspicuous place in your houses; nor suffer it to be banished from your schools. Accustom them to revere and obey its facred contents, as the great charter of their falvation, and the only guide to true respectability and happiness.

Are you children and youth? "Remember now your Creator." Pay a becoming deference to the opinion and advice of those, whom nature and Providence has constituted your guardians and counsellors. "Hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." Listen to the warning voice of their superior wisdom and experience; and yield not to the impulse of blind, impetuous passion. Cherish the impressions and restraints of virtue. Innure yourselves, betimes, to self-denial. Consent not to the inticements of sinners; nor "follow the multitude to do evil." Guard against profaneness and

God in vain"; nor adopt the indecent and impious practice of jesting with sacred things: both of which tend to benumb your sense of moral excellence, and to plunge you into the deepest guilt and error. Consider that your all is at stake, both in this and a suture world; and that much, perhaps every thing depends upon your present choice! Under this conviction, "lay up in store for yourselves a good soundation against the time to come. Seek sirst the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Acquaint yourselves now with Him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto you, and your path, like the rising light, shall shine more and more until the perfect day!"

To conclude: - Whatever be your age, fex, or fituation, think not yourselves secure; but "watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." For "your adversaries go about, like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour." Apprized of their devices, be diligent in the discharge of your respective duties, and vigilant in detecting and avoiding the fnares, to which you are especially exposed. For this purpofe, cultivate a profound and increasing reverence for the name, the worship, and the ordinarices of Jehovah; and affiduously improve the various means, with which he has graciously furnished you, to " escape the corruption that is in the world, through lust, and be made partakers of a divine nature." "Search the scriptures daily," in private; and devoutly attend on the public ministrations of

the word. Should you heedlessly imitate the diffolute and abandoned; "forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is"; and think and speak diminitively of the duties, institutions, and professors of Christianity; without the design, and, perhaps, even without the consciousness of erring from the faith, you may unwarily be drawn into all the practical consequences of determined insidelity; and driven, at last, to its open avowal! "Take heed, then, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. For we wrestle, not against flesh and blood; but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

APPENDIX.

(NOTE 1) ALL this has been exemplified in France. Her leaders, at an early stage of the revolution, took measures, by the introduction of a new Calendar, gradually to banish all remembrance of the Christian Sabbath, and even of the Christian Era from the nation: And in the mean time, either demolished or desecrated most of its Churches. That this was not a sudden or momentary paroxism of infuriated licentiquiness; but a deliberate and premiditated project of infidel philosophy, will appear in the following "extracts from the report of Anacharfis Cloots, mem-66 ber of the Committee of Public Instruction, printed 46 by order of the National Convention. Our Sans-"culottes want no other fermon but the rights of man; "no other doctrine but the constitutional precepts and fi practice; nor any other church, than where the section or "the club hold their meetings .- Nature, like the fun, dif-"fusesher light, without the help of priests and vestals.-"The purpose of religion is no how so well answered as by " presenting carte blanche to the abused world. Every one "will then be at liberty to form his spiritual regimen to 66 his own taste, till, in the end, the invincible ascendant " of reason shall teach him, that the Supreme Being, the 66 Eternal Being, is no other than nature uncreated and un-"createable; and that the only providence is the affo-"ciation of mankind in freedom and equality!-66 Man when free wants no other divinity than him-This god will not cost us a fingle farthing, not "a fingle tear, nor a drop of blood. From the fummit " of our mountain he hath promulgated his laws, traced "in evident characters on the tables of nature. "the east to the west they will be understood, without the "aid of interpreters, comments or miracles. Every oth-66 er ritual will be torn in pieces at the appearance of "that of reason. Reason dethrones both the kings of "the earth and the kings of heaven—No monarchy a-"bove, if we wish to preserve our republic below. Vo-45 lumes have been written to determine whether or no 66 a republic of atheists could exist,—Every other repub-

"lic is a chimera. If you once admit the existence of a "heavenly Sovereign, you introduce the wooden horse. "within your walls. What you adore by day will be "your destruction by night. A people of theists neces-6. farily become revelationists, that is to fay, flaves of priests, "who are but religious go-betweens, and physicians of "damned fouls.—The intolerance of truth will one day " proscribe the very name of temple, fanum, the etemolo-"gy of fanaticism. We shall instantly see the monarchy " of heaven condemned in its turn by the revolutionary "tribunal of victorious reason; for truth exalted on the " throne of nature is fovereignly intolerant!" *---But enough of blasphemies, which must fill every considerate mind with horror! For inferting thus much, my apole. gy to the reader is, that it unmasks infidelity, and furnishes him with additional and powerful motives to guard against its baneful influence.

(2) These demoralizing principles are repeatedly and strongly urged by William Godwin, in his " Enquiry concerning political justice"; a work which has obtained an extensive circulation, and a very considerable celebrity both in Europe and America. He afferts, among other things to the same purpose, that "If there be a man, who " in suffering punishment, is not conscious of injustice, "he must have had his mind previously debased by sla-"very, and his fense of moral right and wrong blunted "by a series of oppression:—That the assassing cannot " help the murder he commits, any more than the oag-"ger:—And that whatever attempts to prescribe to a si mans conduct, and deter him from any course of actions "by penalties and threats, is an unquestionable tyranny!" See vol. 1. page 152: vol. 2. p. 234 and 241. of the first American edition, printed at Philadelphia, 1796.

(3) Ibid. vol. 2. p. 368. (4) Ibid. vol. 2. p. 369—372. The effects of an approximation only to the abolition of marriage, and to that promitcuous fexual intercourse which are advocated in these pages, are justly displayed in a late Morning Chronicle, London; a paper, by no means

^{*} See " A residence in France during the years 1792, 3, 4, and 5." Elizabeth-Town edit. of 1798, p. 269-70. note.

unfriendly to the French nation. "The Moniteur," (a Paris paper) fay the editors, "arrived yesterday, containing a list of the births, deaths, &c. of the department of Seine, including Paris for the last twelve months. Never was there published a document that gives such an official rescord of prosligacy of manners! The number of legitimate births is 17566; the number of illigitimate births is 4979! So that the number of bajtards is little less than a fourth of the whole. The number of marriages is 4359; the number of divorces is 748, or about a fisch! It is needless to comment on such a state of society. Morality is poisoned in its very source! The domestic state is abolished! The school of all the virtues is described!"

(5) See "Political Justice," vol. 2. page 371-2.

(6) Few readers will be ignorant that infidels often deny the immortality of the foul; and none, it is prefumed, have forgotten that the inscription, "DEATH IS AN ETERNAL SLEEP!" has actually been placed at the entrance of

many of the burying grounds in France!

(7) This refemblance cannot have escaped the notice of any one, who has been conversant with the literary productions of pagan antiquity. The dissolute philosophers of those times, advanced and advocated the same pernicious principies, which are now revived and palmed upon the world, as important discoveries of a recent date! The Poems of Lucredius in particular, who flourished about half a century before Christ, exhibit many of the daring and prominent features of impiety and profligacy, which diftinguish and difgrace the publications of Volney, Condorcet, Godwin, Paine, and a host of other demoralizers of a fimilar description. Writers of the same class insested the church in its infancy. As early as the fecond century, Justin Marty described and condemned them in terms by no means impertinent to their visionary successors of the present day. "In my opinion," says he, "the "whole of their lystems present to us nothing but the gross " darkness of ignorance, and the blackness of deceit, with " errors wide and infinite; mere fancies, and crude con-" ceptions, and ignorance which fets all comprehension "at defiance. I have therefore submitted to examine

" them, from a desire to point out the contradictions which prevail in their writings; and to show that they lead in to discussions, incapable either of limit or definition; and further to convince you that the end and result of them is all unsatisfactory, and productive of no advantage what soever; without any support from matter of fact, or from the evidence of reason." Hermiæ διασυφτος (sive Irrisio) των εξω Φιλοσοφων. Sub. fin. Ed. Paris: Justin Martyris Op.

(8) See Paley's "view of the evidences of Christianity,"

Boston edition 1795. p. 371-2. (9) Godwin.

(10) Enquiry concerning political justice, vol. 2. p. 368.

and 371-2.

(11) Instead of a thousand others, which might be quoted, I shall only present the following to the readers abhorrence! "As long as we admit of an essential difference between virtue and vice, no doubt, all erroneous conduct, whether of ourselves or others, will be regarded with disapprobation. But it will in both cases be considered, under the system of necessity, as a link in the great chain of events which could not have been otherwise than it is. We shall therefore be no more disapprobated to repent of our own faults, than of the faults of others!!!" Vol. 1. p. 311.

(12) In Virginia, the most populous and influentia! state in the Union, it is belie ed on good authority, that this pernicious work has gained admission into some of their academies; and is, very generally, put into the hands of young gentlemen, designed for the har, as an introduction to the particular study of law. What bounds, then, can we set—what bounds ought we to set to our appre-

hensions?

(13) His words are, "When we read the obscene sto"ies, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and tortu"rous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with
"which more than half the bible is filled, it would be more
"consistent that we called it the word of a demon, than the
"word of God. It is a history of wickedness, that has
"ferved to corrupt and brutalize mankind; and, for my
"own part, I sincerely detest it, as I detest every thing
"that is cruel"!!! Age of Reason, p. 38—9. Philad.ed. '94.

- (14) To say nothing of the more artful and equivocal praises, which have been repeatedly lavished upon this miscreant, and his abandoned compeers, in some of our public prints; a late work, published at New-York, is full to the point, and contains the following shameless declarations:—" He [Thomas Paine] is one of the first "and best of writers, and probably the most useful man "that ever existed on the face of the earth. His moral "and political writings are equally excellent; and the beneficial influence of the principles, for which he has "contended, will be felt through all succeeding ages. "Volney and Condorcet, Godwin and Barlow, are justly "entitled to the universal gratitude and applause of the "human race"!!! Principles of Nature &c. by Elihu Palmer.
- (15) Here a reference to the Worcester Farmer No. X. will be amply sufficient. This is selected, not because it discovers greater talents, acuteness, or address, than the numberless other calumnies of the same kind, which have appeared. Its principal claim to notice arises from the station of its reputed author; and its only title to distinction is the unexampled rancor which pervades it.
- (16) The writings of Hobbs, Bolingbroke, Shaftsbury, Voltaire, Rousseau, Gibbon, and many others that might be mentioned, abundantly verify this remark.