No. 30.

The design of the Gospel history considered.
John xx. 31. "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name."

Here, then, at the close of one of the narratives of our Saviour's life, we have an explicit statement of the grand purpose of the narrative represented. Perhaps no one has read the Gospels with that profound attention, with a view of those who seek there for the way of salvation, without feeling a desire that these histories had been in some respects more full and comprehensive. We wish, perhaps, that they had conducted us through some scenes of the ministry of Jesus, in which they are now silent; that they had brought to our view some of those mighty acts of power and bright displays of mercy, of which the short and condensed grace of his public services were but a foretaste. We wish that they had embodied, more systematically, more of these lessons of truth and instructions of wisdom, which came from
life inspired by the hallowed touch of the Most High, that they had received some discoveries which have given us, not slight hints of the general subject; we should have been delighted, for instance, to travel step by step with the disciples, to listen to every word which Jesus spoke on the journey to Emmaus, as we wish that what now appears blank in the history had been filled from the rich materials with the life of the Evangelist, that the divine light which ever settled around him, had been poured with some facts and notes the seeds of concealment, if every action incident had stood forth prominent as the miracles and events of divinity in the character of him, who performed them. There is no history in which we can trace the whole extent of the subject; we would learn, if we might, walk by the side of Jesus, so to speak, even in his countenance, beaming of Heaven's mercy, the majesty of his will, his wisdom, we would be aware each word in memory, most faithful record, we would accompany through his trials, his sufferings, his triumphs, and at last see him ascend from earth, we should delight to trace back the track of his life & find next glory in every act of our mission, in a
ey discourse. - We may be ready to think, that our wishes in these respects have been answered, the world would have been something better than the indulgence of curiosity, we may persuade ourselves, that we should have received important instructions, & that our hearts would have felt more deeply the power, the purity, & the wisdom of our divine master.

But however evidently we may wish that we had been furnished with the larger and more particular memoirs of the life of Jesus, yet the providence of G. has ordered it otherwise. It is evident, that the subject affected materials sufficiently ample to have filled volumes. But we should not forget, that the Evangelists went out for the amusement, but for the instruction of mankind that they did not intend to say all that could be said, but all that their purpose required them to say. They selected those discourses, speeches, oracles, which came to their own minds, the story of our Saviour, the events, the scenes, the truths of his life, the events of his mission, were peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of the home & to the respective objects of their writings, and memory presented to them in freshest colours & strengthened
with the force of spontaneous associations. One is leading purpose they all had in view, viz., to prove that it was the C.; if they have some enough to answer that purpose. They did not wish to throw the glare of worldly glory around the character of their Master; to represent his acts in that splendid dress with so easily attract the eye of man. It was not the common story of how they had to tell, like those of old historians that present you thousands. No, they were not to praise a hero, but to show the divine authority of a Saviour, if of this Saviour, they were the witnesses, not the fanatics. And what more would you require of them than the object for which they wrought? Remember that in almost every instance the gospel will not reconcile Jesus as their Master. If Saviour, on the evidence of those records, a historian has furnished us, would not have been to their authority, though the detail of his miracles of constructions had been minute, as they could wish, if though the history had been spread over numerous volumes? If the other hand, these are satisfied, the evidence of the narrative that they already have, will ask no hasty parade, no more elaborate story, than to justify their faith, if to lead them to the great end consummation of faith, the salvation of their souls. It is very easy to ask for light, when we are determined to grope in darkness. Yet the complaint that we have not more as an apologetic for using so ill what we already have.

"These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the C., the Saviour, that believing ye might have life through his name." In these words John expresses the end proposed by his writings, if the great benefit which would accrue from the correction of his history was designed to produce. We may consider each of these points.

1. The end for which the evangelist wrote his gospel. It was simply & plainly this, to convince his readers that Jesus was the Messiah, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the C. the Saviour." These words stand connected with the account of our Lord's appearance after his resurrection of the evidence he gave to his disciples that he had come forth from the grave. If, therefore, some theologians have read the text, not only to the Jews of John, but to that particular part of it, in which these facts are related. But whether this limitation be just or not, it is
certainly true, that the words would be as good
of patient attention to any of the four gods, as to the
light of the particular nation. In this gen-
eral view, we are, therefore, at liberty to consider
them, if thus considered, they make the bright
point, where all the rays of light from the several
histories meet, and blend together. - The Evangelists
relate all that is necessary to their grand purpose
in this text, in the utmost conciseness, without
interrupting their narrative by apologetics, profes-
sions, comments, or exclamations. - There is someth-
ing very remarkable in the manner of the paracris-
ters. They tell their tale of events the most ex-
tremely, in the world ever witnessed, with the
same calmness of temper, the same unaffected
simplicity of style, with as much moment in each
incident of every day's occurrence. If we attempt to recommend these stories by arts to excite
surprise or attract admiration. They may
be present, with an air of sincerity made impressive
by the utter tone of truth, the mighty power of
superhuman power. By such means, declared himself
the Saviour. - The Jewish history had been full of
miracles from the time of the father of the faith
until the captivity of Babylon. But from the
restoration of the chosen people, the power of the
Most High pursued only the common path of its
election. - Its more mighty supernatural efforts
seem to have stumbled for centuries, till it came
forth with new glory in the person of the Saviour. The
history of his life is the history of miracles; miracles
performed not to gratify an idle curiosity,
or to purchase the applause of the world, but to
show that he, who performed them, was in truth the
mediator of Heaven; that he came with the charisma
of authority from God himself. Every tongue
no impostor, in whose mouth demons trembled;
removed, and the nerves of his body relaxed. He
opened the ears, and the tongue, that had been silent;
the horn of whose agamem had
been silent; - the power of nature and creative
energy. - Was he an impostor, who broke the with-
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of man. When he commanded, the minds into silence. If the spiritual waves of the sea sunk into submission, submission before his authority, it was not a mere idle manifestation of power; it was done to conform the faith, to subdue the hard hearts of the nation. All the same is true of all his miracles. They were not performed without a purpose. But the evidence of miracles is not all with the same writers living before us. They appeal to the evidence furnished by the predictions of the Jewish Scriptures. They show us that, in these centuries, the long cherished lines of prophecy—what is it to be of whom Moses & the prophets also write. They carry our minds back to that book, with its blood descendants of those very men, who once filled the air, present to us as authentic & divine. Those pages we seem to read an anticipated & circumstantial history of the Messiah. We see the features of the character, the events of the life. If these writings seem to us not as the deposition of witnesses, but as the predictions of prophets. They present not an emblematic picture of a far distant twain, but a faithful representation of the present, if that, as is not, is painted as though it were. Not only is the Son of righteousness unveiled, but the time of his rising is definitely marked. As is the force of the evidence, so is miracles of prophesy for men to withstand the claims of truth. But the Evangelists stop not here. They bring before us the instructions, the character, the life of their Master. If they do not ask us, but are involuntarily as serves, whether he is he who taught & did thus, were not the favored messengers of heaven? Of hidden times it is enough to say, that they are doctrines for beings, who live on earth, that they may learn to live for something better than earth, that what could not expand their powers in time, what cannot outstrip immortality. They are doctrines designed for immortal beings, to make immortality happy. The historians of the life of Jesus represent not his character, not his purpose indeed on set purpose & by way of design, but as it were incidentally, & in the natural manner, as in the natural manners of inference from what they relate. They carry our minds through the trials, the toils, of his sufferings, his through the trials, the toils, of the sufferings of his ministry; & we see everywhere the triumphs of his meekness, the victory of his resignation. We see him drawing instruction from events the most common & objects the most minute, at the time repelling by a modicum more than human the insidious attempts of those who would have exalted...
ed when him the story of their vengeance. What another deplorable misfortune not affecting, taking all

minds, and giving them heart. The character of Jesus was entirely new, original — superior to that of all instructors who had gone before him, as the first inspiration of it is better than the varying paths we pursue in man. The eye

where maintains the real-time character of the prophet of the Most High. The teacher of truth, goodness;

so when we think of his life, there is no demand upon our regret, no call for sadness, for it is not possible to us in the full, uncovering

transcendent spirit of one, in whom rested the mark,

of the chosen. Such is the evidence presented by the Evangelists to conform to the truth of their

version, that it was the Lord's: the records of miracles, of the power of his doctrines, his character,

and his life. Why is there one heart prepared to resist this evidence? (if true, in that we have not).

I once said to his disciples, 'Does any one of you

say that I am not the Lord's? It was the answer of Dem. Peter.

I shall not, then, be the answerer of each one of us — thence art the, the son of the living God.'

"We are to consider the great benefit of man's

result from the conviction of this truth — that he

soft is eternal life — that belonging we might have life through his name." — The word who have been

ended "life" has significance. It sometimes is used to

express all the means of fidelity, improvement, it

has put into our hands, sometimes it reference

particularly to the disclosure of another's bottomless

The first of these causes the expression in the text may
doubtless appear perhaps require: — but I shall

dwell principally on the heart, as being, if not the

only one. The words of God, yet certainly the best of brightest of those benefits only

have animated the hearts, by God, ever since the prophet

began to pour forth its flow of blessings — the doctrine

of a future endless state of existence from the grand

come, of the true system. Of this doctrine

have no room not only, but certainly. The future faith in the loss is our only or ever

curiosity for this chapter of our helps. What does the

voice of nature teach you on this subject? Is it

goes, teaches you on rushing rather than to be, ignores

the one, the innocent, the good, the wise, the innocent, the good,

those we have loved? Those we have revered. These we have revered

sinking into the grave, nature prompts to the ques-

tion — is this the end of the excellent of the great

So there we remaining, never get my bring them faith

to again? Shall the sight that has settled once the

again?
never be dispelled, of the rules of darkness that are now wrapped around them never be shaken.

And what better answer could nature give than that perhaps there might be a redeeming power that might not be eternal, this darkness may roll away? Reason alone can give nothing in this subject sufficiently satisfactory to make the hope of a future life in an inhabitant of our breasts. All those to whom the supernal light of heavenly doctrine has never been imparted, however remarkable its powers of illusions of wisdom, must find that knowledge of their future state, where no one can give comfort, the security of assurance, I have been forced to listen for a longer time through the darkness of ignorance. But if they had to be more refined inquirer, to close their passage with the tedious, uncertain visions of philosophy. But we must see how poorly all this is adapted to satisfy the aspiring, immortal mind of the rational, religious disposition of man, and is only the expedient sanctuary of the law of the Lord, the bond of the Jews remote to his people nothing superior to the advantage of this life, a fruitful country, plenty, victory, a name, a long life, a vigorous age, all rise in the hope of an eternal security. The hope not deny itself.

If life did not stand forth to the children of the race, as their inassailable refuge for consolation, the supreme, sovereign motive. No, most it means till this star of Bethlehem arise that night came upon the world through not doubt, God had given but a dark, uncertain passage. The sage of antiquity, the prophet of the ancient church, the lawgiver, the God, must all yield to our divine Master, confess that what they have to offer to the life, layers are but trifles shadows, compared to what he can bestow. For he is remembered, he that hath the Son, hath life. The Son, in the assurance of a life to a world to come. This truth, taught us by instruction, proved by his miracles, confirmed by rising from the dead. The apostles have reported to us this truth, is the evidence on which it rests, but how? not by offering to us the dreams of an aquavit, the reverse of conjecture, the doubt of a half schismatic mind, but by declaring a plain matter of fact - a fact in which they could not be deceived themselves, for they certainly trust to the report of their own senses. I must they could not intend to deceive others, unless they excited persecution, were in love with sufferings. For these were their inevitable rewards. Now this fact is, that Jesus who was crucified, went
down to the grave, came forth again in life's home. This one fact is worth more than all the profound systems of elaborate arguments that were ever invented to prove the immortality of the soul.

If there be no resurrection of the dead," says the dear Sir Paul, "then is not Christ dead indeed? and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also vain. Before the resurrection of our Lord, all beyond death was made that unsearchable mystery from whose bosom we travelled as far as we could. In all that unsearchable mystery, the dead returned, the sinner was transfigured, the perishing sinner was saved. But for the resurrection of our Lord, all beyond death was made that unsearchable mystery from whose bosom we travelled as far as we could. In all that unsearchable mystery, the dead returned, the sinner was transfigured, the perishing sinner was saved.

We have this consideration. In the design of the ages, history is the great object of faith in that history. I shall close this chapter to you, as you read the reflections on the subject. It seems natural to suggest that it does not require faith without evidence. The apostles preached the gospel to the world on men to receive the gospel. But to effect this purpose, they assumed no airs of overbearing authority, and required no implicit, blind belief. They held up the oracle of human wisdom, the chains of eloquence, to captivate those who could not be engaged by the plain simplicity of truth. With one of the penmen of the great and solemn doctrine of the redemption of man through the understanding of Sin, they could not impose on men with the reception of their doctrine by bold denunciation of death, by the tremendous threatenings of eternal punishment. No, they left the means of making converts to those who had no other source of importance, the evidence in their own eyes, the evidence in their own conscience, the evidence in their own experience. Hence, the objections of difficulties, nice to the senses, as it were, might have arisen by dwelling on the greatness of excellence of their Master's character. But the heavens are the world since one man, history, as sufficient to furnish all who read it with material to form a fair judgment of the claims of the alteration of the heavens by God that are supported. Well might such a master declare that we have no more motive to subscribe faith, well might they require of their converts to try the spirits and prove all things. This is the glory of our religion, as it can be proved by as found on from the evidences that the faith and springs from the evangelical
history is not the delusion of fancy, but an em-
plishment to authority, but the verdict of the judgment pronounces on a fast hearing of the cause.

2. We cannot but remark how concise and simple is the stig creed. It is founded on these few words: "we believe that J. is the E. the L. of the L. The funda-
mental article of natural religion is that J. is, of that he is the provider of them who diligently seek him." The fundamental article of the stig revelation is, that J. was the Messiah. There fore see there is the same simplicity in the main prin-
ciples of both. The belief of a y. marks the line between atheism of religion; the belief that Jesus is the savior, forms the great distinction between Jews, of heathens, of infidels, &c. &c. But let us remem-
ber that this article, though so simple in itself, has a broad and deep foundation from all the other doctrines of the gospel. It is the reason of the rest.

I. are built all the sentiments, of hopes, of duties, of the stig behavior. If you believe that J. is the approved meeter of life, of course you must be-
lieve that you are bound to receive his divine truth all that he has taught, to acknowledge as of divine authority all that he has commanded. At the first planting of it, the belief in this one proposition "that J. was the L. was all that

was essential to being a stig. But how was the simplicity of the L. corrupted in after times? The waters of life rushed from their eternal fountain, but how soon were they disclosed by the idol through which they passed, & how did they at last become tainted with every kind of impu-
ity? The stig creed was multiplied and enlarged into various & most diverse articles: of the inven-
tion of man became the test of conscience & the stand-
ard of faith. He who knows nothing of it, but what he has gleaned from the history of the church, would doubtless be astonished to see, that a small compass the stig creed is brought by one of the companions of the biographers of the Talmud, &c.

if these are written, that one might believe that J. is the E. the L. of the L. that believing ye might have life through his name." Then let us ever ad-
here to this simplicity & purity of faith; & when men would draw us away from our allegiance to follow & ask us to refuse our basis on doc-
tines of their invention, let us adopt the words of Peter, when "many friends. I. walked no more with him."--"The faith which shall one day prevail, the words of eternal life." J.L., 119.
F. of Merits:  G. of all grace,  to thee would we raise the heart of gratitude and the eye of adoration. We bless thee for the mercies not have been transmitted to us of the life, the instruction, the  

Sav., that they were written that we might believe that Th, the S. of G., that he died we might have life through his name. We thank thee that he both appeared to teach us the most important and solitary doctrines, to instruct us in the edge of the nature of will, of the duties of the regiment of us, of the blessings we there that hope for us,  

it length to suffer and die, the just, for unjust, that he might bring us near to God. On the sense of the free grace & unmerited goodness abide on our hearts, help us not only to speak, but to live to the praise, that we may come forth with joy in that blessed motto, where the wise shall shine as brightness of the firmament in thy favor for through his grace.
At home, Oct. 10th, 1819 - afternoon.
At Weston, Thursday Nov. 14th, 1819 - afternoon.
At Bright, Jan. 9th, 1820 - afternoon.
At Mrs. Bennett's (Camb.) July 9th, 1820 - afternoon.
At Salem (Rev. Bush) Oct. 29th, 1820 - afternoon.
In Malden (Second Society) Nov. 10th, 1820 - afternoon.
At home, July 31st, 1830 - afternoon.