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THE REASON, DESIGN, AND END OF THE  
SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST :

O R,

Divine Wisdom and Goodness displayed in the Death of *JESUS*.

A

# DISCOURSE

Dedicated to those

## D E I S T S

Who disbelieve the

### CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

✓ Caleb Fleming

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“The strength of our persuasions are no evidence at all of their own rectitude: crooked things may be as stiff and unflexible as freight: and men may be as positive and peremptory in error as in truth.”

LOCKE.

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January 15, 1885

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COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE

IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE SENATE

APRIL 1884

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## T O

Those DEISTS who disbelieve  
the CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

**T**HOUGH I may not be allowed to address you in the stile, and under the compellation of christian brethren; yet as fellow-men, as creatures of the same make, alike intended for moral rectitude, and all its pleasing fruitions, you are brethren.

Far am I from sitting in judgment upon you, because of that weight of prejudice which has formed your dislike, or countenanced your disregard to the Gospel-System. The abusive disguises put on that system, by the absurd interpretation of many of its professors, together with the inconsistency of their lives, is a matter of *scandal*, that has proved too much for many to step over. “Contrary opinions cannot have the same title to *inspiration*: contradictory propositions cannot be divine truth: nor can an ungrounded strength of assurance be an

evidence, that any proposition is a divine revelation. light, true light in the mind is, can be nothing else but the evidence of the truth of a proposition." In as much therefore as a religion, that contains principles or opinions, dishonourable to the perfection of God, and which mock and insult the reason and sober judgment of man, cannot deserve his profession ; it will ever be reasonable, rather to reject, than embrace such systems : since no revelation can possibly be from God, that doth not harmonize with the religion of nature, or, which does not enforce the eternal and immutable maxims of moral obligation.

Among the several conceptions which christians have entertained, of an indefensible nature, perhaps none may have given more offence than what relate to the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ, as *expiatory*, and atoning : as the *sine qua non* put upon the mercy of God towards penitents, who need pardon. such suppose, that because God has given to Jesus to have life in himself, and to execute judgment also because he is the son of man, that therefore the father has had no life in himself, nor executed judgment till Jesus was thus authorized  
by



by him. Thus some have imagined, the successive generations of *Adam*, till the advent of Jesus, did remain in a state of death, i. e. unpardoned! and that the justification of life, could not have any place till the man Christ Jesus had the keys given him of hell and of death. So that it is in virtue only of his perfect obedience, men are delivered from the dominion of the grave. Nay, that this obedience which constitutes the personal righteousness of Christ, must be imputed to all men whom God justifies, as their proper righteousness; though so manifestly inconsistent both with reason, and with the nature and truth of things.

Hence the *blood* of Jesus has been represented as a magical charm, that arrests the hand of divine vengeance, disables and disarms offended justice.—And to rely on this absurd and unreasonable conception, is called, *the faith which justifies*.

An attempt made in the following discourse, to give a rational account of the design of Christ's sufferings, you will please to consider, as a sermon, which you may, suppose, calculated for a christian audience; you yourselves are to judge, whe-

whether the interpretation will not conciliate your minds to the Gospel-scheme, and, in some measure, enable you to distinguish between the religion, and the superstition of the christian world.

As to unbelievers who have no religion, so formidable are their numbers, that they threaten to cover us with that worst of all delusions, **POPERY!** a profession, calculated to countenance all iniquity. for no indulgence can be too extravagant to be cherished in the arms of popery. an enormous superstition, altogether built on the banishment of reason, and contempt of evidence. Why any should submit to be deprived of the right of examination, and basely subject a judgment for themselves of what is the will of God, to an implicit reliance on the determination of the priests, or the church, cannot be shewn, but from the deepest depravity, seen in that deplorable submission.

**BRITONS** should take the alarm of the spread of *popery*, from mass-houses opening all around us!—for civil liberty cannot possibly consist with that enslaving superstition.

**H. E. E.**



HEB. ii. 9, 10.

*But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man. for it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

THE original design of this Epistle, was, to reconcile men to the simplicity of the Gospel-system, who had been long prejudiced in favour of the Mosaic ritual. To correct a national prepossession about the *Messiah*; as a temporal Saviour, a prince of an heroic

heroic spirit and of an enterprizing genius, that should make wide conquests, and govern the whole earth, was that argument formed, which begins this epistle. — The sublime and lofty prophetic representations of his heavenly and universal dominion, they had interpreted only of a sensible and secular sway of his sceptre. hence the *infidel* Jew, did imagine, that the putting of Jesus to death, could be no manner of obstruction to the deliverance, which they soon expect from the *Roman* yoke. The writer observes, that angels, had indeed been the ministers of divine providence, through past ages, under former dispensations; yet, to them God had not committed the world to come, or the last age; but has reserved this for the man Christ Jesus, made a little lower than the angels. him has he crowned with glory and honour, and set over the work of his hands. and even all things shall be put in subjection to him, though they are not yet entirely subdued under him.— “ but we see Jesus, who was made a little, &c.”—

The variety in which the new testament writings do describe the doctrine of  
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the mediation, is beautiful; because uniformly harmonious.—his sufferings and death; are always represented in a light, best suited to correct error, and remove ignorance, that had clouded the human mind.—here, he is put in contrast with angels; his sufferings are assigned, as the reason of his sovereignty; and thus declaratory of the universal grace of God. a scheme, a contrivance of infinite wisdom and goodness.

These particulars will furnish proper heads of discourse.

*Viz.* I. Jesus is put in contrast with angels; and their subordination divinely asserted.

II. The reason and reward of his sufferings, are here assigned.

III. The beneficial end divinely proposed to mankind, by the sufferings of Jesus, is shewn to be remote from, nay, the reverse of the design of his enemies.

IV. In this appointment of the sufferings and death of Christ, both the wisdom and goodness of God are made illustrious.—

1st. Jesus is put in contrast with angels; and their subordination to him is divinely asserted.—If the 8th *Psalms* be a prophecy of him, then, as the learned Mr. *Pierce* observes, we must read it in the future tense, “thou *wilt* visit, thou *wilt* make, thou *wilt* crown, thou *wilt* set him over the work of thine hands”—and so in this citation, “thou *wilt* put all things in subjection under his feet.—The description given of man in that *Psalms*, I should be of opinion, is cited by the apostle to shew, the real, proper humanity of Jesus Christ; who, in the scale of beings, was made a little lower than the angels, but is now appointed a superiority over them. the business of his mission, the manner in which he executed that mission, are what have given him the sovereignty; since, by inheritance, i. e. an actual possession, he has obtained a more excellent name than they. — The deity had so resided with, and manifested his truth and grace by him, that he thus became the brightness of his father’s glory, and the express character of his person. Accordingly, when raised from the dead, he had supreme honours appointed him. Angels are bid to obey his orders, or worship him. They do  
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this, as he is the *Shechinah* of God in the heavens: as the presence of the glory is with him. as God is the almighty support of his throne! thus it is that angels cheerfully minister to him, and constantly execute his commands.—

His having the keys of hades and death, his extending his sceptre over the dead and living, gives the *universality* of his rule: and shews him to have a name above every name. even to have all power both in heaven and earth. — So that no supposeable department of angels, under former dispensations, could bear a comparison with the honour and dignity, which the father hath bestowed upon him.—when therefore the carping Jews, thus interrogate the divine Jesus, “art thou greater than our father *Abraham*? whom makest thou thy self?”—he might well reply, “before *Abraham* was, I am.” i. e. I am a man of higher rank and greater importance than *Abraham* was. I am before *Abraham*. *πριν Αβρααμ γενεσθαι, εγω ειμι.* \*

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2dly.

\* Consult *Lowman's* three tracts. and that excellent piece, a letter writ in the year 1730.—both published by *J. Noon*.

2dly. The *reason* and *reward* of these superior honours, are here assigned. The *reason* of them, is, his sufferings and death. Many are extremely apt to hesitate, and shew airs of astonishment, that so great weight and emphasis should be laid upon the sufferings and death of Christ.—Such imagine, “ that verily they are able to produce numerous instances of persons, who have sustained *equal* sufferings in the cause of truth and righteousness, and have done it too with as great presence of mind ; with not less patience, courage, and constancy.”

But how superficial such reasonings ! they omit, they attend not to that which gives the sole reason and ground of this extraordinary emphasis : they consider not, that throughout the ministrations of the man Christ Jesus, such a conspicuous presence of God had been with him, as did justly surprize all who heard his doctrine, or beheld his miracles !—he had constant ocular and audible demonstration of being the Christ, God’s anointed, the *well-beloved* of the father, the favourite of heaven. for, universal nature was obsequious to his nod ! and he was always able to appeal unto, and receive almighty aid and protection, under abuse, distress or perils, arising from the perverseness  
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of mankind.—Conscious of no crime ; ever careful to direct the gratitude and praise of men to that being, who bore testimony to him, gives an elevation of merit, and purity of character to the man Christ Jesus, far above the highest pitch of illustrious virtue, any where found among mortals.—Methinks, a *single* instance of his submission and humiliation, will be owned to be matchless ! as when at his apprehension, in the approaching hour of darkness, and nature's distress, though he knew he had a liberty of supplication, that might have secured him the succour of more than twelve legions of angels, he would not thus either destroy, or even disarm the rage of his enemies!—an instance of submission and resignation altogether singular and unparalleled !

Could any of us therefore put ourselves into the place of an apostle, who was a personal witness of the approving attestations daily given to Jesus, by the divine presence, we could not once imagine the least excess in the *emphasis* they have laid on the merit of our Lord's sufferings : but we should discern, with clearness and precision, the equity and wisdom of the supreme reward, or recompense, given him by the father.—for, even,  
among

among such imperfect and depraved creatures as we are, it is no uncommon thing to pay distinguished honours to men who meet death without dismay; and willingly offer their lives a sacrifice to the safety and happiness of their country.—Such, who thus face the enemy, we think, well deserve public honours. — and the adventurous hero will justly expect some monument, which shall transmit his name to distant ages!—

But in the object of our present view, the victim dies by the hand of his country, whose maladies he had healed, whose fears and perils he would have removed, and whose vice and wretchedness he had *wep*t over! whose salvation he had earnestly sought! — nay more, by whose death the national destruction would be absolutely ascertained.—So singular were the sufferings of Jesus, and so much reason is there for the emphatical sense, in which they are mentioned.

The *reward* of his sufferings, is thus expressed, “for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.” what that glory and honour is, we have considered in the contrast between him and angels. but the connexion is very instructive, and fixes with precision, the idea we should have of his

his *reward*; since it was for the suffering of death.—Our Lord had verily so understood the prophecy concerning himself. *Luke xxiv. 26.* “ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? and St. *Paul* to the *Philippians*,—“he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.”—again *Heb. xii. 2.* “for the joy set before him, he endured the cross.”—The honour and glory of Christ, is therefore the *reward* of his sufferings. — In other words, his sufferings and death were *antecedent* to the glory and honour which God conferred upon him; so that when he prays, “that God would glorify him with that glory which he had with him before the world was;” it must be understood, of the *design* of God, made known from the earliest ages, by prophecy. Such as in *Gen. iii. 15.*—*49. 10.* *Psalms. cx. 1.*—\*

3dly. The beneficial *end* divinely proposed to mankind, by the sufferings of Jesus, is shewn to be remote from, nay, the reverse of the design of his enemies—my text says, it was, “that he by the grace of God, should

\* See Letter. writ 1730. p. 15. and onward.

should taste death for every man."—a late paraphrast \* observes, the Greek may be rendered, " by the grace of God for all he might taste death."—

*To taste death*, is a paraphrasis, for, *to die*—To die for all : is, for every man : for the benefit of all mankind.—how? — why, thus, all men who contemplate the crucifixion of Jesus, may, at once, see the malignity of pride, prejudice, and worldliness ; the evil of bigotry, superstition, and selfishness.—The *Jew* did only desire a temporal Saviour. he would have had a reigning prince, who should give indulgence to his lust, and worldliness. and he had no concern for any but his own nation. he contemns, despises, and would enslave the rest of mankind.—

Jesus *tasted death for every man*, as the aggravated circumstances of painful endurance, did comprehend the utmost degree of suffering, to which man can possibly be exposed. he tasted death for every man, as no circumstance of wretchedness, to which true goodness or piety may be exposed, can exceed the quantity of his endurance. a-  
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\* Dr. Sykes.

gain in the sufferings and death of Christ, the *grace* of God is seen to be universal ; because in consequence of it, men are to publish the terms of peace and pardon as the very same to all nations, *viz.* repentance and personal reformation. — hence, this writer has opposed the voice of Christ's blood, to that of the *Jewish*-sin-offering ; which offering, was a confession of no more than of *Jewish*-guilt.—

But inasmuch as the death of Christ dissolved the institution of bloody sacrifice, and broke down the wall of partition between *Jew* and *Gentile*, it is stiled, *a ransom for all, and a testimony given in due time.* 1 *Tim.* ii. 6. it is so, as it shews us, “ that God would have all men be saved”. for if he would pardon the murderers of Jesus, upon their penitency, no true penitent needs at any time despair of divine mercy. Sometimes his sufferings are mentioned, as delivering men from the dominion of sins : so when our Lord speaks of giving his life *a ransom for many.* *Matt.* xx. 28. there he evidently meaneth, that in the article of his sufferings and death, he should recommend humility, and set men free from pride, ambition, and worldliness : for that is the obvious drift of

his argument. — And in the 6th of *John*, where he dwells so much upon, “ giving his flesh for the life of the world,” — he intends by it, the influence which his example should have, in prevailing with men to persevere in doing the will of God, though under persecution.

Thus it is he makes void the dominion of death, by destroying that worldliness in the heart of man which has the power of death. “ for the sting of death, is sin.” — The divine end proposed by Christ’s sufferings, is therefore remote from and the reverse of his murderers intention. —

4thly. In this appointment of the sufferings of Christ, both the *wisdom* and *goodness* of God are made illustrious! “ for it became him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” — The phrase, *many sons*, is equivalent to *the all*, v. 9. In *the many*, there is no exception, no limitations; but the benignity of the scheme is boundless. — “ Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” — “ him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” — “ God so loved the world,

world, that &c.” “God is, in Christ, i. e. by the Gospel-scheme, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to men their trespasses.”—And hence it is, that the purposes of God, concerning the *election* of persons or families to distinct temporal advantages, or privileges, are no objections to the universality of his saving love and mercy.

It became HIM, of whom are all things, and by whom are all things.—*him?* who? The Supreme being, the creator and disposer of all things.—The creative eternal word, of whom *John* thus speaks, “All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made,” Joh. i. 3. “that Lord God who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that in them is; who anointed his holy servant Jesus.” Acts iv. 24, 27. And who has also disposed the ages in such a manner, that should best illustrate his design of placing Jesus at the head of all principality and power: for, “by him were all things created, or disposed in heaven and earth—all things were created by him and for him—that his first-born from the dead might, among all, have the pre-eminence.” Col. i. 16—20.

*It became him*, Εἰσέπετε γὰρ αὐτῷ, there is a *decorum*, a propriety, that was worthy his perfections.

fections. it was harmonious with the divine scheme, in every part of his providence and rule. there is an illustrious display of divine truth and mercy—mercy appears unoriginated, native, and free.—It became him, the source of all being, to proceed thus, — *in bringing many sons to glory*. here observe, the number is indefinite. all that will be brought, by the display of divine wisdom and goodness, in this captain, this leader-on, being made perfect through suffering. — He is the conductor to salvation, as he declares to men the father. he is the way, the truth, and the life, just as men are persuaded by him, that repentance is the only term of remission; and that there is no more occasion for a carnal ritual, or the bloody sacrifice of atonement.—The moral System is invariable, universal, and eternal: there is a plainness and simplicity in the *way*, which none can mistake, if they are honest and in earnest, in their pursuit of glory.—

Not any thing is more natural, than for men to pay a distinguished regard to those persons of superior knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. and we all find ourselves greatly interested in illustrious examples of piety and virtue! — Even hypocritical pharisees,  
 “ would



“ would build the tombs of prophets, and adorn their sepulchres: ” though they were of their very complexion that had murdered, or destroyed them. Matt. xxiii. 29. But the ingenuous *feel* an impressi<sup>o</sup>n, made by the instruction of piety, that exceeds all other impressi<sup>o</sup>ns. — “ good men are the salt of the earth ; and the light of the world. ” — yet, because this reverence of human wisdom and piety has been liable to superstition and abuse, and the devotees have degenerated into the extravagance of a blind and implicate observance, it became the *wisdom* of God, to give mankind an instructor that should expose this folly and evil, and lead men to distinguish the *divine-teacher*, from the *impostor*. for all men who seek their own glory, or popular applause, are of the depraved complexion. — That this did not enter into the character of Jesus, was made manifest, in that his ministrations were finished, and perfected by the most ignominious sufferings. — Not fame, not popular applause, was the motive, and which governed the labours of Jesus ; but they are accomplished, under a cloud of public infamy and reproach, insult and torture. — In him therefore the demonstration is given, that a steady, unshaken virtue,

tue, under sufferings, shall have a final recompence: since he endured the cross, despising the shame, because of the joy set before him.

It was a scheme worthy the wisdom and goodness of God, in appointing, “that the captain of our salvation should be perfected through sufferings;” since the profession of the Gospel-scheme would, every where, expose men to persecution. christianity could not be propagated, but with opposition from the prejudices, superstition, and lusts of mankind.—on which our Lord had his eye, when he said, “it is enough that the disciple be as his master, and the servant as his Lord.”—There was a propriety therefore in his being perfected by sufferings; since his followers would be so generally exposed to persecution, because of their religious profession.

Some useful observations will arise from the view taken of our Lord’s suffering.

I. His *pre-existence* does not appear to be a doctrine of divine revelation. for the sacred Scriptures do uniformly teach, his proper humanity. That opinion has derived from mistaken interpretations of St. *John’s* account of the divine presence with him. the absolute silence of the three other Evangelists must

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be acknowledged. And all prophecy we know has represented him, as *the seed of the woman*. the person who should be born of the family of *Abraham*, and should more distinctly belong to the house and lineage of *David*. To which the two historical genealogies, given of him, by *Matthew* and *Luke*, are in full evidence.—his historians describe him, as a man.—and the Apostle *Paul* says expressly, “that in the fulness of time, he was made of a woman; made under the law.”—“that for as much as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same.—was made nigh to them: or a neighbour of them.—in all things made like to his brethren.” and all with this design, *viz.* that he might truly represent the condition of human nature under trial; and in that he himself suffered being tempted, he might be able to succour them that are tempted. he therefore can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and was in all points tempted as we.”—

His *example* could only thus countenance and excite our imitation, and stimulate the desire of a growing resemblance. We consider him, as resisting and overcoming temptation, in our own nature and circumstance; and,

and, as a man, we view him blameless, and without spot in his obedience. Moreover, for our encouragement, we contemplate him as exalted to the right hand of power, the *Shechinah* of the divine presence! and so far as the weal of mankind, and the good of the church are concerned, we know he is exercising rule and dominion over the dead and the living.—hence we can take the most familiar and satisfactory survey of our own connexions with him, and of our relation to him, as the one Lord, and as the prince of life.

Thus evident is it, that if revelation guides us, we can have no conception of the man Christ Jesus, *previous* to his being formed by the immediate power of God, in the womb of the virgin. And indeed this Epistle begins with a denial of any pre-existence; for it says, “that God, who at sundry times, and divers manners, spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son.”—not a word of his having ever given any information to mankind, *before* these last days: — but the reverse.

II. The sufferings of Christ, are expressive of divine wisdom and prudence, or in proof of a providence, as they were calculated to expose the pride, prejudice, and worldliness of mankind, in the most striking and efficacious manner. — Since so much illustrious wisdom and virtue which shone in his whole behaviour, at the time it would attract the admiration of crowds, would also raise the *envy* of proud priests, designing senators, and crafty princes. — They could not endure the thought of having an humble, meek, reforming prophet, considered as their Messiah and deliverer. a man, that poured contempt on all they admired and adored, *viz.* power, pomp, parade, and the glare of majesty! They could, by no means, relish a Saviour, who is to teach men how to subdue their vicious desires, and redeem them from a world of iniquity. — This object raised their indignation. and they will much rather crucify him, than their lusts. — The Deity foresaw this opposition would be made to such exemplary and exalted piety; therefore his *wisdom* will thus humble and expose the pride and vanity of the world. —

III. “ His tasting death for every man,” did not procure, but publish and proclaim

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the native, free, unmerited, and universal grace of God.—Here is a dissolution of the Mosaic ritual, which was no other than a local institution, fitted only for one country and people. “ he is our peace, who has made both one, and broken down the middle wall of partition between us”—There is now no more any distinction “ of *Greek*, and *Jew*, *circumcision* and *uncircumcision*.—The benevolence of the Christian system is universal; forasmuch as all prejudices, of a personal and national kind, are banished from the breast of the well-informed Christian.—every man discerns, that the love and grace of God, is unlimited and unconfined, that the term of favour is immutably the same. But

IV. The benefit that accrues to mankind from the death of Christ, is made very illustrious, as it so fully condemns that extravagance, of exercising human authority in matters of religion.—The man Christ Jesus, was born in *Judea*; and, by circumcision, was acknowledged a subject of the *Hebrew*-constitution. yet, no sooner does he enter upon the prophetic office, and undertake the business of a public teacher, but he confronts all the popular prejudices, and fond attachments to the Mosaic ritual. he calls himself,

himself, “ the *way*, the *truth*, and the *life* ! the *light* of the world ! and that no man could come to the father but by him ! ”—he, moreover, assures his followers, that he is “ the resurrection, the life, and the final judge ! ” He strictly forbids any attempt ever to be made, by his followers, upon the liberties of one another ; and condemns the least infringement on the rights of private judgment, in any man.

No other religion can boast such divine security, given to this supreme privilege of humanity.—But to assert this liberty of man, cost Jesus his life. he spilt his blood, bearing testimony to this truth : and because he taught a doctrine that differed so widely from church-creeds, church-canon, or an imposed interpretation and established sense, of the law and the prophets ; — this it was, which did occasion his crucifixion.—however, in order to give a specious colouring to a violation of this fundamental of all religion, the right of private judgment,—the church-plea, is, “ that APOSTLES had a power of binding and loosing. and that this power has been conveyed down to men, who call themselves their successors.”—

But it happens, that *Apostles* never had any power of binding and loosing, which could, at all affect the rights of private judgment.—They were to shew the nature of the gospel institution, and to deliver that doctrine of *truth*, with fidelity, which is to be the rule of the final judgment. But then, every man is left to form his own sense, and make his own interpretation of the divine rule. even an Apostle could not judge for him. — much less, can priests or princes be interpreters of the sense; be lords of faith, or exercise AUTHORITY over religious sentiment.—all religion is rational as well as personal. for no man ever was, or ever will be religious, farther than he sees evidence, and cordially subjects himself to its influence.

If therefore we would reap the advantage “ of *the many sons*, who are led on to glory by the captain of salvation,” we must religiously attend to the moral *design* of our Lord’s sufferings and death, daily be forming our spirits and lives upon that divine intention.

Do any yet ask, what is that intention?— I answer, nothing less, than to teach us humility; nothing less than to divest the mind of all pride, prejudice, and worldliness; nothing



thing less, than to persuade us to improve in a resemblance of that illustrious person, “ who is now crowned with glory and honour ; because, by the grace of God, he tasted death for every man.”—Herein we assert our Christian liberty, thus we are, in fact, and to purpose, exercising the rights of private judgment, by walking worthy of him, who has called us unto virtue and unto glory.

V. If the reason, design, and end of Christ’s sufferings are attended unto, with care, the divine fitness of the memorial rite cannot be called in question.—it is extremely well adapted to aid the mind, in exploring the malignity of sin ; and in contemplating the infinite importance of moral rectitude, or devotedness to God.—we therein admire the wisdom and goodness of the appointment, through the scenery of our Lord’s sufferings ; we venerate, and resolve to imitate his example of meekness, patience, confidence, and acquiescence in the painful allotment. Over the memorials, we determine to be the Lord’s ; we thus discern his body ; we thus eat and drink in remembrance of him.—

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It is not, then, you see, an injunction about a matter of mere ceremony and indifference, which we may either observe, or omit at pleasure: but it is a suitable expression of the reverence we owe the one Lord; since he has bid us thus remember him; and has said, “those are his friends, who do whatsoever he commandeth them.” And St. *Paul* enjoins, that by this ritual, we “shew forth his death *until he come*.”—But, since the *reasons* of such recollection do respect the display of the wisdom and benignity of God, towards mankind, the institution must be of force throughout the ages of the world; or its *use* will be experienced during the probation of man.—

VI. The superstition that has obtained, about the nature, design and end of Christ's sufferings, has disguised that memorial appointment, and rendered it offensive to the rational and careful examination. But if we allow of the premises, and once imagine, that the sufferings of Jesus were a real propitiation, and that the victim, offered by the hands of wicked men, could be so meritorious, as to purchase the pardon and peace of all sinners; then it will be no more than an easy conclusion, that the consecrated *wafers*,  
given

given by the most profligate priest, will operate to the salutary purposes of securing the laic from evil and death. And the solemnities of a *passion-week*, will be heightened, by an astonishing gaze on the blood of atonement.

All this while, the disguise is put upon the divine scheme, and men are diverted from an adorable view of his goodness and mercy, which has been the soul and life of religion, from the beginning ; and can only remain the reason of homage, throughout the ages of the world.

Great is our unhappiness, the plainness and simplicity, the reasonableness of christianity, will not recommend it to mankind, under the weight of prejudice ; but they rather fancy, there is something more venerable in what is more unintelligible and mystical !

T H E E N D.





