

and attendants find little or no difficulty in understanding them. In regarding what they design to communicate, their language becomes as definite and precise as that of the Grecian or Roman orator.

To those who inquire how we are always to find out the design of a writer, we would just observe, that his design becomes apparent either from an express avowal of it, or from attention to a variety of circumstances connected with his writing, or from both. But this will in the sequel become sufficiently plain. Indeed, many readers appear to discover the design of a writer much sooner than they do the meaning or propriety of what he says.

But to bring these general hints to bear upon our subject, we must request the attention of our readers to the design of the narratives of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In this way we think we can most profitably introduce them to the acquaintance of the youth, who may peruse them.

Had we no means of ascertaining *the design* of these four historians, other than mere conjecture, predicated on circumstances, we would rationally conclude, that the design in committing to writing their testimony concerning Jesus of Nazareth, was the same as induced them to deliver it orally; only with this difference, that in writing they designed to perpetuate, in a more permanent form, what must be soon corrupted and forgotten, if only spoken and not written: and that the conviction of unbelievers, and the confirmation of disciples in the truth of one incomparable fact, was the grand design of their testimony, whether verbal or written. This illustrious fact is, that *Jesus the Nazarene is the Son of God, the Saviour of men*. But we are not, in this instance, dependent on conjecture. We are expressly told by one of the historians that his design in writing was, that through his *written* testimony the reader "might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God, and that believing this he might have life through his name." Another of these sacred historians says that his design in writing was, that a certain illustrious personage, a christian disciple to whom he inscribed his narrative, "might know the certainty of those things wherein he had been instructed." This narrative was directly inscribed to this personage, and through him made public property, and consequently was designed to produce the same effects in all persons in similar circumstances, and therefore was as well designed to produce faith where it was not, as to confirm it where it already existed. But, in brief, whatever was the grand design of one of these historians, was the design of them all; for they all were employed to bear testimony to the same person; and in doing this, they were equally guided by one and the same Spirit.

But whence all the differences and varieties in their narratives? This, too, the design of each goes very far to explain. But was not the design of *one* the design of *all*? True, it was the design of them all to prove one fact, *but it was not to the same identical persons*; and all men are not to be convinced by the same arguments. As this is a point of vast importance, in every way in which it can be viewed, permit me to be more particular in invoking attention to it.

As all nations have their own peculiarities, and all people their own ways of thinking, reasoning, and expressing themselves; these varieties