

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD.

A LECTURE ON EPHESIANS I.

"According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Ephesians iii. 11



DUBLIN:
DUBLIN TRACT REPOSITORY,
D'OLIER STREET.

LONDON:
WERTHEIM AND MACINTOSH, PATERNOSTER ROW,
J. NISBET AND CO. BERNERS STREET.

“THE ETERNAL PURPOSE” OF GOD.

WHEN preaching the Gospel, we cannot use language too plain or too simple, in declaring the love of God in the gift of His Son, and the value of that blood, which cleanseth from all sin. These are the great themes of evangelical ministry ; and in more happy service one cannot be engaged. The Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.” It comes to men as “*lost*,” and to such, it brings *salvation*. It brings not a distant hope or chance of salvation ; but, to those who believe with the heart its glad tidings—its certain announcements of what God has done in Christ—it brings a *present and eternal salvation*. It comes to us as “*guilty*” and “*alienated from God*,” and it proclaims to us *pardon and peace* ; for it is God’s good pleasure to grant the immediate forgiveness of sins to every one that receiveth Jesus as his Divine and Almighty Saviour. It comes to us as “*dead in trespasses and sins*,” and it becomes, through the quickening power of the Holy Ghost, the effectual word of *everlasting life*. But until the dead soul is quickened—until the guilty and condemned has obtained pardon—until the lost one has received Christ as his Saviour, and is therefore saved by him, it is not our place to bring before him from the store-house of the Word of God, the varied “*treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” which are peculiarly the property of the children of God, and which are intended to strengthen their faith, to feed their love, and to animate their hope on their homeward journey through this wilderness to their

Father's house. Until Jesus is honoured as a Divine Saviour, and the conscience is at peace through the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, every thing in the soul is unsettled and confused. Nothing is in its right place. Self is the centre of its thoughts and interests. The glorification of Jesus, which is the centre and object of God's eternal counsels, has no place in the mind. The unconverted man understandeth not "the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Without the "unction from the Holy One," through which alone we can have a right comprehension of the things of God, they are treated only as "foolishness." Paul was "mad" in the eyes of Festus, when he discoursed on divine things; or, if they be not thus treated with contempt, they are used as materials which minister to the speculations and entertainment of the vain mind. The first thing which the sinner has to do, is to take his right place in relation to the cross, to receive him whom God has sent as the Saviour of sinners, and to worship God as the God of boundless grace and eternal salvation.

But happy service as it is to declare the Gospel of the grace of God, this is not exactly the object which I have before me at the present time. I propose rather to seek to unfold the further truth of God, in which he that has received the Gospel takes delight, and upon which he feeds. The believer, having found peace with God, through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, in which the love, and holiness, and majesty of God are perfectly displayed and glorified, all the scenes and subjects of God's counsels are opened before him, for the strength and joy of his heart. As a child of the divine family, he cannot but feel a common interest in all the purposes of God, his Father, and in all that concerns the glory of Christ, his Saviour.

There are two things, let me premise, which are commonly confounded, but which it is of the highest importance we should carefully distinguish—I mean God's government of the world, and his calling out of the world a people who are

associated with Christ in living unity, and who shall reign with him in heavenly glory, enjoying in peculiar nearness God's own blessedness. God is the sovereign Governor of the world. As it first sprung into existence at His bidding, order, harmony, and beauty marked the whole creation. It shewed forth the goodness of God, who could look with complacency and delight on the works of his own hands. Man, created in the image of God, was placed at the head of it, invested by his Creator with supreme dominion. But alas ! what a change has come over the whole scene ! Man has departed from his allegiance. Evil has entered, and marred God's beauteous handiwork. Sin reigns every where. God still holds His providential rule, and shows His patient forbearance in dealing with the world ; but when sin has run its permitted course, and reached its climax of emboldened rebellion, God will again interfere for its punishment and overthrow, in a more signal manner than He has as yet, in the exercise of judicial power, ever displayed. The Word of God is not more explicit on any point, than that judgments, terrific in their character, and universal in their range, will clear this groaning world of the burden of iniquity and the curse of sin, and that then the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ ; and that ancient promise shall be fulfilled—"As I live, saith the Lord, the whole earth shall be filled with my glory." All things fail in the hands of man, and this glorious consummation must be brought about by Christ himself, to whom all things shall be subjected. Whether in the narrow bounds of Israel, or in the wider sphere of the Gentiles, all will be subjected to the righteous sway of Israel's Messiah, and earth's rightful Lord.

But this dealing of God with the world, whether we refer to God's earthly people—the Jews, or to the Gentile nations, is entirely different from God's present dealings with men, whether Jews or Gentiles, in taking out from among them a people whom He is bringing into a position of peculiar nearness to Himself. If, as we have said, we con-

found these two things, there is much in Scripture which we cannot understand. For instance, the great scope of prophetic testimony is connected with the government of the world. The prophets testified that Christ should come as "the King of the Jews"—that he would be rejected, crucified, and slain, but that God would raise him up and give him the throne of his father David—that his enemies should be subdued, dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel—that all nations should yield him homage. "A King shall reign in righteousness," and all the glories of this world shall be given to him. But glorious as are these themes, we have in the New Testament, and in the Epistle to the Ephesians especially, a richer and more glorious truth than prophecy has unfolded as to the coming kingdom. It tells us of "the mystery" which prophets knew not—for which we shall search in vain throughout the Old Testament; for, from the beginning of the world, it was hid in God, (Eph. iii. 9) a secret in his mind. "In other ages it was not made known unto the sons of men;" but now this "mystery," or "secret," is revealed and made manifest through the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, viz., that God would, from among both Jews and Gentiles, gather those who should constitute "one body," of which Christ himself, risen and glorified, is the Head: a people brought thus into closest association with Himself—who are, as is said elsewhere, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," and who, therefore, will be brought into the enjoyment, with him, of the inheritance of glory. But blessed as is this privilege, it is not to be compared with the enjoyment of Him, who is the source and centre of that glory. This enjoyment of God, and not the possession of the glory of the inheritance, is the highest privilege of the Church of God, though, in the kingdom, both these things are to be our portion. The inheritance of glory is that which belongs to Christ, and he, having redeemed us unto himself, and for himself, we shall, as thus associated with him, enter upon the inheritance with him. But, as the adopted children of God's love, we are brought into the nearest possible relationship to God, and

thus our highest privilege—our richest portion will be to dwell in His presence in the full enjoyment of Himself.

In this chapter, which unfolds the purpose of God—the “mystery of His will”—we find the Church viewed as in possession of this glorious inheritance, as well as in the enjoyment of the full blessedness of its near relationship to God. Dear friends, this communication of His purpose is a wondrous act of graciousness on the part of God. He discloses to us the counsels of His will. He treats us as His friends, and tells us His secrets. Abraham was called the “friend of God,” and in the intimacy of this relationship, God unfolded to him His purposes about Sodom. “Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?” (Gen. xviii. 16.) With *a stranger* I transact my business, and no more. I do not disclose to him my purposes. I tell *a servant* just what it concerns him to know in his place of service, but to *my friend* I tell out what is in my heart, whether it immediately concerns him or not, just because he is *my friend*. So it is with God. Having set the conscience free, and brought us into the privileged position of children, and made the heart happy in the knowledge of His love, He then communicates to us His thoughts and intentions about other things. He could not give us a more tender pledge of His love and confidence: He could not impart to us truths having a holier tendency. Instead of leaving us to form a future filled with the vain imaginings of our own minds, He gives us a future filled with His own glorious purposes, that our hearts may be full of associations with Himself. Could any thing, I repeat it, indicate more tender love and grace on the part of our Heavenly Father? He knows the weakness of our hearts—our tendency to rest in the things of this world. He knows our life will bear the impress of that future, which we are expecting. Those whose aim it is to rise in dignity and power—those who dream only of riches—those who have no other object than the pleasures of this life, act according to what their heart is set on. Their habits are formed by what they long for. So

it is with Christians ; and therefore God reveals to us the character, and course, and doom of a world which has apostatized, and which is hastening on to judgment, that we may keep ourselves from its entanglements. He also tells us about our heavenly portion, that our character and habits may be formed by the bright objects of our hope. Were the hearts and minds of believers set upon these objects, what would be the consequence ? It would lead us to live, while here below, as “strangers and pilgrims.” It would liberate our hearts from many a care—from many an engrossing distraction hurtful to the life of a Christian.

Why is it, so many Christians are little interested about the future ? Alas ! with some it is because the question of acceptance has never been settled. They are not at rest as to their security in Christ. They have not peace with God ; and therefore, as we have said, their thoughts naturally turn, and must turn, to themselves. They hope to reach heaven in the end, but if they can just get inside the gates, they are content. Their faith has never accepted Christ as their righteousness before God. They are not satisfied with *him*, and *him alone*. They do not enjoy God’s testimony, that “there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus,” and therefore their minds are not free to occupy themselves with the interests of Christ. They have low views of grace, and their communion and walk is correspondingly low.

Others condemn all inquiries as to the course of events, which are unfolded in Scripture, as vain speculations. They shrink not from filling up the future with *man’s* thoughts of progress and improvement, but they shut out *God’s* revealed thoughts ; although the former are really mere speculations, whilst the latter are coming realities ; and, by the revelation of them, God intends to form our hearts and to guide our course. Faith will thankfully receive the “word of prophecy” to which Peter refers, as a “light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn,” and the brightest anticipations of hope are lost in a more glorious reality.

If we study the Scriptures attentively, we may find a development of the perfections of God under two names or characters, according to which He has specially revealed Himself to man. To the Jews, it is as "*Jehovah*" that He made Himself known; (Exod. vi. 3) and His faithfulness and perfections under this character are unfolded in the Old Testament; whilst to the Church He is revealed under the more tenderly expressive and endearing characteristic name of "*Father*." Jesus is, in consequence, presented to the Jews as *Messiah*—the centre of the promises and of the blessings of Jehovah towards that nation; but to the Church he is revealed as *the Son of God*, gathering out from amongst men, whether Jews or Gentiles, his "many brethren," whom he is bringing into the same relationship to God as himself. The hope of the Church is not merely to escape wrath—to be saved from judgment; but, *as the children of God*, they are to share with Christ in all the dignities and privileges of the divine family. They are constituted "joint-heirs with Christ," it being the Father's good pleasure to associate them with all the glories of the Son, "the first-born among many brethren."

The saints called out in the present dispensation are in the New Testament designated by various terms. In the fifth chapter of this Epistle, they are referred to as the bride of Christ; but in the first, we have another term used to designate them, and one perhaps still more strongly expressive of their unity with him. In it they are called "his body." In the fifth we have a reference to the natural relationship of husband and wife—the closest and most tender of human ties—illustrative of the union of Christ and the Church. Their joint dominion in the coming kingdom, is typified by that of Adam and Eve in Paradise. Eve was not the inheritance of the first Adam, even as the Church is not the inheritance of the last Adam. But Eve was the associate with Adam in his lordship over creation, as the Church will be the associate with Christ in his dominion over all things. Poor, unworthy creatures as we are, our thoughts could never rise to such a height of glory as is

here shewn to be our portion, according to the predestinated counsels of God, unless we look at ourselves as associated with one who has title to it all. But we know his title, and we may well say, he ought to have it all. The effect of this is—to exalt Christ, to lose ourselves in love and wonder, and to keep us humble, knowing it is in another that “all things are ours.”

There are two ways, beloved friends, in which we may learn the truth revealed in Scripture. We may begin as the Gospel begins, with the testimony that we are sinners. The Gospel is addressed to sinners, even to the vilest of the vile; and it tells them of their sin and ruin, but that they need not despair—that in Christ there is pardon and righteousness; and it is thus that the Gospel is unfolded to us in Romans. But, instead of thus learning the Gospel, I may begin, so to speak, at the other end. I may begin, not with man's end, but in inverse order, with God Himself—with His thoughts and purposes in grace. This is the way in which the truth is communicated to us in Ephesians. The Apostle begins with an outburst of thanksgiving:—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.” That is, he begins with God's thoughts and intentions about the blessings wherewith He blesses us, and consequently, he places redemption, by which we are introduced into these blessings, in the second place. He here discloses God's purpose to bless us in Christ, and this purpose flows from God's own proper character. God acts consistently with it; and therefore He takes us up, and fits us for the destiny for which we are designed. We who are “dead in trespasses and sins,” as said in the second chapter, must be “quickened,” or made spiritually alive. For it is they, and they alone, who are born of God, who can love Him. But, being born of God, they receive a new nature—they are made partakers of the Divine nature, and, therefore, they delight in that in which

God delights. It is a holy nature, and therefore they delight in holiness. It is a loving nature, and therefore they have perfect delight in Him, who is love. Brought into the family of God, they have an interest in all His purposes.

The principle I am now speaking of, is true of all persons and of all time. God can take pleasure only in that which has a moral likeness to His own nature. A holy being can take delight only in that which is holy. And now God's delights being with the sons of men—it being His eternal purpose to bring us to Himself, and to have us before Him, in His presence, He would have us in that condition which suits His nature, and in which He can delight in us. Therefore He has made provision, that we shall be “holy and without blame before Him in love.” But we are not only to be before Him in a character morally suited to Him, but we are to be brought to Him in the near and sweet relationship of “children.” God has “predestinated us to the adoption of children to Himself.” This is our relationship. It is one of illimitable—of perfect blessedness—in connection with God Himself! Where are we to find the measure of it? I answer, *in Christ*. It is “in him” that we are adopted as sons. We are associated with him as sons to the Father, and, accordingly, to his image we shall be perfectly conformed.

In this chapter we find the relationship of God to Christ brought out in a double character. He is spoken of as “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and as “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Christ said to his disciples previous to his ascension—“I ascend unto *my Father* and *your Father*, and to *my God* and *your God*.” That is, he puts them, through grace, into the same relationship and place of blessedness with himself. Thus he addresses us as his “brethren.” We are spoken of as “members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” With what especial delight, you may observe, in this Epistle and elsewhere, the Spirit uses these words, “*with Christ*,” and “*in Christ*,” in connection with us—words so strikingly expressive of our identification with him! We are said to have died *with him*—to be buried *with him* in

baptism unto death—to be quickened *together with him*—to be raised up *together with him*, and made to sit *together with him* in heavenly places—to be *glorified together with him*. Thus regarded as one with Christ, if we would estimate our blessings, we are not to look at ourselves, but at Christ, for *his* glory is the measure of *our* glory; (Rom. viii. 29) and the measure of the Father's love to Christ is the measure of His love to us. (John xvii. 23.)

We are thus entitled to say, all that God is to the Lord Jesus Christ as *his* God and Father, He is to us as *our* God and Father. We are the objects of the same love. We are blessed not simply *under* Christ, but *with* Christ. There is no limit in this blessedness. We are blessed in the fullest way possible. "All spiritual blessings" in Christ are ours. All spiritual blessings!—not one wanting! Whatever there may be of blessedness, we shall enjoy it, and in the highest way—not on earth, but in heaven. The Jews were blest on earth, but earth will not be the sphere of our blessedness. It is "in heavenly places" that we shall be blessed with the fullest enjoyment of God. His grace will have it so. God is now surrounding Himself with a family in whom He can delight, and therefore they will be "holy," for that is His character. They will be "without blame," for so is He in all His ways. And they will be before Him "in love," for such is His own nature, and such the nature of the family, of which Christ is the "first-born," and the perfect pattern.

Such, beloved friends, is the nearness of communion and the blessedness of relationship, in which we are set in the thoughts and counsels of God; and all will be to the display "of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the beloved." Why is it not said "in the righteous one?" Because God is bringing out all His delight in Christ—the *Son of His love*, and I must know God's delight in Christ, if I am to know His delight in His saints. This is in accordance with the words of the Lord Jesus in the seventeenth of John—"Thou hast loved *them* as thou hast loved *me*." This, truly, is the consummation of joy.

Having thus spoken of "*the glory* of His grace," the Apostle then tells us of "*the riches* of His grace." What a source of comfort is this? Because, when I look at my own deep poverty and degradation, I may well say—"What can meet that?" Well, here comes in the "*riches* of His grace" to meet the depths of my necessities, great as they may be. Out of them all I am delivered, according to "*the exceeding riches* of God's grace," (Eph. ii. 7.)

This introduces us to another subject—*the means* by which all is effected. Never could I rise to this height of perfect blessedness, but through *the redemption* which Christ has wrought out. The Son of God has come down and taken my nature, and borne my judgment. He has charged himself with my responsibilities, taken my sin upon him—that sin, which would for ever exclude me from God's presence—and has "put it away by the sacrifice of himself." He has redeemed me for himself. He has identified himself with me in my ruin and wretchedness, that I might be identified with him in all his ineffable joy and glory. I know his work shall stand. It cannot fail. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." On this ground, and on this alone, I can stand before God. I dream not of innocence now, nor of meriting heaven by obedience to law; but I stand before God in the perfect righteousness which is in Christ. I stand before Him in the full efficacy of that blood, *not according to my thoughts of it, but according to God's estimate of it*. Nay, not only do I stand before God without a stain of sin, but I am before Him with all the value—all the preciousness of Christ—resting upon me by reason of my union with him. Therefore, my heart has not only perfect peace, but it is launched into boundless joy. There is nothing between God and me to hinder fullest—sweetest communion.

And now, I ask, whose love is it that is so manifested towards me! It is the same love as shall be my everlasting delight in heaven? The blessedness that I shall enjoy there, will not spring from another source. The sources of my joy

in heaven, are the sources of my joy *now*. The blood of Jesus will not be more precious in heaven than it is *now*. It is as worthy of my full confidence *now* as *then*. I have the same blessings *now* as *then*; but, being then delivered from this poor burdensome body, my joys, blessed be God! shall be infinitely enhanced.

Having thus told us His purpose of love about ourselves, and put us into this position of blessedness, God then makes known unto us "the mystery of His will." He first makes us His friends, and then He treats us as such, and tells us His plans. He discloses to us "His eternal purpose, which He hath purposed in Himself," for the glorification of Christ. This is another wondrous theme, which this chapter unfolds. God is going to glorify His Son, and in doing so, He associates His adopted children with him in all his dignities and glory. God will set him as "Head over all things," as we are told here. God will, "in the dispensation of the fulness of times" "gather together in one* all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth even in him." All things are his by varied title. They are his by creation. They are his as Son and heir; and they are his by redemption and purchase. This headship is his by his own intrinsic title as Creator; "for by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers,—all things were created *by him*, and *for him*." All things are his as Son; for "the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands," (John iii. 35); but they are his also by right of redemption and purchase, (verse 14) even as they shall be his as the recompense of his perfect obedience. (Phil. ii. 9, 10.) God will put every thing under him as man—as "second Adam." He is head over all things (verse 22) by right and by divine decree, (Ps. ii.) as he will be in fact, and by actual possession;

* ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι—literally, to head up, or unite under one head.

but, as is said in the Hebrews, “now, we see *not yet* all things put under him; but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour,” seated at God’s right hand, waiting till the hour appointed of the Father. “Why,” it may be asked, “is not this headship claimed—why not claimed long since?” Ah! my friends, how profoundly touching and interesting the reply! Jesus is waiting for you—for me—waiting till all the co-heirs are gathered in, before he takes possession of his kingdom, that they may share in his glory. Jesus is bringing the “many sons unto glory,” (Heb. ii.) and he will not enter upon the inheritance till the last member of his body has been brought in, and the Church is complete. Then he rises from the Father’s throne to take possession of his own. (Rev. iii.) Then shall be introduced “the dispensation of the fulness of times,” to which every other dispensation is preparatory, and to which all the prophets point; when God will order all things according to His own mind, and place Christ at the head of them; when the government shall be in the hand of him who “shall rule in righteousness;” when the present day of abounding iniquity, and of the rejection of Jesus, shall be succeeded by the day of righteous retribution; when Messiah’s feet shall be made his footstool; and when our Jesus shall be vindicated and glorified in the very scene where he has been dishonoured, spit upon, and crucified. Then, but not till then, shall that prayer which has ascended so many myriads of times be fulfilled—“Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.” The judgments of God shall gather out of the earth “all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;” and “*then* shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Then shall the “heathen be given to Jesus for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.” The deceits and malice of Satan shall be crushed. The oppressions and sighs of men shall have died away, and this now groaning “creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

These, dear friends, are the times of “the restitution of all

things, of which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began," (Acts iii. 21.) Until then every thing is in disorder. Iniquity triumphs. Righteousness suffers. Satan rules.* God forbears. The present is the period of God's "long suffering," which to us, is "salvation," (2 Pet. iii. 15.) But God, who did not create this world that it might be disfigured and defiled by the lusts and passions of men, will not allow such a state of things—such a blot upon creation—to continue. Jesus will be the restorer, and redeemer, and ruler of all things, as Scripture abundantly testifies. But every thing waits for the day of his glorification, when the redemption of soul, body, and inheritance shall be alike complete. Our *souls* are already redeemed; but then *the body* will be redeemed also. All "*that are Christ's*"—all the righteous dead—shall be raised to meet him "at his coming," (1 Cor. xv. 23,) while the wicked dead shall wait for a thousand years their "resurrection to damnation." The same "mighty power" which raised up the head, shall raise up the members. "The exceeding greatness of His power," as it is said, that raised up Christ, shall be manifested in us, and shall change our "body of vileness," and fashion it in the likeness of Christ's "body of glory."† The power of Jesus

* Satan is the "god of this age," (αἰών 2 Cor. iv. 4) of "this present evil age," (Gal. i. 4,) and "prince," or ruler (ἀρχὼν John xiv. 30) "of this world." Wicked spirits are now "the rulers of the darkness of this age," (αἰών Eph. vi. 12.) The whole world now "lieth in the wicked one," (ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ 1 John v. 19) but God is taking out of it His foreknown people for Himself. In this dispensation or age, *Satan rules, but God overrules.* In the age or "world to come," Satan shall be "bound," (Rev. xx. 2)—shall be bruised under foot, (Rom. xvi. 20) and Christ shall reign supreme, and be the source of universal blessing.

† Literally, "who shall change our body of vileness, (τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν) that it may be fashioned like unto his body of glory," (τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ) "*His body of glory!*"—that body, the brightness of which is above that of the sun—in the presence of which Paul fell to the earth as a dead man. (Acts xxvi. 14.) Wondrous thought! How contemptible all man's loftiest thoughts of glory, compared with this! What a destiny is ours!

shall thus spoil the grave of its prey, and death shall be swallowed up in victory. (1 Cor. xv. 54.) But the redemption of *the inheritance* also waits upon that day of days; for Jesus shall "*reconcile all things unto himself*, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven," (Col. i. 20.) Thus all shall be brought within the range of the redemption-power of Christ, and every knee, of those in heaven and those in earth and those under the earth, shall bow "at the name of JESUS," and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father," (Phil. ii. 10, 11.)

Such is the "purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will," (verse 11.) Such are God's magnificent designs for the display of His own glory, and the consummation of our happiness. God has thus linked us with Himself. We shall be "to the praise," that is, for the display "of His glory," (verse 12.) It is not in the heavens above, nor in the earth beneath, nor in the angels themselves, bright witnesses as they are of creative power, that the character and ways of God will be manifested in "the ages to come." It is not in this old and lapsed creation, but in the new and redeemed creation in Christ, that He will be made known. This old creation is but a platform for the accomplishment of this—His "eternal purpose." It is "in the Church," and "by the Church" of the redeemed, that God's manifold wisdom will be made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, (Eph. iii. 10, 21;) and in the Church—brightest emanation of the divine mind—masterpiece of God's handiwork—every perfection of light, and glory, and beauty, shall be combined and displayed; otherwise she would be unworthy of her high destiny as "the Bride" of the Lamb. Thus God's glory would not be complete without us. We speak with reverence. We limit not the illimitable. We know that in the depths of Deity there are infinite, exhaustless resources; but the revealed purposes of God teach us that we are essential to the full display of His glory. That glory will be enhanced by being reflected in the redeemed, when they are manifested in the same glory with Christ himself. Thus

this wonderful chapter warrants us in saying—that the depths and heights of the grace and love and power of God, will never be known to the heavenly hosts, till they behold the Church, chosen from Adam's ruined and apostate race, not only brought into the closest and sweetest intimacy of sonship to God, but exalted to the highest dignity in heaven—a partaker of all the ineffable glory of her risen Head.

I would here remark to you, dear friends, that Christ is never said to be Head *over* the Church. He is “Head of the Church,” as his body; but he is “Head over all things *to the Church*,” (verse 22.) That is, all this glory is hers. She is to participate in it as his bride. She is not to stand upon the footstool, but to sit—a joint assessor—upon the throne. (Rev. iii. 21.)

Of this glory we have not an atom yet. No. *Now* while Christ is “despised and rejected of men,” we are called into fellowship with him *in his rejection*. We are called *to suffer*, knowing that we shall *reign*. We are “strangers and pilgrims” passing on to the promised inheritance, and of this “inheritance,” the Holy Ghost, as is here said, is the “earnest”—the sure pledge—that in due time it shall all be ours. The Holy Ghost is never said to be the earnest of God's love. No. He is the witness of God's perfect and unalterable love, but the earnest of the glory.

There is another important truth brought out here as to the Spirit. “In whom, after that ye believed,” says the Apostle, “ye were *sealed* with that Holy Spirit of promise,” (verse 13.) The Spirit is not only an “earnest,” but a “*scal*.” When we believe in Christ as “our righteousness,” we have peace and joy, and the Spirit is the seal of our acceptance. Far from leading to a negligent walk, this honouring of Christ with the full assurance of faith is the spring of spiritual strength and holiness. When Christ is honoured as a perfect Saviour, the Spirit of God plants His throne in the heart, and rules as a Spirit of holiness. He is the source of joy and peace, flowing from communion with God; but He is also the inspirer of holy

and heavenly thoughts and desires, and He leads the soul to judge every thing which is not according to God. When Christ is honoured by faith, in the finished work of redemption, the Spirit is given as the "seal." God thus puts His distinguishing and appropriating mark upon us as *His own*, against "that day when He will make up His jewels." Precious thought ! How exceedingly full of comfort !

Now, beloved friends, what effect shall these glorious truths have upon us ? Can we be indifferent to them ? Shall not our souls rather rest on them with intense delight ? Paul prays for those whom he was addressing, that "the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened" to know what is this glorious hope unto which we are called ; and also, that "being rooted and grounded in love, they might be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Why, dear friends, are we so dwarfish and stunted as to spiritual growth ? Is it not because the things of sense, not of faith, command our hearts ? Are not these things revealed by God, in order that our affections might rest, not on things below, but "on things above ?" Think you that it is God's design to introduce us into the inheritance of the saints in light, and the enjoyment of heavenly glory, with hearts engrossed with earthly things ? No ; it is His design that the tastes of the renewed mind should be cultivated—that the Holy Ghost should form the character and pursuits and habits of the Christian, by communion with things revealed. He would train us for a higher sphere before translating us into it. Our life below is, in one aspect, to be viewed as our education for our destiny above.

By faith "things hoped for" become realities, and "things unseen" are evident as if present. By faith, they become part of our very selves. Thus, faith is the most powerfully influential principle. Faith, realizing the glories and blessedness of the future, can look down with contempt and pity on

the low ambitions and pursuits of this world. I commend to you the eleventh of Hebrews, as illustrative of its power. What enabled Moses to turn his back upon the pleasures and magnificence of the most gorgeous court on earth, and to go forth with the pilgrim's staff in his hand, to identify himself with an oppressed and despised people? *The power of things unseen.* To the man of this world he was a fool, and in the eyes of the men of this world, the man of faith, did he walk according to his heavenly calling, would be a fool still; just because to the one, unseen things are every thing—to the other, nothing.

Beloved friends, may the Lord increase our faith, and, by the Holy Ghost, more truly and fully enlighten the eyes of our understanding, and thus translate our spirits more habitually into the scenes of our future glory and blessedness, so that these things may become to us the spring of joy, and strength, and holiness. May He enable us to bear with meekness whatever trials He may allot, and to look with calmness on all the agitations and commotions of this world. Let us remember that those who have such a portion in Christ, "*ought so to walk as he walked.*" May Christ be manifested in "our mortal bodies!" May we find increasing delight in habitual unceasing dependence upon him; and may the Spirit fill our souls more and more with the communion of the love of God, that the affections of our hearts may be weaned from passing vanities, and given to Him who alone is worthy!

For further explanation of the deeply interesting subject of unfulfilled prophecy, so briefly glanced at above, the reader is referred to "Plain Papers on Prophetic and other Subjects." London: Nisbet and Co., and Wertheim and Macintosh; or Dublin Tract Repository.