

THE PURPOSE OF GOD.

“ Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.” Eph. i. 9, 10.

INTRODUCTORY.

It was the good pleasure of the Godhead that all Its fulness should dwell and manifest Itself in Christ.

Such was the purpose of God, a purpose full of blessing. The way in which God is about to manifest that purpose, and in which we are associated with its blessings, is infinitely interesting to us.

In this paper only a small part of that purpose has been treated of, the outward part, so to speak, a part which nevertheless is none the less interesting.

It was designedly that God was pleased to accomplish it in a visible way, in order that that purpose might be revealed to us by means of positive truths, which, while bringing the Christian into fellowship with God, who is their source, preserve him—weak creature that he is—from substituting the wanderings of his own imagination for the holy manifestations which God has given unto us of Himself.

The subject before us is contained in the prayer of the apostle Paul, which we find at the end of Ephesians i. This subject finds a still deeper source (to which we have alluded) in what is announced to us at the end of Ephesians iii., and we cannot truly enjoy the subject treated in Ephesians i., without having felt in some measure the power of Ephesians iii.

In communicating what follows, I only respond in weakness to the desires of a few persons, and I am confident that God will deign to make up for what is lacking.

**THE CHURCH AND THE JEWS THE RESPECTIVE CENTRES
OF THE HEAVENLY GLORY AND OF THE EARTHLY
GLORY IN CHRIST.**

Two great objects are presented to our contemplation by the prophecies and testimonies of the Scriptures, which refer to the millennium : on one hand, the Church and its glory in Christ ; on the other, the Jews and the glory which they are to possess as a nation redeemed by Christ. It is the heavenly people and the earthly people. The Son Himself, who is the image and glory of God, will be their common Centre, and the Sun which will enlighten them both ; and although the place where His glory dwells in the Church be the heavens, where He has "set a tabernacle for the sun" (Ps. xix.4), the nations will walk in the light thereof. It will be manifested on the earth, and the earth will enjoy its blessings. When all is

accomplished, God will be all in all. The tabernacle of God will be with men, not coming down, so to speak, but come down from heaven.

All these things, and the way in which they will have their accomplishment, are revealed in detail in the Scriptures.

Although the Church and the people of Israel are each respectively the centres of the heavenly glory and of the earthly glory, in their connection with Christ; and although they cast on each other a mutual brightness of blessedness and joy, yet each of them has a sphere which is proper to itself, and in which all things are subordinate to it. With respect to the Church, angels, principalities, and powers, with all that belongs to heaven—the domain of its glory; with respect to the people of Israel, the nations of the earth.

We will confine ourselves here to the history and condition of the Church, on one hand; and to those of the people of Israel, on the other.

“In the beginning God created,” the Old Testament tells us.

“In the beginning was the Word,” says the New, proclaiming the foundation of a higher glory and more durable than that of the first creation, and on which was to rest the restoration of the latter, when ruined by the weakness of man and by sin.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” When they came forth from the hand of the Creator, all His works were “very good.”

Sin appeared, and they were marred (cf. Col. i. 20, with Eph. ii. 10). For a moment, God rested, so to speak, in them; but that rest came to an end. The Scriptures say but little as to the evil which sullied the heavens; all that we know is, that there were angels who fell. But it was on the earth and among men that the divine and wonderful work of redemption was to be displayed; and this subject is revealed to us in all its fulness.

THE REST OF GOD IN THE NEW CREATION BY MEANS OF THE SECOND ADAM.

The rest of God, after the first creation, was short. The rest of man with God passed away like a morning-dream. But the blessing of God was not to pass away in the same manner. That which was transient, on account of the weakness of the first Adam, was to be restored on an infinitely more excellent footing by the display of the might and power of the Second Adam; the will of God being to head up in Him all things which are in the heavens and upon the earth (Eph. i. 10).

CHRIST THE HEIR—THE CHURCH JOINT-HEIR WITH HIM, THROUGH RESURRECTION.

It is on this gathering together of all things unto Christ and in Christ, as their Head, that depends the character and the substance of the hope of the Church, until God be all in all. In this point of view, Scripture speaks of Christ manifested, as

being Heir of all these things, and of the Church as being joint-heir with Him. This is, as it were, the formal character which is attributed to Him with regard to all things; that we may understand what is our place with Him. Thus it is written, that God has appointed Christ "Heir of all things" (Heb. i. 2); that, in Him, "we have obtained an inheritance" (Eph. i. 11); that we are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17).

This glorious title of Christ—*the Heir*—has a still more glorious origin. He is "the Firstborn of every creature, for by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are on earth . . . and for Him" (Col. i. 15, 16).

The Church, the children of God, are therefore joint-heirs with Christ. How are they such? It is this which we are about to develop.

Christ receives the inheritance in His character as man, of risen man, once the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" now the Head, the Root and Spring of all blessing.

We must first remark that the first Adam is "the figure of Him that was to come," of the second Adam of whom we are speaking. He is thus referred to in Eph. v. 30, 31. As Eve out of Adam, we are all taken out of Christ, in a sense; we are quickened together with Christ when He has gone down into death, and we are set aside in the place He has taken (cf. Eph. i. 19—ii. 1, 5, 6). Just so the deep sleep fell upon Adam, and the rib

is taken, and made a woman and brought to him. Eve, who prefigures the Church, is taken from his side and God presents her to him as the help meet for him, to be his companion in the government and the inheritance of all things given to him of God in paradise.

Thus Christ, who is God as well as man, presents the Church to Himself, that it may share that glory with Him and that dominion which He already possesses in title and by the gift of God: "and the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them" (John xvii. 22).

Adam and Eve, taken collectively, are called Adam, as if they were but one (Gen. i. 27; v. 2) although, in a certain sense, Eve was inferior to her husband, and had come after him. So it is with Christ and the Church, who are but one mystical body.

This type, familiar to those who read the Scriptures, presents, in a most simple way, all the forms of the reality prefigured, with this exception, that the Second Adam, being "the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor. xv. 47), is also the Head and Lord of the heavenly things.

ALL THINGS PUT UNDER THE FEET OF MAN.

Let us now consider the passages which speak of the dominion of man, and of the union of the Church with Christ in that dominion (but we must remember that the association with Christ,

is more blessed than the dominion which flows from it). It clearly results, from the terms in which they are worded, that their accomplishment has not yet taken place. All these passages rest on Psalm viii. There the Holy Ghost says, "Thou hast . . . crowned him" (man, the Son of man) "with glory and honour . . . thou hast put all things under his feet;" then He tells us (Heb. ii. 7, 8, 9), that this is not seen as yet, but that *Jesus* has been "crowned with glory and honour," that He might be pointed out to the Church as the One who, as man, is to have all things put under His feet. Meanwhile, and until the purposes of God are accomplished, until the enemies of Christ, who hold the power in unrighteousness, are made to be His footstool--in a word, during the period of the present dispensation--Christ is seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high; He sits, as having overcome, at the right hand of God the Father. It is thus that He will grant to him that overcometh, to sit on His own throne (Rev. iii. 21), when He takes possession of it and reigns.

Ephesians i. 17-ii. 7 shews us the Church united to Christ in all these circumstances, according to the working of the might by which Christ was raised from the dead; chapter ii. 7 points out the cause, the glorious motive of it. In chapter i. 22 we find again the quotation of Psalm viii: "And hath put all things under his feet." The apostle adds: "And gave him to be the head over all

things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Thus, therefore, the Church is united to Christ, as a body of which He is the Head, and under whose feet God has put all things. "Christ is head over all things to the Church, which is His body." As to this character, it is as having been raised from the dead that He possesses it, as the passage itself clearly establishes.

But this last point is treated in a special way in 1 Corinthians xv., in which we find again the quotation from Psalm viii.

"Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom" [that which He possesses as being risen, which is the subject of the chapter] "to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject" [always as Second Adam—as risen Man; for it is always in this

character that He is spoken of in this chapter] "unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."* (1 Cor. xv. 21-28.)

Christ, in His character of risen man, reigns therefore over a kingdom which He will deliver up, that God may be all in all. All this administration, and this human dominion, which is brought out in Psalm viii., comes to an end, that the glory of God, simply, may be universal.

As to the way in which these things are accomplished other passages present it to us.

CHRIST AS HEIR RECEIVES THE INHERITANCE IN THE WAY OF PROMISE.

We have seen that Christ is Heir, in title, as being Creator of all things—all things having been made by Him and for Him, as the Son; and also because He has been established such in the purpose of God. So that, God in the way of promise, all the promises find their centre in Christ. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. iii. 16). "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by

*God, but not Christ considered under the aspect of His mediatorial character. It is not said, "that the Father may be all in all;" because, although Christ delivers up the kingdom as Man-mediator, He is none the less God over all things, blessed eternally with the Father and the Holy Ghost.

us" (2 Cor. i. 20). Thus Christ is the Heir, the Seed, to whom the promise was made.

THE REJECTION BY THE NATURAL SEED GIVES OCCASION FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SPIRITUAL SEED INTO THE HEAVENLY PLACES AS JOINT-HEIRS.

As regards this earth, the people of Israel, the seed according to the flesh, were, of all mankind, in the best position to receive the Lord, in a world that knew Him not; in coming unto them, "He came unto His own" (John i. 11). That people possessed the law, the promises, the covenants, the oracles of God; it was in their midst that, according to the promise, the Lord was to come, and that He actually came. (Rom. ix. 4, 5.) It was this people which, in the midst of a lost world, possessed, through their relationship with God, the sabbath—that sign which was to remind them of the hope of Jehovah's rest. But when the Messiah appeared, although His coming was in perfect harmony with the predictions of their own prophets, the Jews did not receive Him. It is true, they said, and this rightly, "This is the heir;" but as they hated Him, they added, "Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours" (Mark xii. 7). Thus vanished the last hope of God's rest upon the earth. After all that had come to pass, God had yet been pleased to send His own Son; but this

trial served to complete the evidence that man is absolutely without any resource, and that "every man at his best state is altogether vanity (Ps. xxxix. 5).

But that only opened the way for a dispensation far more admirable, far more glorious. The earth and the people of Israel as a nation were set aside for a time; although "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The design which was hidden in God for ages past was about to be revealed (that is, the gathering together into one body, and in Christ, the remnant of the Jews and the fulness of the Gentiles, in order to bring them into the heavenly places. See Eph. iii. 5, 6, 9). The companion and bride of the One who had been rejected, but who is risen—the Church—is gathered from among all nations, while her Bridegroom is seated at the right hand of God; and she will shine forth in the same glory as Himself, when He shall appear. (Col. iii. 4; 1 John iii. 2.)

Christ, in His character of Seed of Abraham, is the Heir of the promises. If He had taken possession of this inheritance during His life here below, He would have possessed it for Himself alone. In fact, after He had manifested His glory as Son of God by the resurrection of Lazarus, and as King of the Jews by His entry into Jerusalem, when the Greeks came also to see Him He said that the hour was come when (in spite of the rejection of the promised Seed by the Jews) the Son of man should be

glorified ; but, as the Lord immediately adds, " Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 1-24).

It was as risen that Christ was to enter into the possession of the inheritance with the Church—the ear, sprung from that grain of wheat cast into the tomb—with the Church henceforth perfectly justified. (Rom. iv. 25.) Thus Christ inherits the promises, not as having come in the flesh on earth, but as risen. He inherits them, after having done all that was necessary for the redemption of the Church, and in the power of that life which He has taken again, of which He makes His bride to partake. The result of this union is, that the souls which form the Church, when they are born of the Holy Ghost, are considered as risen with Him. In a word, Christ is Heir, in His character of risen Man—of risen Head of the Church.

Paul, in Galations iii. 17, speaks of the confirmation of the promise, made to Christ, and what he says perfectly agrees with what we have just been saying. Moreover, the apostle is quoting Genesis xxii. 18, " And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ; because thou hast obeyed my voice." In these words we find indeed that the promise, made to Abraham in chap. xii., and referring to the blessing of the nations, is confirmed to the seed of the patriarch, after that seed had been restored to him in a figure of resurrection. (Heb. xi. 19.)

Thus we have seen how the Scripture establishes, under divers aspects, this blessed truth, that the Church is redeemed to be united to Jesus, in order that, when He takes possession of His inheritance, He may have a companion meet for Him, to be associated with Him in all things, and perfectly like unto her glorified Bridegroom.

For the complete fulfilment of these things, it was necessary, not only that the Church should be redeemed, but also that Christ should go to prepare a place for her.

CHRIST EXALTED IN THE HEAVENS PREPARES A PLACE FOR THE CHURCH, AND CAN FULFIL THE PROMISES MADE TO ISRAEL—MEANWHILE THE CHURCH IS CALLED.

The resurrection of the Saviour had the double result of accomplishing the redemption of the Church, and of putting Christ in a place where He could secure the sure mercies of David (Acts xiii. 34), that is to say, confirm in His own name all the promises made to Israel. Moreover, it was needful also that He should take possession of the heavenly places, in order to establish the kingdom of heaven and to fill all things (Eph. iv. 10; cf John xx. 17); as well as to associate the Church with that glory—new, and yet eternal—prepared before the foundation of the world, and yet hidden from the former ages, but the manifestation of which had been determined according to the wis-

dom of God by the rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish people.

We must here distinguish two things: Christ preparing a place, a heavenly habitation; and Christ gathering from among all nations those who are to be His joint-heirs, calling the bride who is to enter into possession with Himself.

Thus, in John xiv. 2, 3 the Lord says, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

In John xvii. 24: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world."

In Romans viii. 29, it is written: "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

**AT HIS COMING, HE RECEIVES THE INHERITANCE
WITH THE RISEN CHURCH.**

In Colossians i. 18, Christ is called "the head of the body, the Church the firstborn from the dead."

But in what manner do these things take place? — "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

"As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." These words are found in 1 Corinthians xv., where we find the subject of the resurrection exclusively treated. Thus again it is also written in Romans viii. 30, and that in reference not to sanctification, but to glory—"Whom he justified, them he also glorified;" without any mention of sanctification.

Philippians iii. 21: "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

The time when these things will be accomplished is clearly taught in Scripture. Christ is now hid in God, and our life is hid with Him there (Col. iii. 3). The present time is that during which are gathered, by the Holy Ghost, the members of His body, His joint-heirs, while *He* is seated at the right hand of Jehovah, until His enemies are made His footstool. "This man," says the apostle, "after he had by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified," "sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool" (Heb. x. 12-14). He has accomplished all that was to be done for the redemption of us, His friends; and while He is still gathering His own by the power of the Holy Ghost whom He has sent, and who reveals Him, and the Father through Him, He is seated, in the expectation of the possession—and not in the effective possession—of the earth, of creation;

until the number of the joint-heirs is completed. He is sitting on the Father's throne, and it is there that the Church knows Him at the present time.

But while He is waiting, we wait also; and even as regards the whole creation, it waits also: it waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. As for the time and manner of that manifestation, the Scriptures are clear.

Since we are to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus, it is evident that it must be by resurrection and by glorification; for He is risen and glorified. Therefore it is said that the whole creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God; and the apostle adds, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. viii. 19, 23). Again, it is written. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. iii. 4). "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John iii. 2).

THE SAINTS JUDGE THE WORLD.

We have already seen that the Lord says, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 3); and this is what will take place, either by resurrection, or by being changed; for "we shall

not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. xv. 51). This is the entrance of the Church into glory, as we are taught in detail by 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

One may read in Rev. xix. the description of this scene—the marriage supper of the Lamb, and the subsequent judgment of the earth, or at least of the heads of the antichristian revolt. This judgment is again described in more general terms in Jude 14, 15: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment," etc.; and in Zechariah xiv. 5, it is said, "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee."

How blessed the time when Christ shall have presented the Church to Himself, as a glorious spouse, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!" (Eph. v. 27.) Clothed with the beauty and glory which belong to her, seeing in her Lord the beauty and glory of the Father, she is moreover associated with the glory of her Bridegroom in the power of that love wherewith He loved her, and in which He gave Himself for her, that she might be perfectly cleansed and made glorious with Him, even where He is; then manifested in glory, surrounded with honours such as He re-

ceives Himself; made partaker of all His glory, of that glory which the Father gave Him, that the world might know that the Father has loved her, as He has loved Him. Associated with the Lord of glory, the saints will judge angels and the world (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3); they will be the servants and instruments who will dispense the light and the blessings of His kingdom over an earth delivered of all its sorrows, and where Satan is no longer: "For unto the angels hath he not put into subjection the world to come, whereof we speak" (Heb. ii. 5). "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world ('age') to come, "and the resurrection from the dead," can die no more (Luke xx. 35, 36). "On such the second death hath no power," but they live and reign with Christ a thousand years (Rev. xx. 4, 6). Happy thoss believers!

At the coming of Christ, these (already risen as to their souls) will rise as regards their bodies, by His Spirit that dwells in them (Rom. viii. 11). This is that resurrection—not of judgment, but of life (John v. 29)—which belongs to the Church in virtue of her union with Christ by the Holy Ghost. It cannot therefore concern the wicked; although they also must be raised up in their own time by the word of Christ, but to be judged. Those who belong to Christ will be raised at His coming; as for the rest of the dead, their resurrection will take place when Christ, after having delivered up the kingdom, will be seated, as Son of man, on the

great white throne, to judge the dead, when the earth and the heaven have fled away before His face (Rev. xx. 11).

Such is the teaching of the word of God. The taking possession of the kingdom by Christ is described in Daniel ; but to treat this would lead us to the second part of our subject, the earthly glory, which would unduly lengthen out this paper. My only desire here is to shew the place which the Church occupies in this scene, and the connection which exists in Scripture between that doctrine and the most fundamental and comforting truths which form the hope and the joy of the believer.

THE KINGDOM OF THE FATHER.

There is a point in this subject which has been hardly touched upon, but the contemplation of which would lead us too far away from our main object, and might expose us to the danger of losing sight of it. It is the place which the Father's love has here—a subject equally full of deep comfort. It was for the kingdom of the Father that Jesus taught His disciples to pray ; it will be in the Father's kingdom that the righteous shine forth as the sun (Matt. xiii. 43), that is, as Christ, the Sun of righteousness. It is in the glory of the Father that Christ is to appear, and that is for us a most happy circumstance in the blessedness of that great day. Here we enter into deeper waters, and yet more calm ; into that eternity which is an

unruffled and boundless ocean of infinite joy—a joy of which, however, we shall know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, which pass all knowledge; for it is there that we shall learn these things; it is there we shall study the glory. Here below we may feel perhaps more deeply what grace is; there we shall be the full manifestation of it, we sinners made like unto Christ Himself. (Eph. ii. 7.)

But the passages which have been placed under the eyes of the reader, with the reflections added, may suffice to guide those who desire to inquire further as to this simple but blessed truth, and to receive the revelation of it in their souls. They will not be long without feeling that it contains everything; that it is the fulness of Him, who, without having had a beginning, was pleased to be born, and who, having no end, is pleased to accomplish eternally in us that infinite joy, the realization of which will even render us capable of enjoying it in a measure always increasing. We shall have great lessons to learn in glory with Christ, the Lamb, in whom the Father is fully revealed. The life we have received gives us even now a right and title to all these blessings as ours.

This is only a simple outline of the position the Church will occupy, when Christ shall be revealed in His power and glory. Then will it be manifested as His bride, His companion, in the same glory with Himself; and all things will be blessed through it. For it will be the sphere and means of the display of the glory and blessing of Christ.