

possesses this truly scientific character, it is precisely that of textual criticism. A few years may see the labours of generations, accumulating slowly but surely, at last reach their goal. And then it may be a source of regret that this weighty task of Revision had not been reserved until its first and perhaps greatest half was already done, and all that remained for the Revisers was to step into and occupy ground prepared for them. We may dream of such a state of things; and the dream seems to have some not inconsiderable auguries of its own accomplishment. Still, it may after all prove fallacious; and, in the meantime, we must not let "the better" be "the enemy of the good,"—especially where the difference between "the good" and a possible "better" is so small.<sup>1</sup>

W. SANDAY.

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*SOME FEATURES OF THE LIFE EVERLASTING.*

ST. JOHN xiv. 2, 23.

IN discussing the Vision of Isaiah a number or two back,<sup>2</sup> I said: "We often speak of that bourn from which no traveller returns, and lament that no one of those who have crossed the stream of death has ever come back to tell us what would have added praise to praise, by bringing us a report of the land that lies beyond." And in rebuke of the thoughtlessness or ingratitude which prompts us to speak thus, I alluded to the fact that "He who could not be holden of death *had* returned to assure us that it is a wealthy land and a good," and passed on to point out that "a whole order of men, the prophets, have risen into the spiritual and

<sup>1</sup> The next article will consist of a review of some of the principal results of the Revision as it affects the text of the four Gospels.

<sup>2</sup> *THE EXPOSITOR*, vol. ii. p. 81.

eternal world, the world which lies beyond death and above life, and have come down from it to tell us what they had seen."

As my subject was "the Vision of Isaiah," I then naturally went on to indicate those features of the life eternal which were disclosed to the Prophet when he saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up, his train filling the temple. And now I should like to take up and expand the point I then passed over with a bare allusion, and to suggest how much we may learn of the life everlasting from the life and words of Him to whom all the prophets bear witness. For when I said that He who could not be holden of death had returned from beyond the bourn from which we have too hastily concluded that no traveller has returned, I did not tell the half of what He has done to reveal and illustrate the life of which we complain that we know so little, of which we sometimes complain that we know nothing at all. For not only did Christ enter into that life through the gate and avenue of death; He also came down from it through the gate and avenue of *birth*. The life everlasting was familiar to Him *before* He came and dwelt among us. It continued to be familiar to Him while He tabernacled with us. His whole life on earth is the express type and pattern of what our life in heaven, as well as in the kingdom of heaven, is to be. How, then, can we lament our entire ignorance of what the life everlasting is to be, when we have only to look at Him in order to see what it is! With what face can we go on repeating the old foolish complaints and longings—complaints of the darkness in which the future is hidden from us, and longings for some clear and cheerful light—when all the while the light is with us and the darkness has passed away!

What, then, it may be asked, do we learn, or what may we learn, from the life of Christ, of the life everlasting?

And, in reply, I may say that, in general, we learn that so

often as we rise into the life of faith, the life of righteousness, the life of love and service, we lay hold on life eternal, we practise ourselves in the life we are to live for ever. But this is so obviously true that I need not dwell upon it. Yet there is probably great need to insist on the immense worth of this reply, this revelation of what the spiritual and eternal life really is. For, when we speculate about the future life, we are too apt to let our thoughts settle on its mere conditions and accidents, rather than on its supreme and essential qualities. We want to know, for instance, what the place we are to inhabit is like; or who our companions are to be, and how many or how few; or whether we shall be in a body or out of a body; or whether we shall recognize those whom we have known here, and love those whom we have loved. Nor are such speculations to be hastily or intemperately condemned: it is natural, I suppose, and may be right, that we should indulge in them. But these, we should remember, are not the main questions. If we want to know what the life of any distinguished man was like, and what it was worth, we do not determine our answer to that question by ascertaining what his income was, or what class of house he had for his abode, or what was his personal appearance, or what costume he wore; but by finding out what he knew, what he thought, what he did, what, above all, was the ruling character and animating spirit of his life. The former series of questions is not without importance, indeed; for the answers to them help to throw light on the character of the man and his achievements: but they are important mainly as they do throw light on these. And, in like manner, it is not the accidents or details, it is not the conditions and costume of the heavenly life which are of the first importance to us, but its essential character, its ruling and animating spirit. When, therefore, we learn from Christ that the life of heaven is a life of righteousness, of charity, of service, we learn what it

is most important that we should know about it, and may well be content to leave its minor conditions and external accidents for future disclosure. Not that they *are* all of them so left; but that we should not need to fret and trouble ourselves even if they were. If our friends who are with God share his pure, loving, ministerial life,—if they possess the very life which was manifest in his Son Jesus Christ,—*as they do*,—what more need we ask or wish for them? And if we, when we die, are to share that life, what more do we need to know for ourselves, or how can we dare to say that we know nothing about the life beyond the bourn? We know *all*, or all that is of real and vital importance.

Nor is it only in his example that the Lord Jesus Christ reveals to us what we call the future life, but what He called “the life eternal.” He also revealed it, or many of its main features, in his words. And it is a curious instance of the foolish and complacent ignorance with which men are too often content, that, at times, even those who believe in Christ should speak of the future life as quite hidden from them, though all the while they hold in their hands words which, if duly studied, would disclose its main features to them; and never so much as suspect that they are guilty of the basest ingratitude in thus casting on *Him* the onus of an ignorance for which they themselves are alone to blame. Nor are these illuminating words, as a rule, mystical and remote, hard to get at or hard to understand; there would be some excuse for us if they were.

Take, for example, the words of Christ reported by St. John: *In my Father's house are many mansions*. The words are simple enough. We have all read them, I suppose, almost as often as any words in the New Testament. We have only to meditate upon them for a few moments in order to find a meaning in them which gives us a new sense of the vastness of heaven, of the charm and variety of the life we

are to live in it, and of that curious and happy combination of repose and progress in it which meets and satisfies the two main currents of our nature : and yet how few of us have made that meaning our own !

It tasks no scholarship to see that our Lord, like the prophet Isaiah when *he* was caught up into heaven, had the Jewish temple in his mind ; and that He here represents heaven to us as “the spiritual and eternal antitype,” or archetype, of that transitory tabernacle. For the temple at Jerusalem had many courts, and many chambers ; it was the abode of many different kinds of men,—as priests, singers, scribes, porters, watchmen, soldiers. And in this respect, He tells us, it resembled his Father’s house. *That* also has many mansions, for many different kinds of man and spirit. For by his Father’s “house” I understand Him to mean the whole broad universe seen and unseen, with some of its mansions on this side the river of death, and some on that side ; just as some of the courts and chambers of the house at Jerusalem were on one side of the little stream that ran through it, and some on the other. When He leaves his disciples, therefore, when He is parted from them and taken up into heaven, they are not to let their hearts be “troubled,” as though He were really separated from them ; He will but have gone from one mansion of God’s house to another : the same great roof will still cover them both. And the mansions are *many*, because men are many, and that there may be room for them all. In other words, the universe is large and various because the Father in heaven has so many children, and must find a suitable home for every one of them. We are in one mansion of that great House even while we are on the earth. Our friends who have left the earth are only in another mansion, or chamber, of the same great House : they are still under the same broad roof with us ; and God is still their Father, as He is ours. We may as easily pass to them as a Jew could pass

from chamber to chamber, or go up from court to court, in the temple at Jerusalem.

And, lest even this familiar and homely figure should fail to reassure us, Christ passes on to say, *I go to prepare a place for you*,—to suit a place to you, to provide conditions for you so sweetly and delicately attuned to your individual needs and bents and cravings that each one of you will feel himself to be at home in it, feel too that his home is a heavenly home, whatever the chamber or mansion in which he may dwell; nay, for only thus do we reach the full force of the phrase, in a heaven *of his own*, a place that he may call and know to be his very own—his private heaven, his personal abode.

The mansions are *many*, then, that there may be room for us all, and because there are so many of us; and the places are *prepared* with a view to our personal idiosyncracies, our individual leanings, necessities, preferences. So that the heavenly life is at once a large life, having the whole universe for its domain, and a life of infinite variety, exquisitely adapted to every man's wishes, culture, needs; and this life, at once so various and so large, is—as we have already seen—a pure and holy life, a life of righteousness and service; for all its mansions are parts of a temple and partake its sanctity, a temple in which God is worshipped day and night for ever.

These, surely, are pleasant and helpful thoughts concerning the future life; they lie on the very surface of our Lord's words, and may be picked up by any one who looks at them with a heedful eye. But for the next thought we must go a little beneath the surface, though not much. For, although the word *mansions* will suggest to every reader ideas of solid endurance and stately repose, we may not all know that the word *mansiones*, like the Greek word (*μοναί*) which it translates, means "resting-places," and indicates those "stations" on a great road where Eastern

travellers found, as they still find in similar caravanserais, both repose and refreshment. And that this is the true meaning of the word here, all scholars are agreed. So that when Christ says to us "In my Father's house are many *mansions*," by his very choice of this word He suggests to us that curious combination of the contrasted ideas of rest and progress which enter into all our conceptions of the heavenly life. When, and in proportion as, we enter on that life, we rest from toil, from strife, from care; and this rest, as it denotes an immense advance on our natural or earthly life, so also it predicts advances still to come, and speaks to us of an endless progress into the likeness and fellowship of God our Father as we pass from mansion to mansion of his great Home—resting in each, yet rising from one to another. Advance without restlessness, a journey in which every day will bring us to a fresh station, and every station will be a mansion, and every mansion a home, and every home made glad by our Father's presence and companionship; to be for ever drawing nearer to God, while yet we are for ever enjoying Him—this is the thought suggested to us by the phrase, *In my Father's house are many mansions*.

How much, then, have we learned from Christ; how many essential features of the life everlasting become plain to us as we study his life and words! The future life for which we look is not to be separated by any deep gulf, by any abrupt break, from the life we are now living, or may and ought to live. Our friends who have passed into it are not divided from us; they are under the same roof, though in different chambers or mansions of the same House; they are in the presence of the same Father; they share the same life with us. For we too enter on the life everlasting when we live a life of faith, of righteousness, of love, of service; and this life is at once large and various, at once pure and genial, at once stable and

advancing, at once a constant rest and a constant progress to a deeper rest; it has the whole universe for its theatre; and this theatre is a sacred and august temple, in every chamber of which we may worship the Father of our spirits, rejoice in his presence, and enter into a closer and more inward fellowship with Him.

All this, too, remember, we have learned from a single word of Christ; and there are many such words, all waiting to yield us their store of precious meaning, and to enlarge our conceptions of the life that now is and of that which is to be, the very moment we meditate upon them.

Yes, *the life that now is*, as well as that which is to be. Let us mark that well, and lay the keenest emphasis upon it. For it is "the life everlasting" of which we are speaking, the true life of man in time as well as in eternity. And there are many who, while curiously speculating on the mysteries of the future life, neglect the duties of this present life, and fall short of the peace which might be theirs. Like Judas (Verse 22)—the honest and loyal Judas, not the traitor—they fail to understand how they may share the life eternal in the fleeting hours of time, how they may realize a Divine Presence, and feel that even here and now they are resting in one of the many mansions of the Father's house. Jesus had said (Verse 21) that He would manifest Himself to as many as loved Him and kept his commandments even after He had been taken up and vanished from their sight. Judas quite understood that in these words his Master was promising a special revelation of Himself, a revelation which would carry everlasting life with it, which would raise as many as received it into the very life that dwelt in Him, and draw them into a vital and constant fellowship with his Father. But Judas did not understand how these things could be. And so Christ had to teach him (Verse 23) that men's



power of receiving a Divine revelation depends on their active obedience of Divine commandments; and that active obedience, again, depends on personal and fervent love for the Giver of those commandments. Judas asked: "Lord, what is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto *us*, and *not* unto the world?" And Jesus replied: "If a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." In other words, Christ taught him that the Divine manifestation and fellowship are limited, not by any lack of love and bounty in God, but by the lack of love, and therefore the lack of receptivity, in man. For how can even God Himself give men what men cannot or will not take? But if any man *will* take, God will give. Let him but open the hands of love and obedience, and his hands will instantly be filled. Now, and here, he will see God, and in God his Father, and by that vision be raised into the life everlasting. And, as if to impress this thought upon us, our Lord uses in Verse 23 the very word He had already used in Verse 2; and as there He had spoken of the many mansions in his Father's house, so here He says, "If any man love me and keep my word, my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode"—our *mansion*—"with him."

Here, then, and now, we may dwell, we may work and rest, in *one* of the many mansions. Here, and now, we may have our Father always with us. Here, and now, we may enter on the life everlasting, the life of love, of obedience, of service; that large yet various life, that stable yet advancing life, that life of rest and yet of progress, of growth and yet of peace, which is the strength and joy of heaven. For if we know and are sure that, whatever our lot and outward conditions may be, or however they may change, we are always in God's house, and that God

is always with us—loving us because we love Him, ministering to us because we serve Him, blessing us because we worship Him in all we do—we are settled and stablished in a peace which none of the chances and changes of time can disturb; at a single stroke we are freed from the stings of vanity, and the frets of care, and the torments of fear, and the pangs of loss. We are one with God in a growing fellowship, in a growing yet always satisfying peace; and what harm can time and change do to those who are one with the Lord of change and time? what harm can death itself do us when even death is, for us, only a messenger sent to call us to some ampler mansion of the House and Temple in which we already abide, and to conduct us to a place still more exquisitely prepared for us?

S. Cox.

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*THE HISTORICAL CHRIST OF ST. PAUL.*

IV. THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

GALATIANS ii. 9. “James, Cephas, and John, who are held to be pillars.” We have selected this portion of the verse in order to mark the fact that a new apostolic name is here introduced to our notice. We have already heard in this Pauline Gospel of a Cephas, and a James, and have been able to identify the one certainly, and the other probably, with men bearing the same names in our own historical Gospels. Here there is brought before us a third disciple, named John, who is said to have occupied in the primitive Church a position of equal authority with the other two. When we turn to our Gospels we find there also the record of a specially favoured disciple whose name was John. It is interesting to mark the fact, because, if St. Paul had