

*THE MANY MANSIONS AND THE RESTITUTION  
OF ALL THINGS.*

THE interpretations of these two phrases which I am about to advocate have this in common,—that they bring into this life and into the past and the present what has generally been put off into another life and the future.

“In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you” (St. John xiv. 2). It is admitted that the word “mansions” is not a happy rendering of *μοναί*. Etymologically, indeed, it is an exact equivalent; *mansion* means an abiding or abode, as *μονή* does. But it has acquired in common use a different sense from that which it first bore. But what are the *μοναί* or abiding-places in the Father’s house? I think that in all comments on the passage which I have seen or heard it has been assumed that they are the places to be occupied in the future world by the faithful disciples of the Lord. Bishop Westcott in his note on the passage expounds the words as relating to “the future being of the redeemed,” to “future happiness.” The nature of the *μοναί* will depend upon the nature of “my Father’s house.” According to Westcott, this is “the spiritual and eternal antitype of the transitory temple”: “Heaven is where God is seen as our Father.” There are many references to the house of God or of the Father in the New Testament, and none of them obliges us to think of the future life. The physical and human senses of the word *house* are often blended; as in St. Paul’s fine passage, “So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners (*πάροικοι*), but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God (*οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ*), being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom each

several building [or, all the building], fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephes. ii. 19-22). St. Peter uses the image in the same manner, remembering that saying of his Lord of which his name was a witness,—“unto whom coming, a living stone, . . . ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house” (1 Pet. ii. 4, 5). In a passage of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the word rendered “built” is *κατασκευάσας*, it is doubtful whether the writer is thinking of the construction of a material house or of the founding of a human house; but God’s house is to him what it is to St. Paul and St. Peter. “He [Jesus] has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by so much as he that built the house hath more honour than the house. . . . And Moses indeed was faithful in all his [God’s] house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were afterwards to be spoken; but Christ as a son, over his [God’s] house; whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end” (Heb. iii. 3-6). The sacred writers always assume that the Father’s house was the home of themselves and their fellow-believers whilst they were still living on the earth.

Christ went, he tells the Apostles, to prepare a place for them. He “went,” through his death and departure into the unseen world. But he adds “If I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” The most natural sense of these words is, not that the disciples when they severally died should go to Jesus and be with him, but that he would come to them. This return of his began with the Resurrection and was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. Jesus promised that the Spirit should be given: “I will not leave you desolate (or bereaved); I come unto you. Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth

me no more; but ye behold me: because I live, ye shall live also. In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Here *abode* is *μονήν*. This is the only other place in which *μονή* occurs in the New Testament, though *μένω*, abide, is almost the key-word of St. John's spiritual teaching.

The Apostles evidently understood their Master to promise that, when he had gone out of their bodily sight, he would come to them again in spiritual presence, and they would dwell with him and the Father in a spiritual home: and after the day of Pentecost they were accustomed to assume that the promise had been fulfilled, and that they were living as the Father's children with the other members of the Divine Family, looking up to the Divine Son as their head. The "many mansions" are places in this household, occupied by the *οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ*. When Jesus had overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers; and they who believe are now citizens of it.

The phrase "restitution or restoration of all things" occurs in the following passage of St. Peter's address, spoken in explanation of the cure of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple:—"Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you," even Jesus: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began" (Acts iii. 19-21).

The apostolic expectations with regard to the future form a constantly recurring difficulty in the New Testament.

Commentators are apt to assume that when they have adopted the belief that the Apostles expected what did not come to pass the difficulty is disposed of. But that is not so: it remains difficult to know what the expectations were. That difficulty confronts us in this passage. Putting aside what actually occurred in the apostolic age, what are we to suppose that St. Peter meant, and that the author of the Acts understood him to mean? The Apostle seems to assume that, if his hearers turned to God by believing in Jesus as the Christ, the Christ would be sent to them from heaven, and there would be a happy spiritual time; but that the Christ would remain shrouded in heaven "until the times of restoration of all things,"—or, until they, the Jews who heard Peter speaking, should repent. That restoration of all things had been the subject of all the prophets. St. Peter adds presently, that all the prophets had "told of these days," *κατήγγειλαν τὰς ἡμέρας ταύτας*. Again therefore he associates the expected revelation, the blessed time, with those days, with the age in which he and his hearers were living. And it is remarkable that the address closes with the statement that the Christ who was to be sent to the people on their repenting had been already sent to them after his death that they might repent. "Unto you first God, having raised up his Servant, sent him to bless you" (*ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν εὐλογῶντα ὑμᾶς*). In the Divine history, it would appear, Christ had come. To those who through repentance had eyes to see him, he was present, and had brought his blessings with him; but those who still had a veil on their hearts could not see him or enter into those blessings. The restoration of all things was then taking place in the Divine history, and would be actually accomplished in the general recognition of the Christ who had come.

But the restoration of all things, *ἀποκατάστασις πάντων*, cannot be separated from that remarkable saying of our

Lord's, recorded in St. Matthew xvii. After the vision of Moses and Elijah talking with him, Jesus commanded his disciples, "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead. And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come? And he answered and said, Elijah indeed cometh, and shall restore all things (*ἀποκαταστήσει πάντα*): but I say unto you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they listed. . . Then understood the disciples that he spake unto them of John the Baptist" (verses 9-13). And *ἀποκαταστήσει* is the word used in the Septuagint version of Malachi, where the Hebrew is rendered "turn." "Elias shall restore the heart of father towards son, and the heart of a man towards his neighbour" (Malachi iv. 5). The coincidence can hardly be accidental.

It was the establishment of the Messianic kingdom that the prophets and our Lord and St. Peter had in view. The coming of that kingdom would be the putting right of all things. In being the herald of the Messianic kingdom, John the Baptist, that other Elijah, brought in this reconstitution. The essence of the right establishment of all things was the fulfilment of true spiritual relations. To put hearts right was to put all things right. When men saw and confessed the Son of man reigning at the Father's right hand, all would be right with them; family life, social life, would be perfected in the acknowledging of Christ.

When St. Peter spoke, he knew that the Christ was reigning, and he knew that the blessings of his reign were enjoyed by his true spiritual subjects; and he was convinced that for all his countrymen their Messiah was come and all was put right—if only they would turn to him with their hearts and acknowledge him as their Lord.

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