

It is just possible that Krete is the Alasia of the Tel el-Amarna tablets. The prevalent belief at present is that Alasia is Cyprus. This is based partly on the reference of the king of Alasia in one of his letters to 'the working of copper' (*ebis eri*), partly on the fact that in the Golénischeff papyrus the captain of an Egyptian vessel, when leaving Dor for his own country, was carried by contrary winds to Alasia. But the working of copper does not necessarily mean mining; it might refer to the manufacture of bronze objects, which Mr. Evans' excavations show to have been largely carried on in Krete. And St. Paul's voyage in Ac 21¹⁻³ makes it evident that ships could sail direct from Lycia to Phœnicia. Against the identification of Alasia with Cyprus is Gn 10⁴, which distinguishes Elishah or Alasia from Kittim or Cyprus. Classical tradition associated Krete and Lycia together, and it is therefore noteworthy that one of the Tel el-Amarna letters describes the Lukki or Lycians as having made a raid on the coast of the Delta along with subjects of the king of Alasia whose vassals the Pharaoh considers

them to be. The statement in another letter that the kings of the Hittites and of Shinar (Sankhara) had intrigued with the king of Alasia would be quite as explicable of Lycia as of Cyprus, like the mention of Kinakh[khi] or Canaan, which also occurs.

A connexion has been suggested between Alasia and the title of 'Alasiote,' which is given to Resheph-Apollo in a bilingual Phœnician and Cypriote inscription (Tamassos II.). But the first letter is doubtful in both the Phœnician and Cypriote texts, and the fact that the name is written אֱלִיָּוִת(?) in the Phœnician text excludes Alasia or Elishah altogether. I would rather propose to see in Alasia the 'Ἀλῆιον πεδίον' of Homer (*Il.* vi. 201), where the Lycian king Bellerophon is said to have wandered. 'Ἀλῆιον' presupposes an original 'Ἀλάσιον.'¹

¹ I find it difficult not to believe that 'Ἀλάσιον, like Alabanda, Hali-karnassos, and the Kretan Phalanna, is connected with the Karian *ala*, 'horse,' when we remember the close connexion that existed between Bellerophon (who was also called Hippo-noos) and the horse.

The Father's House.

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'In My Father's house are many mansions.'—John xiv. 2.

As I intend taking these words in a wider sense than the ordinary one, I would like to make it plain at the outset that I do not exclude the ordinary one,—far less contradict it. I know how dear the common interpretation is to many, bound up as it is with the teaching of bygone instructors, and the scenes and the sayings of Christian deathbeds. And, therefore, I would wish you to understand that in bringing before you anything that is new, I am not asking you to part with anything that is old—the old comfort, the old sweetness, the old spell. If it pleases you to believe that the Father's house means heaven, and the many mansions the varieties of accommodation, employment, and blessedness, which heaven provides, believe it still. The thought is true in itself. And it has a place, too, in the meaning of the text. Only I have sometimes had

the feeling that the idea is a broader one. What if the Father's house should be looked at as something wider even than heaven,—heaven I mean in the material and local sense in which we usually employ the expression: What if it should enclose both heaven and earth, throwing its ample roof over each, and so making of twain one.

This is quite consistent with the context. For observe how the words come in. The disciples had just awakened to the truth that Christ was to leave them. And they were filled with sorrow on account of it. He was going, they thought, to a different sphere. He was removing, they imagined, to a distant bourne. Henceforth they would be cut off from Him, and He from them, by the wide deep gulf that divides between the known and the unknown, the seen and the unseen, the temporal and eternal. 'Nay,' says the Saviour (according

to the view we are taking); 'ye do err. Ye do err if you think of a different sphere. Ye do err if you think of a distant bourne. I am only passing from one chamber to another, in the same residence,—the same canopy above us, the same walls around us. In My Father's house are many mansions. Tarry here, among the mansions it provides for you on earth, while I go yonder to the mansions it reserves for Me in heaven, to prepare a place for you in the meantime, and ask you to follow Me hereafter. No, I shall not be far off from you,—in another existence, in another home. Your home and My home are one, only our posts, our stations, our mansions, are for the time being separate. Soon even these will be blended together, and ye shall be for ever with each other and for ever with Me.'

Cannot you fancy Christ implying some such conception as this in using the words of the text? It would add to the impressiveness of the saying, if we suppose (what is not so unlikely) that while speaking He looked out through the lattice, and pointed to the blue midnight sky, with its glittering assemblage of worlds, each in its own order, each in its own place. 'Many apartments,' He might say, 'but one dwelling-place,—the one abode of the one Creator,—the one palace of the one King,—My Father's house.'

What I want to develop from the text, then, is the thought of the breadth and expansiveness of the kingdom of God, not of its shelter and service on earth merely, and not of its shelter and service in heaven merely, but the shelter and service that are common to both. The house of God may be looked at in various aspects. The house of God may be treated from various standpoints. But whatever be the aspect, and whatever be the standpoint, the house of God is marked by one quality—room. It has a place for every sort of nature, every mode of work, every kind of gift, and every stage of progress. Let us beware of ever thinking otherwise. Else we may limit God's purpose, interfere with His ends, mistake the meaning and the claims of His kingdom, by declaring those to be outside of His house we should have been careful to keep in. That, then, is the thought I would like to bring before you. I take the Father's house to be the sphere of the Father's presence, the Father's favour, and the Father's care, which you may look at sometimes on its earthly side, and sometimes on its heavenly,

but whose characteristic—take it on which side you will—is inclusiveness, amplitude, room. And room whether we speak of its provisions and arrangements here, or its provisions and arrangements yonder.

1. We test the Father's house then first by the *space* it includes. We look at it topographically. And we say that, considered, to begin with, as the Divine residence,—the dwelling-place of God's Son, the habitation of His Spirit,—the Father's house is a house of many mansions. There may be a difference between the earth and the stars. There may be a difference between the stars and the heaven of heavens beyond them. But it is a difference that is less than the connexion, when we think that round earth and stars and heavens alike there is a band that draws all into unity,—even the presence and the presidency of one and the self-same Sovereign,—one and the self-same God.

And it is good to remember and realize this. There are times when the universe oppresses us—its vastness, its solitude, its callous and un pitying indifference. Perhaps some of you recollect how the feeling finds expression in the words of a great German writer. 'I dreamed,' he says, 'and this was the dream I dreamt. I went through the worlds. I mounted to the suns. I flew with the galaxies through the wastes of heaven. And I cried, "Oh, God, where art Thou?" There was no reply. I descended into the abyss, as far as being casts its shadow. And I cried again, "Tell me, where art Thou?" But I heard only the everlasting storm, which no hand guided. I saw only the gleaming rainbow which no hand hung. And when I looked up to the immeasurable space for the Divine eye, there was only an empty black eye socket. I was an orphan, alone with the universe, alone with myself.' He attained to a truer standpoint. He came to a better mind. He awoke from his morbid visions to the healthy consciousness of one who could say, 'O God, Thou hast searched me, and known me! Whither shall I go from Thy presence? Whither shall I flee from Thy Spirit? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shalt Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand uphold me.' Better still, he realized at the same time, that the eye that looked down on him was

the eye of an infinite pity, the hand that upheld him was the hand of an infinite love.

So we come back to the thought we were speaking of. What is the universe to the Christian? How should he look at it? How should he think of it? We know what the universe is to some. It is a storehouse of force, with none to direct the force. It is an assemblage of wheels with none to guide the wheels. Or it is a prison with its bondage. Or it is a mystery with its terrors. But what is it to the Christian? It is the Father's house. From base to topstone, it is the building that He has made. From outmost porch to inmost recess, it is the sanctuary that He fills. The distance between earth and heaven is the distance between footstool and throne. 'Is not earth My footstool,' it is said, 'and heaven My throne?' And that distance cannot be great if each is appropriated by the same occupant, and if each is covered by the same robe. Or to turn to the figure of the text, the distance between earth and heaven is the distance between one suite of rooms and another. That distance cannot be great if each is set apart for the same inmates, and each is sheltered by the same roof. There is comfort as I say in the thought. It gives a softened aspect to removal, a kindlier character to death, when we realize that the change involved in it is not a change from the house to the outside void, but a change within the house itself, from a lower mansion to a higher. Hence the words of the hymn—

Come, let us join our friends above,
That have obtained the prize,
And, on the eagle-wings of love,
To joy celestial rise.
Let all the saints terrestrial sing
With those to glory gone;
For all the servants of the King,
In earth and heaven, are one.

One family, we dwell in Him,
One Church, above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.
One army of the living God,
To His command we bow;
Part of His host hath crossed the flood,
And part is crossing now.

2. But again we may test the Father's house not only by the space it includes, but by the *characters* it contains. We may look at it not only topographically but socially. And we say it is a

house of many mansions, with room for all types of temperament—all kinds of service. Even in an earthly household, there are different mansions—that is, if the life of it be natural, and the heads of it be wise.

There is a mansion for the active member, whose line lies in minding the things of the house. There is a mansion for the studious member, whose happiness consists in sitting in the corner with a book. There is a mansion for the grown-up lad, who can sympathise with his father in his interests, and help his father in his work. There is a mansion, and a very royal one, for the little child, who rules the household with his baby wishes, sways the circle with his baby hand.

And yet, what men recognize and allow for in the family, they are sometimes slow to discover and lay account with in the household and the Church of God. 'Lord, bid my sister that she come and help me.' So spoke Martha about Mary, the busy jealous of the contemplative. 'Why was not this ointment sold for so much and given to the poor?' So spoke the disciples—the prosaic envious of the poetic; the sticklers for utility envious of the lovers of beauty. There may be something of the self-same intolerance still. With what impatience, and even contempt, do some narrow-minded Christians express themselves as to others less commonplace and matter-of-fact than themselves. 'They are only dreamers of dreams,' they say. 'They are only singers of songs. They are only painters of pictures. They are only devisers of ornament,—taken up with unpractical interests, absorbed in unproductive pursuits. Let them quit their privacy and testify on public platforms. Let them leave their retirement and debate in Church courts. Let them try to raise money. Let them take a turn among the slums. Lord, bid them come and help us, who are doing the real work, effecting the real good.' Is there not an intolerance of this kind? I think I have heard of it. I think I have seen it myself. As if the cause of Christ did not need the dreamers—the men of imagination and of vision, who set us the pattern of our work! As if the cause of Christ did not need the singers—the men of music and of melody, who give us heartening and good cheer at our work! As if the Church of Christ did not need the beauty-lovers—the men of sentiment, susceptibility, and artistic taste, who refine and adorn our work. Let the

practical draw to the practical, if they will. They can best understand the practical. They can most benefit by the practical. But let not the practical look down on the visionaries, if their eye be directed to heaven, if their mind be busy with God. In the Father's house are many mansions. Somewhere among the multitude they will find a niche to occupy, somewhere they will find a circle to bless. He who has kindled the light will assuredly provide the candlestick. He who has imparted the gift will assuredly make scope for the exercise.

3. The next thought is closely akin. We may test the Father's house not only by the space it includes and the characters it contains, but also by the *occupations* it allows for and sanctifies. We pass from the local and the social to the industrial side of God's kingdom. And we say that, considered as a sphere of activity,—to which activity may be brought, in which activity may be carried on,—the Father's house is a place of many mansions.

Some years ago an eminent minister, not of our own Church or country, published a book on *The Kingdom of God*, in which he propounded a bold and sweeping idea. When we speak of the kingdom of God, we limit the thought to what is purely religious. We connect it with the appointments of religious worship, the propagation of religious truth, the transaction of religious service. In fact, we speak of the kingdom of God as being very much the same thing as the Church. This writer took another standpoint. He put forward another interpretation. He struck another note. The kingdom of God, he said, is coextensive with the whole wide field of human activity,—takes in the whole wide area of human energies and human life. The Church and religion proper is only a department of the kingdom,—a great department, it is true, an all-important department, but nothing *more* than a department. There are other departments as well. There is the department of politics. There is the department of literature. There is the department of art. There is the department of science. In all these God's kingdom is apparent. By all these God's kingdom comes. Each shows a different side of His character. Each helps a different portion of His plan. Such is the conception of the writer we speak of. I think he errs in putting religion so distinctly by itself. I think he gives encourage-

ment to the false idea that, independent of religious worship, and independent of religious belief, a good statesman, a good writer, a good tradesman, is a subject of the kingdom of God, fulfilling the kingdom's conditions, qualifying for the kingdom's rewards. I think he should have put religion more definitely in the centre, and classed as subjects of the kingdom, only those who are working from religion as their basis, with religion as their spring. If he had said that the kingdom of God needs religion as its medium,—seeks religion as its end,—and that the religion that it needs and seeks annexes all spheres of life, politics with their questions, literature with its treasures, art with its beauties, science with its discoveries, then the position would have been sound, the lesson true. For religion ought to annex things such as these. And it should be the aim of religious men and women to see that it does annex them. The great rule with regard to all such employments is, not to suspect them, not to draw off from them, not to consign them to the world's occupancy and leave them to the world's care, but to lift them to a higher level and transact them in a holier way, as duties that are fixed by the Father's appointment, carried on in the precincts of the Father's house. For in the Father's house there are many mansions. And the Saviour, who prepares a place for you in the mansions above, has also prepared for you a place in the mansions beneath, where your daily life may be spent, and your daily duty be done, in the love of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.

For every Christian man is a priest, and the work he performs is his sacrifice. Are you offering that work on the altar? That is the question. We hear much in these days about priests. Some imagine that none can be priests save those who have an official religious calling. Others, who acknowledge all Christians to be priests, confine the priesthood to the exercise of directly religious functions,—such as prayer and praise, and the offering of religious vows,—the giving of religious gifts. There is a higher and a nobler view to be taken than that! *All Christians are priests in all acts*, if these acts are done in a religious spirit. You are not only a priest while at Church,—in the worship you render, and in the gifts you present,—you are a priest in your everyday tasks, in the industries you pursue, in the work you turn out. That is, if you lay your industries and your work

on the altar. Why should not you? Why should not the teacher be a priest,—his sacrifice, daily instruction well given? Why should not the scholar be a priest,—his sacrifice, daily lessons well learnt? Why should not the physician be a priest,—his sacrifice, visits punctually made—remedies conscientiously tried? Why should not the salesman be a priest,—his sacrifice, transactions honestly made? Why should not the clerk be a priest,—his sacrifice, figures carefully counted? So, common occupations may be turned to spiritual sacrifice,—daily work be turned to temple worship. And never shall our trade life be purified,—redeemed from the selfishness that besets it,—in which each man thinks only of his own, till society has attained to the principle. A good deal is being said of this selfishness, and the extent to which men of business persuade themselves that the principles of commerce are one thing, and the principles of brotherhood are another. All honour to those who bring the claims of brotherhood to the front, and preach the duty of goodwill and self-sacrifice towards our neighbour. But there is a higher rule even than that of goodwill and self-sacrifice towards our fellows. And that is the priesthood in all things unto God. Once get a hold of this, grasp it, act on it, and men's duty to their brethren is clear, men's duty to their brethren is safe. It will be readily acknowledged. It will be cheerfully done. Well, friends, the point I am making is this, that whatsoever is pure, whatsoever is lovely, whatsoever is fit and fair, in the secular sphere, religion approves and appropriates, so that it is secular no longer, but sacred. In the Father's wide-spreading house there are many mansions, and what is good for a man can never be bad or unsuitable for a Christian and a saint.

Children, a word to you. Do you ever imagine that religion is a dull thing? Do you ever imagine that in entering the Christian fold and assuming the Christian ties, you are parting with innocent pleasures, forfeiting harmless amusement? Let no one persuade you of *that*. Do you know a text which says, 'The streets of the city shall be full of boys and of girls playing in the streets thereof?' What city? The city and kingdom we are speaking of—the city and kingdom of God. According to the thought of the prophet, the city and kingdom of God has room and space for diversion. Ay, and diversion is nowhere so hearty,

diversion is nowhere so safe, as when it is carried on within the city of God. I believe that among the many mansions of the Father's house, the children may find mansions to play in, and that in their pleasures as well as their task-work, they too may be priests unto God. This is true with regard to the mansions below. And what of the mansions above? Does not Christ prepare *these*, so that whatever changes death brings to the little children, it will leave to them their guileless interests, retain for them their simple joys. What provisions will be made for these interests, what channels will be opened for these joys, we do not know, and we cannot tell. But all will be very familiar. All will be very home-like. Leave the happiness of the little children in heaven with Him who, when on earth, said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' He will see to their comfort. He will care for their welfare. He will arrange for their spheres,—a lot for themselves at the end of the days. In the fold above there is room enough and to spare. In the Father's house are many mansions. We may leave them in the tracts of immensity with confidence, assured that they are not waifs, assured that they are not strays,—left roaming in bewilderment and solitude, but each with their own post and each with their own room, while the self-same Father is over all.

We might pursue the thought. We might test the Father's house not only by the *space* it includes, by the *characters* it contains, and the *occupations* it allows for and sanctifies, we might test it by the differences of *doctrine and of worship it shelters*. We pass at this point from the local, social, and industrial sides to its ceremonial and theological side. And we say, that considered as a spiritual temple erected for spiritual ends and inhabited by a spiritual people, the Father's house is a house of many mansions. Most certainly, it has mansions for all who, calling Jesus Lord, keep the words which He says, looking for the mercy of God unto eternal life. The great, the overwhelming majority of these are undoubtedly in connexion with our Christian organizations. But I do not—I dare not—unchristianize some who are still without,—souls here and there, who hold the Christian position and conform to the Christian spirit, but are not yet within the visible Christian fold. Cannot we claim the Master's authority in so saying? When

the disciples forbade one who was doing Christ's work, in his own department, on his own road,—on the ground that he followed not with them,—Christ said, 'Let him alone. None that does miracles as *he* does, can speak lightly of Me.' It is a lesson that is needed still. Christianity is wider than the Churches. And there are those here and there who, though not within the Christian society, may, notwithstanding, be within the Father's house.

And if Christianity is broader than the Church as a whole, still more must we hold it to be broader than the Churches in particular,—this one or that one, as our lot may appoint us. Orthodoxy, so-called, may be less than religion. Purity of worship, so-called, may be less than sincerity of life. There is a standing in the Father's acceptance,—there is a place in the Father's heart, for some who in faith are far from ourselves. We may rule them forth of the bounds of our ecclesiastical charity, we cannot rule them beyond the shelter and the safety, the privileges and provisions of the Father's house. I had a talk some time ago with a minister of a foreign Church. As we walked together on the hills, we discussed the points that distinguished us, and amongst others, discussed the meaning and the bearing of the sacraments. We went over these points in detail, the higher view that he held, the intermediate view that I held, the lower view that others held, yet all of them perfectly compatible with loyalty to the Saviour's person, fidelity to the Saviour's work—I remember how the conversation finished. Slackening his pace, and speaking slowly, in such broken English as he could command, my friend ended thus: 'Yes,—Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli,—they had each their own way of thinking, they had each their own way of speaking. But I have read that in the Father's house there are many mansions—space for all. And if they have each their separate room, they are all beneath the same roof.'

True, I do not depreciate sound doctrine. Let us prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. But we see only through a glass darkly. We know but in part. Things are not quite so plain

and so sharp-cut as some people would fain have us think. Differences in doctrine there are, and differences of doctrine there will be till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, to the measure of the fulness of the stature of Christ. It is well that differences in doctrine do not affect identity in acceptance for the Father's house in a house of many mansions.

What we are to remember as to doctrine, we should remember as to worship. We are not to confine God's spirit to any particular form of worship, or say 'this or that is alone compatible with the grace and the gravity of the Father's house.' It is not too much to say that all have their separate fitness,—meet their own type of character, teach their own type of truth,—none has a monopoly of sainthood. Saints have been nurtured, and saints have been satisfied, through the characteristics and contributions of each. Puritanism with its simplicity, Anglicanism with its stateliness, Presbyterianism with its order, Evangelism with its fervours,—perhaps the kingdom has been better of them all. Men may find fault with one or another as they will. What they repudiate God receives. 'For in the Father's house are many mansions.' Thus we have spoken of the house of God, regarding it in different aspects, contemplating it on different sides. We have spoken of it locally, socially, industrially, and devotionally, and in each case we have found that it is a house having many mansions.

But are *you* in the Father's house? You may be in it locally. But are you in it spiritually? That is the main question. What use is there in speaking of the width of it, what use is there in speaking of the provisions of it, if it is all as a tale that is told,—not a fact that is felt and experienced. 'Behold I set before you an open door.' Will you be satisfied with an examination through the aperture? Or will you cross the threshold and go in? May Christ give us each a place among the mansions below, that in His own good time we may see Him and serve Him in the mansions above!