

faith. The profound reality which underlies these homely words, is life with God, admission to the perfect fellowship of God. That is the substance under all the fair names which have been put upon the future world. That is heaven, immortality, blessedness, glory and life eternal. These words mean at the very heart, eternal fellowship and friendship with God. To know God as a Father, to see Him, to be with Him as children, to stand in the light and power of His love, to have that love flowing into our being, as the sap of a vine flows into its branches, and changing us, and making us at every change more like Himself, and thereby more fruitful in love, so that at last love shall flow back in worship and service to God—that is the grand purpose which Christ came to work out: that is perfect Christian life, and, perfectly realised, it is heaven.

## II.

The thread which runs through all the Lord's words about the life of heaven, and through the words especially He addressed to His disciples at the close, is this relation between the Father and His human child. Heaven itself is the Father's house, the place from which the Son Himself has come, to which He is going back; into which He is to gather all His brethren at last; on whose family records are inscribed their names; a home that is a kingdom as well, prepared from the foundation of the world, which the children are to inherit, in which they are to share the joys of the Father and receive rewards from His hand, and where they are to be one with the Father and the Son for ever, even as the Father and the Son themselves are one.

In this way, the most familiar symbol of the future life in our Lord's teaching comes to be the earthly home. And perhaps it is this fact which has narrowed and belittled for so many, the conception they have formed of heaven. They transfer the ideal of the earthly home

into the future. It is that, or sometimes something even less than that, they wish realised. At any rate, that or something like that, was the error into which the first disciples fell when the great words fell on their ears: "In My Father's house are many mansions." To them up till that moment, it had been dear old Judea alone which was the Father's house.

All their affections to Christ had grown up beside its lakes and mountains, within its homes and villages. And when He spoke to them of going away, it seemed as if not only the light was going out of their dwellings, but as if God's house was to be left desolate. Abraham, David, and Isaiah had added glory to the house of God, the beloved land of their birth. The songs of psalmists and the teaching of prophets and the wonderful manifestations of providence had made Jerusalem the dwelling-place of God and the joy of the whole earth. And it had been the fond hope of those simple men that their Master had come to add to that glory and make the house more joyful still.

Our Lord carried their thoughts up out of that narrowness, up into the heavenly place to which He Himself was going. He elevated and expanded their conception of the Divine dwelling-place; took them far up out of the little valley in which their views had become straitened, and gave them a vision such as Moses had from Pisgah. "In My Father's house are many mansions." Not this scene alone, fair though it be, this Palestine, this dear land of our birth, this loved home, this circle of attached friends, this life-long surrounding, not this, nor any similar centre, nor any outward sphere is what our Lord intends when He says "My Father's house." In these words He opens the door of the unseen universe and bids His disciples gaze into the unsounded depths, the boundless reaches, the manifold fulness, the unending variety of spheres which His Father fills, and which have new openings and expanses