



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### **Usage guidelines**

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### **About Google Book Search**

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

THE HEAVENLY VISION.

MOSES AND BALAAM.

GRAHAM.

!

---





# THE HEAVENLY VISION:

MOSES AND BALAAM:

SERMONS

PREACHED IN UNION UNITED PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH, BROUGHTY-FERRY, ON SABBATH,  
THE 2nd FEBRUARY, 1879,

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM GRAHAM, D.D.,

LIVERPOOL.



LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON.

EDINBURGH: WILLIAM OLIPHANT & CO.

1879.

100. cc. 76



*PREFATORY NOTE.*

---

THESE Sermons were preached on the occasion of the death of my wife in February last, and at that time were found useful. They were at first intended only for private circulation, but are now published at the desire of one in whose opinion I have great confidence. May the Lord bless them to others, as they have been blessed to us!

JAMES GRAHAM.

BROUGHTY-FERRY,

*May 1, 1879.*





## THE HEAVENLY VISION.

---

“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”—REV. VII. 13-17.

THIS vision of the Apostle John is a window open in heaven, sending down an ineffable light and cheer on this dim and sorrowful world. The traveller in Switzerland stands on the platform at Berne, and, as the sun sets behind the mountains, and the roar of the river in the valley is heard below, his eye is fixed and enraptured by the vision of the far-off Bernese

Oberland, of peak after peak surging in glorious multitude, and lifting up the reddening white crests of their waves to catch the last rays of the sun. In the darkening of all around, in the still, wearied twilight, these mighty forms throw their grandeur and calm in upon the throbbing heart and the depressed soul. And yet there was a time when these came out of great tribulation—out of the wild upheaval of waste waters and a fiery chaos. See, also, that handful of sand and flint and clay. Throw it into the fire heated seven times, fuse it; and poured, molten and pure, out of the great tribulation, come the massive and gleaming sheets of plate-glass, through which landscapes of beauty and sublimity may be seen. Yonder, too, is a paper-mill, and into its processes the most foul and tattered pieces of cloth are thrown. They are torn to shreds, washed, woven, till, lo! from the rags of the pauper come the pages on which a queen may write her letters of State.

What these are in earthly things, the great vision of John is in spiritual and heavenly realities. Many things might well move us to enter on this theme—the passing away of years; the burden of our shortening days; the deeper burdens of our immortal lives; but, at this hour, *the unexpected and desolating bereavement that darkens your minister's home and casts its*

gloom over this congregation, calls us to seek its living fountains of waters, and its assurance of the time when God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

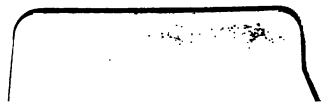
### I. THE VISION ; AND

### II. THE LESSONS OF THE VISION.

I. THE VISION.—It is twofold as to what the glorified are led out of, and what they are led into.

(1.) *The Vision of what they are led out of.*—“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Here we remark the two things they leave behind, the great tribulation, and the sins, which blackened the robes. Both of these are indeed at root one, for tribulation and sin are branches of the same root, fruit of the same tree of ungodliness and unrighteousness.

Look at the tribulation first—the shadow deep and universal which sin casts before and around. Take the outermost circle of it—bodily trial. Even to the youngest and healthiest it is a settled and great tribulation to know that strength will one day give way, and we shall utterly perish from the sweet light of new mornings, and the grave will be the cradle of our crumbling dust. A world however bright, yet



many aspects, all of sadness, which the great tribulation time after time puts on? But what are these, after all, when set against the tribulation, greater far, of sin that has troubled to the depths and utterly marred the sweetness and calm of life? Were the conscience and the spirit filled with all the fulness of God, men would glory in all these tribulations; but these central nerves of our highest life have their own troubles of guilt and sin which embitter and make more heavy all the others. For it is the heavy laden conscience, and the heart aching with the want of the love and liberty of God, which crown the great tribulation.

Now let us turn and shortly look with John at the vision that changes all. "These are they which came out of great tribulation; and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The Redemption is complete; the old Egyptian deliverance is lifted up and transfigured in the everlasting Christian Redemption. They are out of the slavery and shame of their trouble and degradation. The Red Sea and the Desert are far behind, and away up by the fountains of the great hills of heaven they sing with voices of joy, and look around with eyes undimmed. They have come *out* of the great tribulation. It was great in intensity; but now the last pang

is felt and forgotten: it was great in duration, but it is all gone, and shall never come again. They are out of it, clear and far out.

The word "tribulation" marks an outward sorrow. It is the threshing of the wheat, but now the threshing-floor is left, and only the chaff is there; the finest of the wheat is garnered on high for the nurture and strength of immortal souls. It is the Lord, the Redeemer, who has brought them out. He went before—the breaker up of their way—and the path of sorrow, no matter where it leads, is brightened because He Himself was in it; and still He is beside the flock as it passes through it. Never for a moment has His voice been silent even when no light might be seen. "I will lead the blind by a way they know not, and in paths they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." Nay, more than this:—He often sends the great tribulation before Him to prepare a way for His footsteps in the great salvation. The darkness of earthly sorrow, whether in our path among men or in the deeper passages of the way our soul takes before God, makes us look away from the earth to the hills, to the God of our help and healing. The *pilgrimage* through the great tribulation is

meant also by our Leader to bring us to His own cross and redemption ; and so they have also "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Stains of sin are inward, more intense and pervading than stains of sorrow, and are therefore the greatest tribulation. This is, indeed, the deep pit and the miry clay. The robe, the being is darkened all through, and every fibre and every thread must be cleansed. The dark stain of guilt, the darker, ingrained stain of depravity—from these they have washed their robes, their very selves. But, oh, the certainty and the fulness ! It is in the blood of the Lamb. The incarnate God is their sacrifice and Redeemer. The innermost depth of God's very life is thrown open, and what new omnipotent sufferings, victories, resources, all children of holy love, come forth ! That holy love unto death makes clear and glorious the justice and holiness, as well as the tenderness, of God, while it takes away the sin of the world. The blood of the Lamb, that meets the eye of faith on the cross, carries up the conscience and heart into the divine life of love that laid itself down for us, and will fill us yet with all its fulness. And mark how the Lamb leads, and, infinitely more than that, lays down His life for them. "They come out."



They are not dragged, but drawn out by the omnipotence of the love and death divine. For led out they are by a guidance as sure and sweet as that which guides them at last far up to the fountains of life. It is they themselves also who wash their robes. Oh! the eagerness, the humility, the trembling, and trust with which, led by His Spirit, they take of the fountain open for sin and uncleanness, and day by day receive its divine cleansing.

(2.) Pass we now from the past to the present state of the glorified ones—from what they have come out of, to what they have come into. And first, they are at rest and safe. They have come out with weary step, and now, the desert passed, they pitch their tent everlastingly before the throne. The last halting step has been taken, and their feet stand fast—"they are before the throne." Feet aforesaid sinking in the deep pit and miry clay; feet moving wearily in paths of loneliness and toil, by deathbeds to graves, at last through the valley and shadow of death—they rest at last. Lo! the throne high and lifted up; and they are under its refuge shadow, and stand within its glory. Their guilt is all over; they had access in the journey unto the grace wherein they stood; now they have reached its height of glory and there stand; *not only out of the great tribulation, but high*

up, ennobled subjects evermore who once were degraded rebels.

Still more : "They serve him day and night in his temple." White-robed priests are they who offer up, as everlasting sacrifice of gratitude, their pure burning hearts of praise and joy. The foul ragged prodigals of want and sin are now holy, gloriously arrayed priests in the temple. On earth, as the body was borne out, amidst blackness of grief, to the deep, dark grave, they themselves walked in white robes of joy as they passed upwards in the heavenly temple to the innermost shrine. And they shall forever wear the very robes they have washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, and in them serve Him day and night.

But there is here more than the palace with the throne, more than the temple with the service ; there is the home and the circling children. "He that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them." It is good to be subjects ; better to be servants ; best of all to be sons. Now is the great covenant promise at last fulfilled :—"I will dwell among you, and walk among you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord." Theirs is a divine home of plenty. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them." "Bring forth the fatted calf, and also the finest wheat of God," is heard on high.

Christ's great sacrifice is their everlasting nourishment with its sweetness of dear pardon and strength of divine fulness. Christ's own life passed into theirs is, in their enlarging blessedness, the life of their life. They are, indeed, and, at last, in their Father's house, and there is bread enough and to spare. Now they begin to be merry, and the music and dancing last evermore. "For they shall hunger no more." Oh, the change from the husks which the swine did eat to the food of angels and the bread of God Himself! And it is a home of peace and progress. Instead of scorching steps of tribulation and sin, "the sun shall not light on them, nor any heat;" and, instead of wandering amidst blinding sand-drifts, "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall lead them to living fountains of waters." Of old the Good Shepherd made them to lie down in green pastures; He led them beside the still waters. These were the far-off streams, but now they have reached the well-head of all; they have come to living waters of life; and more than waters, to fountains.

What a pathetic and ennobling summary of life is the old Eastern saying, "In the morning, mountains; in the evening, fountains"! And here it is in its highest fulfilment. Think of *these spirits* as now far up in the heights of

glory! They lie down and drink deep of the very innermost fountain where life, God's life, pours itself, fresh and full, into their very being. This is more than even sonship; it is the life divine that breathes and beats beneath sonship. This is more than service; this makes the heart burn in sacrifice, and the lips break forth in song. This is more than subjection; this elevates not only before, but to the throne of God. It is life, fountain life, the well of life springing up in them from the divine fountain into everlasting life. Now, indeed, they comprehend with all saints the length and the breadth, the depth and the height; now they know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, and are filled with all the fulness of God.

Still even yonder the great tribulation is not all forgotten. Hark, one note more—one ray, the tenderest of the heavenly vision, one bar, the sweetest of the heavenly music! It reminds us of perhaps the noblest passage in Handel, the "Dead March" in "Saul." When the music surges free and escapes all gloom in the great burst of joy after the funeral wail, then at its highest there comes in a tremulous minor strain which makes the glorious vision of the swelling triumph more heroic and exultant as we see it through tears. Another touch could not be added to the vision;

but it can be made more thrilling and pathetic by a hint of the great tribulation that is gone, by flashing it for a moment and unexpectedly through the dimming tears once so sad and familiar; and that touch is given in the words which close this vision, which beginning with tribulation ends with tears, but the more leaves the whole space between calm and undimmed. The mighty hand that bore away their sins, and led them in royal majesty, touches them with more than a mother's yearning. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Tribulation gone from their steps, sin washed out of their hearts, now all the fountains of their tears are dried up. Truly the right hand of the Lord hath done valiantly in its mighty deeds of salvation; but this its last touch of ineffable pity moves us to the uttermost with the tenderness as well as the omnipotence and infinitude of love divine.

Meanwhile to us, as we look up to that vision, is given the sweet pain of noble tears, and we feel rising within us the longing desire of the great Dreamer, who in his vision followed the Pilgrims from the City of Destruction to the City of the New Jerusalem, till he saw them "go in at the gate. And after that they shut up the gates; which, when I had seen, I wished *myself among them.*"

## II. THE LESSONS OF THE VISION.

(1.) Here is the *true view of our life*. It is not something vain and superficial, nor is it, on the other hand, something gloomy and equally superficial. It has, indeed, its fleeting brightness and shadows, but it is in itself serious, and has within it elements of nobility, peace, and joy. It has its great tribulations and its deep stains, but these lie not in the original charter of our existence, but have come in from another source. "An enemy hath done this."

(2.) Again, we mark here a *divine purpose and plan* in our life. Fronting the dark difficulties of our life there open up higher and undiscovered things in the heart and wisdom of our God. The deep of our sinful hearts calls, and not in vain, to the deep of His holy love; and now God, God incarnate on the cross, on the mediatorial throne, by His indwelling in the heart, follows us step by step in our great tribulation, cleanses us in His own blood, and lifts us, in the omnipotence of His redeeming and renewing love, back to Himself. This spans and brightens our earth with a glorious immutable heaven. You know Raphael's last picture—"The Transfiguration." On the mount Christ is transfigured, and Moses and Elijah and the three disciples are lost and overshadowed in the

glory. But at the foot of the mount are the demoniac boy, his tormented look contrasting with the enraptured face of Christ ; the agonised father ; the helpless apostles. One feeling breathes below, "It is not good to be here;" and it is met by that above, "It is good to be here." Our lives contain both parts of the picture in their one compact frame ; but at the presence of the Great Healer the lower troubled part shall feel the touch of His hand, and gradually pass into the calmness of everlasting transfiguration.

(3.) This vision is also a *vindication*, as well as a glorifying, of our God's ways. God, though now unknown to us for the most part, leads and teaches us, has come down to our own nature and borne away our sins ; and putting our steps in His footprints, makes our redeemed life keep pace with and reach towards His life. What a revelation ! what a transfiguration before our eyes ! God and the Lamb ! God, the infinite, without us in all worlds, within us in creative energy ! God the Lamb, with an infinite holy tenderness, swathing power, and all-quickenng salvation ! God with His grasp upon infinity and eternity ! God also with His touch upon the most sinful, sorrowful, shrinking movements of our little lives ! "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity ?" "Behold *what manner* of love the Father hath bestowed

upon us that we should be called the sons of God!"

(4.) One solemn lesson given also by this glorious sight is *in awful but salutary contrast*. What if through our sinful and mad choice we miss the blessed use of all our earthly tribulation and keep deepening within us the dark burning stains of guilt and sin! Surely more than even the terrors of the Lord, the joy of the Lord, and entrance into it, should persuade men. Yonder is the eternity of salvation, but now is its day of offer, decision, acceptance, possession. Take hold now of the hand that will lead out of the great tribulation. Seek that He Himself would cleanse you in His own blood from all your sin. He that sitteth on the throne cries in tones of authority and yearning, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but would rather that he turned unto me and lived. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? saith the Lord God of Hosts."

(5.) The visions reveals also *the bond of union between earth and heaven*. Here below some come out of great tribulation, and wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. Yonder others stand, triumphant, untroubled. Pale faces, once bathed in tears, are now radiant with smiles of joy. Above, the



crowding entry and marshalling of victors with high shout and sweetest song; below, battle all along the line with many a wound, deep-felt by the fainting, and many a cry going up from the struggling to the Lord of Hosts, the Captain of salvation. But both make one army, one church, one redeemed humanity, one divine brotherhood. One tide of highest life lifts up the great waves of joy in the heart of the sunlit sea, as well as dashes stormfully and in moans against the rocks of earth.

(6.) We have also a *solace amidst the shadows of our changing lives*. The streams of our passing years shrink, and one after another dries up. Like channels where full, glad waters overflowed, nothing is left but the hard, cheerless stones. But in this vision we catch a gleam of the far-off fountains of living waters, and that gleam steadies our faith and sweetens our pains.

(7.) The vision yields an *encouragement to brave and constant work*, for Christ shines from the throne into our hearts. They come not out solitary from the tribulation, nor alone wash their robes; they come out in bands, they wash their robes with mutual cheer and help. The more, then, let us be Christ's hands, taking hold of the fallen and fainting, and helping them as they come out. The more let us be Christ's *voices*, crying to the guilty and the anxious,

“Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!” In the last day Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Why should not we share more of that highest, dearest throne of His, and sit down evermore amidst the satisfaction of having led and taught others whom, as we look around, we see gazing indeed on the face of the Saviour, but glancing gratefully to us as their helpers also.

(8.) And certainly this vision is *a crowning joy to the bereaved*. A great tribulation has brought me at this time to your minister's desolate manse, and to the mourning congregation. It is one that the patriarch Jacob came out of long ago; and the story of the Broughty-Ferry home was gone over near Bethlehem, on the way towards Ephrath. There it was said to another beloved wife, and of the same name, Rachel, “Fear not, thou shalt have this son also;” but what followed was common also to both: “And it came to pass as her soul was in departing (for she died) that she called his name Benoni, the son of my sorrow.” I think I see the dying mother looking at the little child and crying, “Oh, the pain, the leaving of thee and all I love, my ‘sorrow!’” But however the father might share her grief, yet calm, and cheered by the God who not long ago had blessed him at Peniel, again he wrestled and prevailed, and he

11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65  
66  
67  
68  
69  
70  
71  
72  
73  
74  
75  
76  
77  
78  
79  
80  
81  
82  
83  
84  
85  
86  
87  
88  
89  
90  
91  
92  
93  
94  
95  
96  
97  
98  
99  
100

called him "Benjamin, the son of my right hand." We know how he loved him for the sake of her who died in bearing him, saying on another day of grief, "Will ye take Benjamin also?" and how, as the years went on, he was strengthened by feeling that as a very right hand Benjamin had become to him. We know also that in the great crises of the Jewish nation Benjamin was one of the bravest, and certainly the most martial of the tribes, guarding the narrow mountain passes. And looking farther down, strange to say, it is to the dying Rachel that we owe the mighty Benjamin of the New Testament, the great Paul. Think of his brave cry of victory as life's battle was ending: "I am now ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; I have kept the faith." Contrast this last word of Paul with that of Rachel. Surely our Benonis, sons of our sorrow, grow at last, and in ways we little dreamed, into Benjamins, sons of our right hand; and so we come out of great tribulation into marvellous triumph.

Many years after that dark day—more than forty years—"Israel," too, "must die." And he said to Joseph, Rachel's other son:—"God Almighty appeared to me at Luz, in the land of *Canaan*, and blessed me." And then in a

moment the far-off grief and grave rose up clear and monumental in his dream of death, and he adds:—"And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan, in the way when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath; and I buried her in the way of Ephrath: the same is Bethlehem." It is not many months since I stood beside that very spot where Rachel lies alone, away from the Machpelah gathering-place of the Patriarchs and their wives. I could not help thinking, as I stood beside the lonely spot, It was well for her to sleep apart, as certainly in Jacob's heart she had a place all her own.

It was only the other day I stood with some of you at the grave of her so many miss and mourn at this hour. You know how unexpectedly she was called away last Sabbath. My brother might say, in the sad literalness of the Prophet Ezekiel, "So I spake unto the people in the morning, and at even my wife died." She suffered, indeed, greatly for a day or two, but at last the suffering abated. This was because tribulation had well nigh ceased, and she was getting near to the other end of the valley of the shadow of death. Her words on her deathbed were few, and, like herself, they were, in the main, words that gave her simple consent, her last homely "Amen" to the great and

precious promises as they were repeated for her comfort. With her usual unwillingness to pain others, especially her dearest, she never said she was dying, but she spoke in answer to questions as to where her deepest trust was placed, in such a way as to show that death brought with it no fear. It was her common every-day "Oh, yes," but uttered now after immeasurable words of hope and assurance. "You are looking to Jesus," it was said to her. "Oh, yes," was the childlike reply. "The blood of Christ Jesus cleanseth from all sin." Again the firm, affecting "Oh, yes." Then her favourite hymn, "Jesus, lover of my soul," was repeated by her dear husband; and she followed him line by line through the first stanza, repeating the words after him, but when the verse was ended, she herself eagerly took up the second, saying,—

"Other refuge have I none,  
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

It was well with her. She died as she had lived, deeply restful and unostentatious, only just in departing out of the weakness and in the leaving of all, her face lit up with a strange light of transfiguration, as of one who had suddenly met the welcome of another face. As of old, One came over the stormy and dark waves *with footsteps of help and voice of cheer*, "It is

I, be not afraid." Then there was a great calm, and receiving Him as never before, straightway she went to the other side. I shall not dwell on what she was in herself, gentle, unpretending, firm with unswerving conscience, with true heart, with a will from early years yielded to Christ and to God, and their service. She had a desire to be useful, rather than seem useful; her voice was not heard in the streets; the law of kindness was in her mouth, and her husband safely trusted in her. In one word, simply but unmistakeably she loved Christ and Christ's cause. What she was as a daughter, an only daughter, her father and mother feel most sadly and tenderly to-day. She was a soothing counsellor, modest, loving, faithful in every duty of a daughter, and she was more a daughter the longer she was a wife. She knew how to do kindnesses which parents crave to receive, but care not to ask, and so she breathed into their hearts one of the sweetest joys of our human life—that which comes from grown-up children, crowning their parents' advancing years with tokens of deepening reverence and gratitude; and especially was her presence a blessing to them at this time, when trials and misfortunes fell black and heavy on their path. And her only brother, companion of earliest years, will miss her all his days.

On the grief of my brother, her husband, I shall not, I cannot, enter. I know his heart. The loss is unspeakable. To him she was an atmosphere of calm in his home, a hand of help in his work, a heart of sympathy in his weariness and perplexities—all that a dear human Christian wife alone can be ; and she was it all, and growingly every year. And, oh ! the loss to the little motherless children. Great and pitiful indeed is the promise, “As one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted, saith the Lord God.” I am glad to be relieved from speaking of her in regard to this congregation, for nothing could be more true, as well as kind, than a passage I read to you from a letter of sympathy sent from a united meeting of the Session and Managers:—

“The session and managers cannot permit themselves to record on their minutes the death of Mrs. Graham, without giving expression to their feelings of profound sorrow which this mournful event has inspired them. The church has been deprived of one who was noted for the patient zeal with which she devoted herself to its interests, and the regularity of her attendance, thus making herself an ensample and pattern of good works. She was one of those valuable associates in Christian works who, *though of modest and retiring habits*, was ever



ready to give what help she could to a good cause. The elders and managers desire to express their sincere sympathy with her parents and brother, who mourn for her loss, and their deep and tender sympathy for the bereaved children, and commend them to the care and guidance of Him 'who is the way, the truth, and life;' and more especially would they express their heartfelt sympathy for the husband who has lost one who, in every respect, was a worthy helpmate; and desire that the regret he now experiences may be mercifully tempered by a remembrance of the amount of good she was able to accomplish during life, and the blessed conviction that its close has only been the signal of admission to a more blessed existence."

So she is away, "Come out of the great tribulation, having washed her robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Let us follow her in her faith and patience, and, in God's good time, with her, be inheritors of the promises.

## MOSES AND BALAAM.

---

“So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”—Ps. cx. 14.

“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”—NUMB. xxiii. 10.

THERE is in these words of Balaam the phrase all know so well—“My last end.” Our life has many an end before the last, but each end presses toward and shapes the last end. And equally the words of Moses, “Number our days,” carry at once and universally the solemn weight and pathos of our life’s highest wisdom.

This Sabbath is one on which all your hearts are softened by a great sorrow, and we desire that, with God’s blessing, into these channels of grief His rich and comforting grace may flow. If on other Sabbaths your hearts have not yielded to the great end of life, it may be that on this Sabbath you may become wise unto salvation, and if aforesaid under the pressure of the powers of the world to come, and of the fleeting number of our few days, you have *learned wisdom*, then to-day may you rest

more assuredly on its strength, and draw new sweetness from it amidst change and grief. We would look at both classes, and may God help us to speak and to hear, so as to encourage and warn.

We take the last and ripest reflections and desires about life and its end, of two men, Moses and Balaam; the very opposite in all other points, but agreeing entirely in this.

I. A FEW WORDS ABOUT THEIR PREVIOUS HISTORY.

II. THE GREAT MORAL AND SPIRITUAL CONCLUSION AT WHICH THEY HAVE ARRIVED.

III. THE PRACTICAL WORTH OF IT IN EITHER.

IV. THE LAST END OF BOTH.

V. WHAT CAME AFTER THE LAST END.

I. *A few words about their previous history.* For mark well, our previous history makes our present. It is most hard to undo the past, and to begin to build again when we have built long. Let the young weigh this, and the advancing in years rejoice or tremble before it. Moses is well known to us as, if not the greatest character, certainly inferior to no other in the whole Bible. Here we have him in his 120th year; and in this 90th Psalm, a psalm of Moses, the man of God, he gathers up his long experience. It is a touching, solemn, yet noble

experience, on the one hand, of the shortness of life; its close sometimes sudden, always sure and sweeping; the sadness and sin of life, which lie in its very root. And, on the other hand, the everlasting existence of God, and that filled throughout with the heart of God, which is the sure refuge and true home of men; while linked to God is the true life of man in its enduring reality, stretching beyond the present life with its transient passions and purposes, as these sweep, for a moment and fitfully, as if over some dim and shaken curtain. You can condense a hundred and twenty years, with their deep and varied experiences, into seventeen verses. You can unfold the seventeen verses into innumerable sentences. In stock-taking there are many weary details, but you can get the sum total into one line of figures; so in the estimate of our life it may be brief as a sentence, while endless as thousands of pages. And the experience of Moses and the reflections founded thereon are true now in our town as among the Moab mountains far off in the East.

Turn we to Balaam, and we get a glimpse or two into his heart and history. In himself he was a man naturally of an intellectual and imaginative structure and stature, nearly as great as those of Moses. Pharaoh with his *army was the first opponent of Moses.* Balaam

with his great sceptre of genius and enchantments is his last and his most dangerous, in as much as all intellectual and spiritual power, however corrupted, is mightier by far than all physical force. Balaam came from the East, and for forty years had learned tidings over and again of God, Israel's God, His power in miracles, His holiness in laws, and His purpose in making Israel a kingdom, whose principles should fill the world. He had seen the star of Jacob, but he had not come to worship. He was a proud spirited, intensely susceptible, yet self-contained man, full of idealisms, a poet, a magnificent expresser of his visions, a magician in words; but, common to observe and curious to say, he was fond of money, as the instrument of a solid ostentatious power; and like all men of imagination, a worshipper of beauty, and testing, as we see him doing, its fascination in the grossest form on the Israelites, he himself, it is plain, like many a man of high genius, had known the spell of the lowest passions. I have a kind of feeling that Balaam was a half-inspired and utterly unsanctified Isaiah. This man also gives his estimate of life and its chief end. After all his magic of enchantment—after all his joy in that power over multitudes which intoxicates genius, after all his gladness in money and rapture of

passion, now as he looked at Israel and thought of Israel's God, and set life, and closer still, his own life, in contrast with both, his deepest uncontrollable conviction threw itself out in that brief cry of pathos and yearning which the world has ever since recognised and passed on as one of the current golden coins of experience and expression, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Better the meanest Israelite dying uncheered in the humblest tent of the host, with his trust in God and his God's care of him ; better far is he when life's tent is struck than the great but sinful and dying Balaam—prince, prophet, magician, millionaire !

II. Such are the two men. Let us now look at their *passionate and deliberate summing up of life*. First : take that of Moses. He begins to speak out his desire after he had first looked at life's shortness and sin, and God as the eternal refuge-home of man. What, then ? He is moved to pray, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Let these great truths of our little life and of that great life in God, pass into our needy, eager hearts and become, not merely truths outside of us uninfluencing, but truths intense and inward, full of that divine influence which is wisdom. *To these, do Thou Thyself teach us to apply our*

hearts—not our heads—our whole nature of sorrow, trust, joy, choice. But to help us in this he cries, “Return, O Lord; how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. Oh, satisfy us early with thy mercy,” mercy that takes away Thy righteous anger and quickens in us an everlasting divine life. So instead of the dreary wail of our short and sad existence, we shall be compassed about with songs of deliverance. “Let us be glad and rejoice in thee all our days,” and let the old days and years, evil and afflicted, pass away in the gladness of Thy returning and rejoicing presence. Let Thy work with its fruit appear to Thy servants, and Thy glorious work in its ripest and most abundant fruit appear to their children. Let the beauty of the Lord be upon us, and the work of our hands establish Thou it. Then we shall have a beauty, not flower-like and withering, as that of our perishing lives; and a strength which shall not be carried away as with a flood, but shall abide and flow on within us as the river of God.

Such is the profound and noble estimate of life which Moses had at the close of it. More teaching of God; more applying of the heart to wisdom; more presence of the Covenant God; more sense of mercy and joy; and out of this more inward beauty like God’s beauty; and more outward work like God’s; a blossom of

beauty and a fruit of strength, for evermore. As the years pass does not this approve itself to you? No doubt it does, and will every day deepen in its grasp. Certainly when you come to the last day of your last year it will be felt to be your passionate, deliberate, dying thought. Well, then, apply your hearts now, and more than ever, to wisdom. O God, Thyself teach us this wisdom—the numbering of our few days, the weighing of what cannot be counted, Thine eternal life; and out of this deep and often bitter root of wisdom let there come forth the beauty of divine purity, and the fruit of Christ-like work.

Second: Turn now to Balaam's equally condensed and burning summary of life. He had come to curse Jacob, and he was willing to sell high genius and higher truth for money. His covetousness drew him strongly, but as he looked at the tents of Jacob, and thought of the greatness and holiness of Jacob's God, his eye affected his imagination, true in its instincts to a higher bribe than money, and his imagination stirred up his heart, and so for the moment his nobler nature pushed aside his baser into the back ground. He looked up and said, "How can I curse whom God hath not cursed? or defy whom God hath not defied?" And looking down at the tents again, he was swept along by *the compulsion of truth*—"I had rather die the



meanest death in one of those tents under Jehovah's care than live my splendid and fatal life in the court of Balak, and amidst the fame and power of Moab." Balaam was compelled to speak the truth, and he spake it. Men of the greatest genius, wealth, power, and fame have ever echoed the same cry in the midst of their magic and enchantments, from hearts these could not make glad, but rather depressed, by their sense of the need of a noble, satisfying life. It has been the lot of all splendid, ungodly lives to have this in its darkest form. The black slave is always behind the conqueror's chariot, repeating in his ear amidst the song and shouts of victory the stern monotony of the dull words, "Remember thou art mortal;" and at all feasts, as at the Egyptian, the skeleton has its place, and passes round to speak with dumb lips to each guest, "Thou shalt be as I am."

The proud, imaginative soul of Balaam felt the reality, the humiliation, the eclipse of the last end, and his heart smitten and trembling, cried out, "Where is safety? where is true life? Oh! let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." This was no sudden and superficial desire of Balaam. Few men seem to have pondered more than he did the primary moral questions of life, and few men have registered their convictions and cravings

in more vivid and weighty words. What light is thrown upon Balaam's long course of thought, not unvisited with light from on high, by the memorable record which Micah makes hundreds of years after Balaam had gone. God Himself would impress the hearts of his people through the lips of Balaam. "O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed me, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah vi. 5-8.)

Well might Balaam's deep moral wisdom take passionate utterance at this time, when temptation to sin was beaten back by the rising to fresh power of the truth he knew so well, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." For there lies in the worst, *the inevitable* conviction that the righteous will

come right at last, as they are felt to be right from the first; and the most joyful know well that the happiness of the righteous, if despised, hated, rejected now, in the midst of life, strength, pride and self-will, will be the only thing that shall abide and suffice when life's banquet is done and life's board is drawn, and pride shall be hidden in the grave, and self crumble out of sight of men and be lost in the oblivion of mortality. We all crave for a safe death. Here, if here alone, Moses and Balaam agree, but, as to the life that shall secure it, these men part. Moses took one way, the divine teaching of wisdom in the heart, the indwelling of Christ, Himself heavenly wisdom, in the heart's new life; the living out therefrom a heart-chosen, unselfed, God-pardoned, God-like life. Balaam would take another way, and he knew he was wrong. Even then he felt as Augustine confesses he did when he used to pray and his prayers did not prevail. "I used," he says, "to cry, 'Lord, save me,' and I added secretly, 'But not yet.'" And so Balaam cried, "Let me die the death of the righteous," but added to himself, "Let me still live the life of the unrighteous." Oh, fatal contradiction of kindling aspiration and retained evil! "Let me sow tares each day, but in my last day let me gather the finest of the wheat. Let me glide in music and dreams

down the rapids, and when Niagara rock is reached, sweep smoothly into the ocean calm. Let me live unrighteously and die righteously." Such was Balaam. Such was the place where the two seas met in him—the sea sending down its heavenly stream in upon him, and the sea forcing back with its foul earthly waters the rising tide of heaven.

That Balaam had been, that he is, and that, in spite of this stern resistance of his better nature and God's own stirring up, once more, of his conscience and heart, that, alas! we shall see, he remains at his last end. Is that you? Brethren, tell me here and honestly, is that you? You have felt, have you not, over and over again such desires, imperative and piercing? Have you gone on their flowing tide into the harbour of peace in Jesus Christ, and come forth bound for a new and nobler life? Or have you resisted, yes, knowingly resisted their high impulses, as you yielded to some lower mood within you; and are you now drifting in passive habit, or driven in passionate gusts elsewhere? You are still unrighteous, and you feel it; feel it in dull, or it may be aching, pain—nay, more, and worse by far, yield to it, alas! as a numbing necessity. What! feel ye no movement when still and again I utter the mighty melting words, "God is *in Christ* reconciling the world unto himself,

not imputing to men their trespasses. For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"? Again, I ask you as though God Himself asked, as assuredly He does ask you, Have you stifled these inborn, spirit-born aspirations, and blotted out by your own choice the divine vision of reconciliation and righteousness? Alas! what shall the last end be? What must it be? It can be none other than what, like Balaam, you fear and know it shall be.

III. Let us now mark Moses and Balaam *after their prayer and desire.*

Moses had his desires answered. As surely as his great prayer, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory," had its revelation of goodness, so his cry for wisdom would give it a new increase in his heart. The more was he the man of God after his prayer than before it. Not that he was perfectly so. It may have been that it was even after this hour of noble entreaty Moses yielded in sudden gust of anger to the sin that rose up and barred his way into the promised land. But the sin could not keep him out of God's pardon, and so, although the beauty of the Lord his God had been marred by the folly of his unadvised thought and word, it was again restored to him with all its joy. And he would never forget through the memory of his sin

better to prize and follow the teaching of wisdom. The strong oak may be bent by the swift whirlwind, but the more the branches are tossed and the earth around it is loosened, the further does it spread abroad, and the more do the rain and dew enrich its roots. Moses rooted himself deeper in watchfulness and the desire of wisdom, and brought forth fruit abundantly, so that never was his influence greater than in his latest words of blessing to the people. Compare that "large discourse" of his fullest wisdom as it is about to pour itself into the ocean whence it was drawn with the forced and fitful words of Balaam, and you have the measure of the worth of both men.

But Balaam! what was he at core and in his life after this hour of visitation? That hour passed away, and the sap which, if cherished, would have become root and pith and stem and blossom and fruit was scorched out of him when his hotter and habitual passions had their hour again. As one of kindred spirit cried, looking at a like career, "Oh! had he kept that height, it had been well, but the earthly clay will quench the spark immortal." The gleam of the tempting gold dazzled him, and as his heavenly vision faded into the light of common day, it eclipsed the brightness that had flashed only to depart and leave all more dark and cold. He *yielded*, and this time more than ever, to his

love of money, whether in its base form of mean covetousness, or its more splendid seduction as a sceptre of power. But worse, far worse, his compelled obeisance to the inalienable superiority of the Israelite stung his pride into hatred, and hardened him to the cold vileness of tempting the righteous he envied to the unrighteousness of foul lust, and so of sure defeat. This great genius, as for a moment he had risen higher than ever in pure desires, sunk the deeper into counsels of uncleanness, and with these base enchantments brought a curse indeed upon Jacob. These two—I had almost said twin—passions still do their fatal work. An unchristian civilization is their very spirit and fruit. This may be not in “barbaric pearl and gold” of Moab, but in subtler and even grosser forms. Not in the young only, whom hot passions seduce, to be followed by the cold passion for gain; but in the middle-aged and in strange shapes of mixed desire in the old, these passions work against the new and emancipating gift of the gospel of Christ’s pardon, and a Christ-like life. Sometimes they rule apart; sometimes they combine. No matter, through one or both of these, what becomes of the pathetic noble gleam of spiritual aspiration? It dies out. Worse still, it looks like folly and impossibility, and is gravely or lightly put aside till again it has

an hour of resurrection forced upon the man by some bereavement that tears him from all his old moorings, by some disappointment that staggers, by some sting of conscience with its darkening forebodings, or stronger still, by some kindling of the heart with its final flash, even in the socket of its utter weakness; and so it is again and again till, what? You are dying; and, what then? For come the last end does, and that, whether we are righteous or unrighteous, whether we are ready or unready.

IV. Here now is the last end, *the end of the number of the days of Moses and Balaam*. It came to Moses, not, as he for many a year had dreamed and desired, in some quiet resting place in the Land of Promise. It came to him as he still journeyed in the wilderness. Death seldom or never comes to us as we idly and fondly wish. It mattered little to Moses when or how it came, it found him ready. He had got the wisdom, and the mercy, and the joy, and the beauty, and the strength. And now, clothed in these more gloriously than was Aaron when he mounted his hill of death in his full priestly array, Moses, too, went up to die at the call of God. However sad and solemn the departing was in its colours of change and prohibition, yet never did the beauty of the Lord shine from him more *divinely* than now, when he turned his last gaze



on the host he had led and on the land he had longed for in many a worn hour of sorrow and toil. If a fear fell on the people when Moses came down from the mount after forty days' divine communion, as they saw his shining face, what must have been the awe when, now for the last time they saw him as with undimmed eye he looked his farewell blessing on them, and with face gathering strange brightness, turned for ever from their dimmed eyes to look at the face of God. Strong he had been as he smote the Red Sea and toiled forty long years through the desert, but now as he went up the steep of Nebo, his natural force was not abated, but rather raised and quickened by the new force of the life that pressed around him. In a moment, as he waited for the last time on God, his strength was renewed into the power of an endless life. Far above all he had thought or asked, his prayers for wisdom were answered, as, with eye undimmed indeed, he passes in a moment into the light in which he sees light. Truly he died the death of the righteous, and his last end was like his!

But, Balaam! what was his last end? Read it in the 8th verse of the 31st chapter of Numbers; "And they slew the kings of Midian beside the rest of those that were slain, . . . five kings of Midian. Balaam also, the son of

Beor, they slew with the sword." Such are the brief stern words as if thrown in at the close of this despatch from the field of battle. But there is enough for endless thought and solemn impression. Fighting against Jacob and against Jacob's God, the death of Balaam was not the death of the righteous, nor was his last end like his. Not like Moses in the calm of a mountain summit, nor in the higher calm of a soul so near to God that one step more and he was in Him; but amid the tumult, the wounds, the rage, the despair of a battle-field. Poor Balaam! did there not rise up in his heart as he died the awful thought, "Oh! that I had lived the life of the righteous, then my last end should have been like his"? Archbishop Leighton was once met by a friend, who asked him if he had heard the sermon. "No," said he, "I have seen one. I have just seen a funeral." Enough, we have seen Balaam die. God grant that it may teach us how to live! Let us pass on, awed and changed. But for a moment look into that room and see a dying man. Look nearer; it is yourself. What are you? Still fighting against God? God forbid! Now, then, yield yourself to God through Jesus Christ.

V. Now comes *the end after the last end*. Our Lord quoted the simple words of Moses concerning *the Patriarchs*:—"They all live unto God,"

and opened out from them the immortality of the soul. Few men have ever passed into the life on the other side of the grave with a larger fitness than Moses had to receive it in all its fulness. And filled with it through long sixteen hundred years, he comes back to earth at the word of the same God who had called him away. At last, his prayer—that he might go over into the land of promise—is answered; for now he stands, a follower of the great Leader of the hosts, with Christ Himself, on the Mount of Transfiguration. As the telescope reveals spaces in the open skies inconceivably great in extent and splendour, so does this one ray of revelation light up, for a moment and for ever, centuries and millenniums of life in the highest heavens. But Moses was the same, though transfigured. He brought with him, alike from the God whose immediate presence he had left, and from his undying memories of the old exodus from Egypt, thoughts and words which cheered the heart of the heavenly Saviour, now He is about to take the first step of His darkening way to the cross. What could be a more fitting and suggestive glimpse of Moses in his higher after-life.

But we read concerning Balaam also in 2 Peter ii. from the fifteenth verse, of those "cursed children, which have forsaken the right

way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness," and further on it is added, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse than the beginning. But it has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." To such degradation, as of the lowest animals in their lowest actions, has come the latter end of this Balaam, whom we have known with the eloquence as of an angel, and the desires almost of a saint.

Passing from the immortality of the men, we meet Moses and Balaam once more in the immortality of their influence. These two men come together once more in the last book of the Bible as they had done in one of its opening books. "I have," says Christ to the Church of Pergamos, in the Book of Revelation, "a few things against thee because thou hast here them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication." "The evil that men do lives after *them*;" but it is not true "the good is oft in-

tered with their bones," for still Moses leads the host of the redeemed on high, as they follow the Lamb. The old song of deliverance from Egypt is transfigured into the new song of redemption from all sin and evil, and Moses marches on his everlasting way, singing, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name ? for thou only art holy, for all nations will come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest." Moses has, indeed, learned wisdom, and lo ! now it puts on the garments of praise, and as we listen, though we see not Moses, yet we hear the great everlasting Psalm of the man of God, and we are moved more than ever like him to cry, " So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

What, brethren, is your influence now ? What influence will your memory bear with it when yourselves are gone, and when, long after, your memory is gone ? What shall be the unnamed, but still ever increasing influence it shall spread. Would you not have your work to appear when God, in distant centuries, uses it in marvellous ways, as the means by which His glory shall appear unto your children, and far beyond them ? Live, then, like Moses,

and like Moses, you will live on from this generation to those which are to come. Or, like Balaam, would you leave a name and an influence that can only degrade and deprave? Who does not shrink from this immortality of evil? Do more than shrink; seek that wisdom from Christ which Moses sought and found, and that hold of the life of divine decision which Balaam lost by his love of sin, and yours shall be the glad experience now and evermore: "This is life eternal; to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent."

