THE BOW IN THE CLOUD

Sunday Discourse by Dr. Chapman, the Noted Pastor-Evangelist.

A Gospel Message Filled With Sweetness and Help—We Get Only the Half of Things at Best.

[The Rev. J. Wilbur Chapman, D. D., is now the most distinguished and best known evangelist in the country. He was second only to Dr. Talmage, but since the death of that famous preacher Dr. Chapman has the undisputed possession of the Pulpit as the preacher to influence the plain people. His services as an evangelist are in constant demand. His sermons have stirred the hearts of men and women to a degree unapproached by any latter-day divine. J. Wilbur Chapman was born in Richmond, Ind., June 17, 1859. He was educated at Oberlin College and Lake Forest University, and graduated for the ministry from the Lane Theological Seminary, Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1882. His sermons are simple and direct, so that their influence is not so much due to exciting the emotions as to winning the hearts and convincing the minds of those who hear him. Dr. Chapman is now in charge of the Fourth Presbyterian Church, New York City.]

NEW YORK CITY.—The following sermon is one prepared for publication by the Rev. J. Wilbur Chapman, America's best-known evangelist, who is now preaching to overflowing congregations in this city. It is entitled "The Bow in the Cloud," and is founded on the text, Genesis 9: 13, "I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth."

It may seem at first thought as if this were a queer text to choose from which to give a gospel message, and yet all the works of God are so wonderful that one has but to get the key to unlock the door leading into them to find them filled with sweetness and with help. The rainbow is no exception to this rule. It is hardly possible for one to look upon the bow that spans the clouds after a storm without an exclamation of delight.

One would think that it would grow monotonous, for we have seen it so many times, but quite the opposite is true. Sunsets differ; they are as unlike as two things could possibly be. Indeed, it must be true that one is never like the other. But rainbows are always the same. And yet in spite of this we are charmed as we look, and inspired as we study.

The first mention of a bow is in the text. It is not said that this is the first time the rainbow has appeared, for from the very nature of the case it has always been in existence since the worlds began to be, but this is said to be the first use of it. The last mention of a rainbow is Revelation 4: 3: "And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." You notice that the expression used is "round about the throne," and here for the first time we find a rainbow in a complete circle.

We have only seen the half of it here, which is surely an illustration of the fact that in this world at best we only get the half of things. We only get the half of truth. Take the great doctrine of the Atonement; who is able to understand it? But it is very helpful to know that we are not obliged to understand it, but only to receive it. God is satisfied with it, and He fully comprehends it, and when we stand with Him in glory we shall see the other half of the bow, and our hearts shall rejoice. We only see the half of life here. At its best it is a mystery. Over and over again, when we wanted to go to the right we were compelled to turn to the left, and a thousand times because of our perplexities and trials we have cried aloud:

"How can these things be?"

But we must learn the lesson that we must trust Him where we cannot understand Him. The day will come, when seated at His feet we shall see the other half of the bow of our life, and we shall know indeed that all things have worked together for good.

The last mention of the bow in Revelation tells us that it is to be like an emerald. This is certainly very strange, for one has never beheld a green rainbow here. Six other colors must be added to it to make it complete. The color, however, is not without its suggestiveness. Green is the color that always rests the eye. It is for this reason that the hillsides, the waving branches of the tree, and the grass beneath our feet, are so restful on a summer day. Is not this a hint that heaven is a place of rest as well as beauty?

There are three primal colors in the rainbow, red, yellow and blue. If you drop the red and put the yellow and blue together you have green as a result. Red is the color of suffering. Surely it is a hint as to the thought that when one passes through the gates of pearl he leaves suffering behind him. There is to be no red mark in heaven. Christ finished His sufferings upon Calvary, and never a pang shall meet Him again. We finish our sufferings, too, when we say good-bye to this weary road we have traveled, and the gate of heaven that shuts us in shuts suffering out.

I.—THE CLOUD.

We know what the cloud was for Noah (for this text which I have quoted has to do with him), and a cloud in Noah's day was not unlike the cloud of yesterday; but in the thought of the sermon the cloud is sin.

It would make one heartsick to read the history of sin. First, in the world, beginning with Adam, going to Noah, reaching the howling mob about the cross on Calvary, coming down to the present day, when the whole world seems to be touched with its power, the most terrible thing in the world is sin. Second, in the home, blighting and blasting that which is a type of heaven, and wrecking that which God meant to be a safe vessel to carry us through the turmoils and strife ever round about us. Third, in our own heart, giving us wrong conceptions of God, and dragging us toward hell, even against our will. The blackest thing in all the world is sin.

The cloud does two things: (1) It obscures the sun. The cloud of sin does the same thing. No one ever yet has had a true vision of Jesus Christ with the least particle of sin in his heart or life. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

A poor fellow converted in one of the missions in Chicago, who was thought before his conversion to be hardly worth the saving, was so wonderfully transformed that a committee waited upon him to find the secret of his changed life. He answered their question in just one sentence:

"I have seen Jesus."

This vision ever changes the life and transforms character.

(2) The cloud compels us to see things in a false light. God made the works of His hands to be seen in the sunlight. We must not judge them under the cloud. And with the cloud of sin across a man's mind he can have no real conception of the Bible; he must certainly be prejudiced against the church. Scatter the darkness that hovers over your mind, and the Bible will become to you the very thought of God, while the church will compel your admiration.

II.—ACROSS THE CLOUD GOD CAST HIS BOW.

To see a bow three things are necessary. First, there must be a cloud; we certainly have that in the world's sin. Second, the sun must be shining; we have this condition met in the fact that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. Third, the rain must be falling. We have this in Isaiah 55: 10, 11—"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

Or, we might put it—first, in order that we may be saved, we must acknowledge ourselves to be sinners. This is the cloud. Second, we must have some conception of God's hatred of sin. This is the light. Third, we must be persuaded that He loved us and gave Himself for us. This is the rain. With these conditions met, the bow of promise spans the cloud of a sinful life.

III.—THE SEVEN COLORS.

If I should hold a prism in my hand and the light of day should touch it, there would be refracted at once seven colors, as follows: Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet. There never has been a rainbow in this world but these have been seen in more or less prominence. In my message now, the prism is the cross, and the light is God's truth. As it strikes this long prism it breaks up into seven colors. The seven together give us the rainbow.

First, forgiveness. Psalm 32: 1.—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

The word forgiven means taken off. What a wonderful thought it is! Oh, what a load of sin we had to carry! How it did weigh us down! How day and night we went crying aloud, saying, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" Resolution never lifted it a particle. Reformation only seemed to make it heavier. Then He came, and stooped down, or whispered to us just one sweet word, "Forgiven!" and when we realized it the burden was taken off. To receive all of this we have but to yield to God. Trying to make ourselves better only adds to the cloud and deepens our despair.

The second color is cleansing. Psalm 51: 7—"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

The little bunch of hyssop carries us back to the Passover night, when the lamb was slain and its blood collected. It was not said that one should take a brush, but a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood and sprinkle the posts of the door. The commonest thing that grew in the East was hyssop. It represents faith. One had but to step to the door of the cottage and stoop down to pluck a bunch of hyssop. The commonest thing in all this world is faith. We have faith in each other, whether we express it in this word or not; and the faith that one has in his mother, in his father, in wife or husband, if turned toward Jesus Christ would save his soul. It is one thing to be forgiven, but the color deepens, and the truth sweetens when we know that because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ we may be made clean. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

The third color is justification. Romans 4: 25—"Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

One might be perfectly sure of his forgiveness, and know that it meant sins taken off, and might be confident of his cleansing, but there is the memory of the old life of failure which is ever to him like a shackle when he would run to God. Justification is sweeter by far than anything we have yet learned. When Christ rose for our justification He stood before God as a kind of receipt (as John Robertson has said), and when God looks upon that receipt He knows the bill is paid.

"Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe.
Sin had left a bitter stain, He washed it white as snow."

But justification is even better to me than this, for when one is justified before God he actually stands as if he never had sinned.

The fourth color is—sins covered by the sea. Micah 7: 19—"He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

It is very comforting to know that there are some depths in the ocean so deep that they can never be sounded. Our sins must have gone as deep.

There is also another thought of comfort; if a body is cast into the ocean where the waters are not very deep, when the storms come and the ocean is in a fury, the storm, as if with giant hands, takes the dead body and casts it upon the shore. But there are depths in the sea so great that no storm that has ever yet swept across the face of the deep has stirred the waters. Thanks be unto God, our sins may be sunk so deep in the sea that they will never be cast up against us again. The color deepens and the truth grows sweeter still.

The fifth color is—sins removed. Psalm 103: 12—"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us."

It has been proved that the distance from east to west could never be measured. This is certainly inspiring. But there is something better for me than this in the fifth color, for when I am told that my sins are as far from me as the east is from the west I know that the east and the west can never be brought together; nor can the saved sinner and his pardoned sins ever meet again.

The sixth color is Isaiah 44: 22—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins; return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee."

A man cannot blot out his own sins. Some have tried it with their tears, and have lost their reason. Some have attempted it by works of mercy, and have given up in despair. But God can easily do it. For sins to be blotted out may mean the same as for man's account to be blotted out. I may have a bill charged against me on the books, but if on the opposite side is credited a sufficient sum of money to meet the indebtedness, it is blotted out. But the expression must mean more than this. It means that when one's sins are blotted out by God they are as if they never had been.

The seventh color seems the climax of all. Ezekiel 33: 16—"None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him; he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live."

We have an idea that, although our sins have been forgiven and we may have been justified, when the great day of judgment comes we may be obliged to meet them all again. But this is not true. Once and for all hath He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and the sins of our lives shall not again be mentioned to us.

IV.—GOD'S COVENANT.

The bow was God's covenant then. Now God's covenant is His Word, and upon this Word we may depend. Notice the number of times God uses the expression, "I will," in Exodus 6: 6-8:

"Wherefore, say unto the children of Israel I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments; and I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob; and I will give you it for an heritage; I am the Lord."

He ever waits to fill the covenant which He has made with Christ concerning us. If we would have the joy of salvation, we need but two things; first, we must believe God; whatever our feelings may be, we must believe; second, believing God, we must act as if we believed Him. The one gives us life. The other gives us joy in life's possession.

Some men are born to command, and others get married.

Sailor Tells Good Story on Bob Evans

An old sailor, in a reminiscent mood, told this story of "Fighting Bob":

"Did I ever hear Evans swear? Now, you're asking me to tell tales out of school. I know the newspapers have given him a reputation for salt water talk, which I guess hasn't lowered him very much in the affections of the people. But I wouldn't want to make any statement about it. I'll tell what I did see, once, though, that was the funniest thing to me I ever laid eyes on. We had been lying up at Funchal, in the Madeiras, waiting for the southeast trades to help us along. The first day out, toward sundown, everybody was piped aft to prayers. It was pretty hot, and things looked squally, but there was a chaplain aboard, so we all trooped aft to hear the prayers read. On the bridge was an officer, who shall be nameless. The captain was standing near the chaplain. The prayerbook was spread out on a capstan, and the service had just begun, everybody with his cap in hand, listening I hope, with reverence. All of a sudden the ship gave a lurch, and we found ourselves in the middle of a nasty squall. For a second everybody stood still. Then the officer on the bridge leaned over toward us and shouted: 'You blankety-blanked landlubbers, get aloft with you as if all hell was on your heels! Climb, you dashed pirates! Climb!'

"The men at the wheel had the rattles or something, for they lost control of it, and the ship almost broached to and came around with a jerk. The captain had been standing right near where the starboard main sheet had been coiled man-o'-war fashion. He was a very heavy man, weighing nearly three hundred pounds. As I was cutting up the shrouds I looked below, and nearly dropped off with laughing. There stood the outraged chaplain, with his prayerbook tightly clasped, looking with horror at the captain. He had stepped back onto the coil of the main sheet. Some duffer had let it go, and it raced out with a jerk. The jerk threw the captain flat on the deck. There he sat, swearing like a carpenter at the chaplain for not helping him up, while on the bridge stood the officer I've not named, shouting blue language at the topmen. And, there, looking from one to the other in horror and disgust, stood the chaplain, holding the prayerbook on the captain with both hands, as if he were trying to decide whose language was the worst. I've seen comic operas, but never has there been a situation so funny to me as that."—New York Tribune.

An Interesting Relic

Document owned in Wisconsin which dates back to 1553.

Alexander T. Lindholm, of Stillwater, Wis., is the owner of an interesting old relic, dating back to 1553, which he has mounted on a piece of oak and framed, and has hung it in a bank building in St. Paul, says the St. Paul Pioneer Press. It is a verdict rendered by a jury of twelve high officials in Norway, at Oslo courthouse, where Christiana now stands, in June, 1553, and decided the legal ownership of a large estate. At the bottom of this novel verdict hang twelve strips of sheepskin, to which are attached twelve pieces of beeswax, about the shape and size of a small gold watch. These were called seals in the olden days when this verdict was rendered, and each one contains the seal of one of the jurors who decided the matter.

When this verdict was rendered there was no such thing as paper known to the civilized world, and all official documents were written on sheepskin parchment. It may also be stated that the present jury system, which is in vogue in the courts of the United States and also in Europe, originated in Scandinavia in the eleventh century.

The verdict was rendered during the reign of Christian III. of Denmark The contesting parties were Erik Bollsea, whose descendants had it in their possession until about fifteen years ago, when Mr. Lindholm secured it from one of Mr. Bollsea's descendants, and a Mrs. Margaret Nilsdatter, an heiress. In those days all cases of this kind were tried before a jury consisting of four governors, four attorneys and four counselors. Out of these twelve men, one was selected to act as judge, and the evidence was taken. After a verdict had been decided upon, it was written on a piece of sheepskin parchment and the seals of the twelve men who tried the case were affixed. These seals were carried in the same manner as the people of to-day carry their watch-charms, and all men in official positions had their seals attached to their watch-charms, that they would be convenient when needed.

Mrs. Bettie Danbridge, a daughter of Gen. Zachary Taylor, 77 years old, lives in Winchester, Va. She was educated in Philadelphia.

GRANT'S WELCOME TO GEN. TOOMBS

One of the Few Witty Remarks Credited to Him.

Gen. Robert Toombs was one of the few Confederate generals who refused to have his political disabilities removed, and he died an unreconstructed rebel. It was a source of much regret to the people of his state that he refused to place himself, when they could again send him to Washington as a senator. As he grew older he would in conversation frequently refer to the fact that he was not a citizen of the United States.

During Gen. Grant's term of office as President, Gen. Toombs had been to New York and stopped off at Washington. The Georgia delegation insisted in his calling at the White House, and after much urging they got his consent and he went up. Gen. Grant had never seen Gen. Toombs, so when Gen. Toombs reached the White House and his card was sent in, Gen. Grant came forward to greet him. Gen. Toombs took the President's hand and said:

"Although not a citizen of this country, while in the capital I have called to pay its Chief Executive my respects."

"Don't mention it, Gen. Toombs," said Gen. Grant. "I heard myself you were a citizen and at one time I thought you were, but now I know you are not, because I hunted for you down there for nearly two years, but never could find you. Come right in and sit down."

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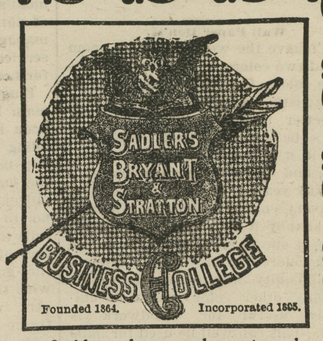
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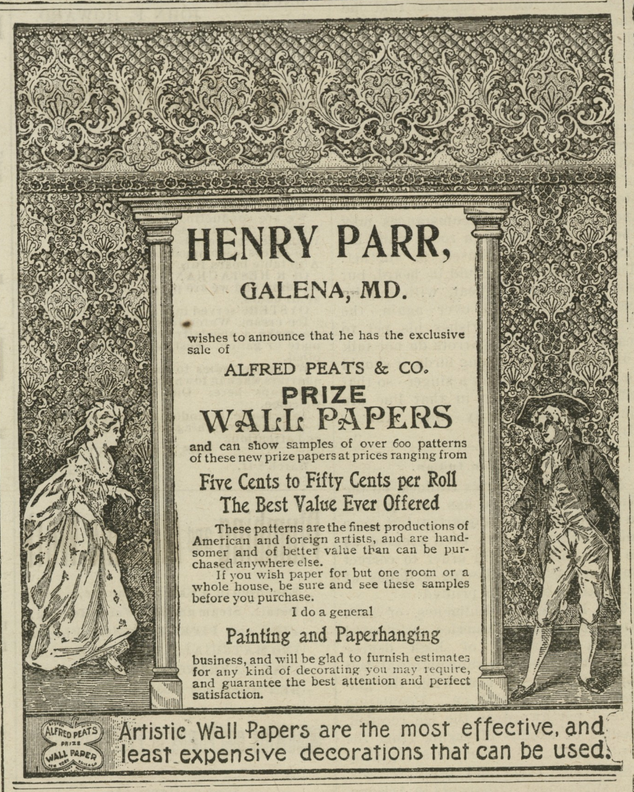
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