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## LESSONS FROM THE RAINBOW.

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(*Congregationalist.*)

I have set My bow in the cloud and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth: and it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth that the bow shall be seen in the cloud.—Genesis ix., 13.

As the appearance of the bow in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.—Ezekiel i., 28.

And there was a rainbow round about the throne.—Revelations iv., 3.

PERHAPS there are no books in all the world's literature which have so constantly been the victims of that slavish and mole-eyed literalism of interpretation, which is the saddest fate which may befall any really great message of God, as have the books of Genesis, Ezekiel and Revelations. "The letter killeth," as Jesus said; and that stiff dogmatism which grows out of a prosaic literalism becomes the breastwork for an ignorance which neither learns anything nor forgets anything. One of the outcomes of this literalism, which has insisted upon its prosaic interpretations of the poetic words of Genesis, is the current notion that the writer of the book was ignorant of the nature and constitution of the rainbow; and that this is the accurate account which he would leave us of its first being set in the sky. It is useless to say that no one who has sympathy with the deeper meanings of Genesis ever obtained such an impression from the reading of the chapter; and nobody needs to be told that this popular misconception had its birth in that method of Scripture interpretation which persistently misapprehends the story of creation, constantly asserts that there is a conflict between Genesis and geology, and feels that this conflict is only a single battle in the long and hopeless war between religion and science. In a much more brilliant light than that of yesterday, the thinkers of to-day are finding a devout and Scriptural use for every word of

## MOURNING AND MENDING.

By REV. THEO. L. CUYLER, OF NEW YORK CITY.

Blessed are they that mourn.—Matthew v., 4.

EVERY minister, as he runs his eye over his congregation, sees the black badge of sorrow in every part of the house. Yet many of the deepest and sorest griefs of the heart do not hoist any outward signal of distress. For who ever puts on crape for a family disgrace, or a secret heartache, or loss of character, or an acute contrition for sin, or a backsliding from Christ? Set it down as a fact that God sees ten-fold more sorrow than the human eye ever detects.

What a clear streak of sunshine our Lord let into this legion of sorrowing hearts when He pronounced that wonderful benediction: "Blessed are they that mourn!" Perhaps, some poor Galilean mother who came up that day to hear Jesus of Nazareth, with her eyes red from weeping over a lost child, whispered to herself: "That is for me; I am a mourner." "Ah!" thought some penitent sinner who felt the plague of his guilty heart, "that means me; I am in trouble to-day." It did mean them. Christ's religion is the first and only religion ever known in this world which recognizes human sorrow, and has any sunshine of consolation for broken hearts. Do cold-blooded infidels realize that fact when they attempt to destroy men's faith in the gospel of Calvary?

We are apt to limit this benediction of Jesus to one class of sufferers. We take this sweet little text into sick rooms, or to funerals, or into the lonely group which gather around a mother's deserted chair or a little empty crib. It was meant for them. It has fallen upon such stricken hearts like the gentle rain upon the new-mown grass. Many of us know full well how good the balm felt when it touched our bruised and bleeding hearts. I remember how, when one of my own "bairns" was lying in his fresh-made grave, and another was so low that his crib seemed to touch against a tomb, I used to keep murmuring over Wesley's matchless lines,

Leave, oh leave me not alone,  
Still support and comfort me!

In those days I was learning—(what we pastors have to learn)—just how the arrow feels when it enters, and just how to sympathize with our people in their bereavements. Somehow a minister is

never fully ready to emit the fragrance of sympathy for others until he has been bruised himself. There is a great lack about all Christians who have never suffered. Paul abounded in consolation because he had known sharp tribulations in his own experience. What a precious spilling of his great sympathetic heart that was when he overflowed into that sublime passage which ends the fourth and begins the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Corinthians. The outward man perishing—the inward man renewed day by day. The affliction growing “light” in proportion to the transcendent weight of the eternal glory! The old tent dropping to pieces and the heavenly mansion looming up so gloriously that his homesick soul longed to quit the fluttering tent, and to “be present with the Lord.” These are indeed mighty consolations to bear with us into houses of mourning. They are the foretastes which make us long for the full feast and the seraphic joys of the marriage-supper of the Lamb. We experience what the old godly negro “Uncle Johnson” did when he said: “Oh, yes, massa, I feel bery lonesome since my Ellen died, but den de Lord comes round ebery day and gibbs me a *taste ob de kingdom*, jus as a nus would wid de spoon; but oh, how I wants to get hold *ob de whole dish!*”

There is no heart in the universe that so sympathizes with us when we cry out in contrition as the heart of Calvary’s Redeemer. No pain does Jesus look upon so kindly as the pain felt by the conscience over sin committed and the spirit grieved.

Selfishness says: “Cover sin,” and the sin thus covered up kills like a cancer. Jesus says: “Confess sin and I will have mercy. Abandon sin and flee unto Me!” And never do we draw so closely to Jesus as when our inmost soul has been wounded by the arrows of conviction, and we have felt what an abominable thing it is to wound our Master in the house of His friends.

There are too many dry-eyed Christians in this world. There ought to be more tears of penitence over our neglects of Christ, more tears of sympathy with the afflicted, and more tears of joy over the infinite good things which Jesus brings to us. They that sow in the tears of contrition shall reap in the joys of pardon, and the Saviour’s smile. Such tears water the roots of our piety. Blessed are they that mourn—and *mend!* The ladder to the higher Christian life starts from the dust of self-abasement, but every round in it is a new grasp on Christ.