

Church Commercialism

It would seem that the great bane of some churches is the commercial spirit which controls the main managers of the church. They measure the success of the church by the money standard. Of course they want a pastor who has just the kind of talent that will bring into the membership those people who have considerable wealth. If they happen to have a pastor who is destitute of such talent they grow very weary of him as soon as they discover such a destitution in him. It matters not how spiritual the pastor is; he may be a most devoted Christian, a very sound Bible scholar, a nourishing preacher; but if he fail to bring plenty of paying members into the church he is counted as an undesirable pastor, and his resignation is impatiently waited for.

One of the editors of the Presbyterian Journal says:

"We once knew a minister of another denomination whose chief offense lay in the fact that he added no financial strength to the church. Many joined, but the list of pew-holders did not increase with the membership. His brethren felt sorry for him, but in view of all the circumstances advised him to go."

Well, this minister had far greater reason to feel "sorry" for those members who made commercialism a standard of pastoral success than they had reason to feel sorry for him. How much do such members value the salvation of poor people? Very little. This may seem to be harsh judgment, but I base it on the ground that notwithstanding the fact that many people joined that church during that pastorate, yet the ruling members wanted the pastor to leave because the new members did not bring much financial strength to the church. It certainly looks as though the ruling ones thought much more of dollars than they did of saved souls. And this is the terrible bane of many churches to-day. I do not wonder that they are spiritually weak. No wonder that God's blessing does not come upon them. Christ said: "Take heed how ye despise one of these little ones."

The church that grumbles because only poor people are uniting with it flings an insult into Christ's face. That church is sure to be chastised by God.

C. H. WETHERBE.

Famous Old Men

Socrates, when his hair whitened with snow of age, learned to play on instruments of music. Cato, at fourscore, began his study of Greek, and the same age saw Plutarch beginning, with the enthusiasm of a boy, his first lesson in Latin. "The Character of Man," Theophrastus's *magnum opus*, was begun on his nineteenth birthday. Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" was the work of the poet's declining years. Ronsard, the father of French poetry, whose sonnets even translation cannot destroy, did not develop his poetic faculty until nearly fifty. Benjamin Franklin at this age had just taken his first steps of importance in philosophical pursuits. Annaud, the theologian and sage, translated "Josephus" in his eightieth year. Winckelmann, one of the most famous writers on classic antiquities, was the son of a shoemaker, and lived in obscurity and ignorance until the prime of his life. Hobbes, the English philosopher, published his version of the "Odyssey" in his eighty-seventh year, and his "Ilak" one year later. Chevreul, the great French scientist, whose untiring labors

in the realm of color have so enriched the world, was busy, keen, and active when death called him, some ten years ago, at the age of one hundred and three.

These men did not fear age; these few names from the great master roll of the famous ones who defied the years should be voices of hope and heartening to every individual whose courage and confidence is weak. The path of truth, higher living, truer development in every phase of life, is never shut from the individual until he closes it himself. Let man feel this, believe it, and make this faith a real and living action in his life, and there are no limits to his progress. The constant looking backward to what might have been, instead of forward to what may be, is a great weakener of self-confidence.

The Twentieth Century Sunday.

At a legislative hearing on a question of legal restriction of Sunday trade, a gentleman favored wider liberty because we are at the opening of a new century, implying that Sunday laws are a relic of the dark ages. Not of the darkest ages, he should reflect. They do not prevail now in "Darkest Africa," or in any dark and savage land, nor ever did. Sunday observance is not a mark of rude, uncultivated life. Only enlightened Christian nations observe Sunday rest, and protect the civil rest day by law, as a wise provision for the good of society. Not only savages, but bad men everywhere do without Sunday. Either they are not able to see that it is a necessity of wise living, or they do not wish to live wisely. Just in proportion as men advance in enlightenment, and in a desire to live according to the best light, they keep Sunday. There are exceptions, but on the large scale, and in the long run, exactly as men gain in spiritual insight, a train breadth of view, and a comprehension of the forces and tendencies which govern human life, if they also are wise enough to conform their conduct to their increased knowledge, they will prize Sunday, and keep it with all their heart. This is absolutely sure. How do we know it? On the word of Him who cannot err, who is the truth, for he said "The Sabbath was made for man"—for man as man, always and everywhere; not for Jews alone, not for certain centuries only, but for all the centuries, for the twentieth and the fortieth, for all those blissful and prosperous ages when human progress shall have lifted man to the high vantage ground of enjoying the blessings a kind Providence makes ready for his use. And of all these blessings, one of the richest in value in itself, and most prolific of other blessings is the day of Sunday rest and worship. And when God made the Sabbath for MAN, he thereby declared that the Sabbath is something man needs in every age and land. It is indispensable to his property. Therefore a kind Heavenly Father will see to it that this precious gift shall not always be as pearls cast before swine. He will educate men and train them up to see what is good for them, and will give them wisdom enough to take what is good for them. Many men spurn it now, for they are like very young kittens, they have not got their eyes open yet. But the day of vision and of wisdom will come, if not for them, for "the coming man," the man who will not fly in the face of Providence, and trample its best gifts under his feet.

Through the voice not of written revelation alone, but through the cry of man's entire nature, body, soul and spirit, by the examples of Christ; and by the Providential favour

shown to Sabbath keeping in its good results, God has made known His will, that man should take one day in seven, so far as the claims of necessity and mercy allow, to rest the body and train the soul.

THE DEFENDER.

Sparks From Other Anvils.

The Christian Guardian: Grip with the hand of love the man who would be better, but his defects are burdens, and sometimes the load is not all of his own making. When you lift a struggling soul over a stile, there are always angels looking on, and they cannot help whispering in the ear of God.

The Morning Star: It will not help you in the end to say that you couldn't help your doubts, and that you had to fashion your beliefs in accordance with the doubts. Men smart from burns and suffer from poison and drown in the sea, whatever may be their doubts about the nature and effects of fire, arsenic, or water.

The Christian Endeavor World: The appeal should not be: "The church needs you. See how much good you might do in the church. See how all the good people and the wise people are in the church." But it should be: "You need Christ. You are a poor, wretched, lost sinner. Without Christ you are ruined for time and eternity. Come, while it is called today."

The Christian Intelligencer: In our estimate of spiritual values, in the way of means to an end, prayer should be held paramount. The sermon is for edification. Prayer is more manifold in its objects. It aids communion with the Father, promotes Christian fellowship, and secures the gift of the Spirit and His infilling, without which our teaching and preaching is of little or no avail.

Herald and Presbyterian: Let every sermon have positive instruction, and impulse and help. It is not enough to denounce sin and unbelief. The great truths of the Gospel must be presented and urged upon the acceptance of those who hear. When the light is brought in, darkness disappears. When food is eaten, hunger ceases. When Christ is accepted, unbelief and sin are removed.

The Sunday School Times: Little things are sometimes greater than great things. A needle is often more of a peril to step on, or to handle, than is an iron spike. The temptation to commit murder is not likely to be so hard to resist as the temptation to say a harsh word, or to be unkind in spirit; but who shall say which offense is greater in the sight of God? Lord, help us to resist little temptations and great ones, and to keep near to thee in time of temptations that we count hardly worth our notice, but which "in thy sight" are our chiefest peril.

The Presbyterian Banner: A member of a large city church made the remark recently that she had heard but one sermon in that church, in many years, upon the duty of young men to enter the ministry; and she did not see why this matter should not be presented now as it used to be by the generation of preachers just gone. Perhaps there is an explanation of the smaller number of candidates for the ministry, to be found at the present time in our theological seminaries, in the fact that our pastors have ceased to call them from the pulpit.