

arisen, they have sought earnestly to overcome them and to obtain divine guidance in their efforts to advance the spiritual interests of the place.

The church has been served by efficient officers in all its various departments. Matters of business have been attended to with wise care, and a good degree of liberality has been shown by the people in sustaining the finances of the body. What seems to be needed most at present is an extensive spiritual awakening among all classes of the community, and a more united and cordial effort to win the wayward and save the lost.

So far as we have been able to ascertain from the records the total number of persons who have united with this church since its formation has been 458. Of these 128 have passed away to the home above; and 151 have been dismissed to unite with other churches. A few have been excluded, leaving the present membership 170.

Each passing year will make some changes in the church roll. One by one the present members will silently follow those who have passed within the veil. But who will fill the vacant places? Who will rise up to carry on the important work our Master has committed to our care? Let us arise and gird ourselves for the glorious service of our risen Lord. Soon will he come to reward his servants. May he not find us sleeping.

"Watch thy Lord's command,  
And while we speak he's near;  
Mark the first signal of his hand,  
And ready all appear."

### Building a Christian.

BY REV. THEODORE L. COVLER, D. D.

"I never let fools or hairs see my work, until it is done," said a famous Scotch painter; he knew that no production of human art could be rightly judged until it was completed. I remember that when I first saw Cologne Cathedral nearly fifty years ago, it had a stumpy and unimpressive appearance, for it was towerless. The next time I saw the edifice it was disfigured by scaffolding on which workmen were busy. But when in the summer of 1894, I beheld the completed towers in their flashing splendor, I felt that it was a mighty and magnificent poem written in marble.

That illustrates the way in which the Master builds a true Christian. The Bible declares that the Christian is "Christ's workmanship created anew unto good works." Anyone who looked at a company of church members in a prayer meeting or at a sacramental table might say that some of them were quite imperfect specimens of workmanship, as he could testify from intimate acquaintance. Very true; but if that same person wished to purchase a melodeon he would not go into the manufactory where the different parts were being fashioned; he would go into the salesroom and inspect the completed instrument. This world is the great workshop in which Jesus Christ by his Spirit constructs Christian character.

"Ye are God's building," wrote the Apostle Paul to his brethren at Corinth. Of himself he wrote at another time, "Not as though I have already attained, either one already perfect." The scaffolding were not yet taken down, and the work of grace was not yet completed.

It is easy to discover some flaws in even the best men and women; but the critic must consider what materials our Master has to work with in frail and fallen human nature, so often disfigured and defaced by innate depravity. Napoleon used to say that he had to make his marshals out of mud. Certainly no power less than that of the Holy Spirit could have constructed such a conscientious and effective Christian as John Newton out of so hardened and desperate a sinner. A very eloquent and spiritually-minded minister once said to me, "before I was converted I wonder how anyone could live in the house with me." During my forty-four years of pastorate, when I received converts into the church, I often recognized the fact that one candidate for membership had been reared in a frivolous and worldly family—and another had a naturally violent temper—and another was constitutionally timid and irresolute—and still another had to contend with hereditary sensualities of temperament or practice. Some of the overhauls and headlong had to be held back and and tested, and some desponding doubtless had to be encouraged. A study of the experience of our Blessed Lord in building twelve disciples out of the material that came to his hand is full of solemn suggestion, and one of those twelve tumbled in to ruin under the very eyes of the Master Builder.

Character building is like cathedral-building—a gradual process. No Christian is born full grown, else there would be no sense in the divine injunctions to "grow in grace" and to "press towards the goal of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The corner-stone of every truly regenerated character is the Lord Jesus; other foundation can no one build on without risking a wreck in this world and eternal ruin in the next world. The first act of saving faith is the joining of the new convert to the atoning Saviour. Then upon that solid foundation must be added the courage, the meekness, the patience, the conscientiousness, the honesty, the loving kindness and the other graces that make for godliness. Let no young beginner be disheartened. Oaks do not grow like hollyhocks. A solid Christian character can-

not be reared in a day—nor is it to be done simply by Sabbath services or by sacraments. Some poor pumice-stone has to be thrown out, and not a little bad timber rejected in spite of the varnish on it.

The Bible is the only plumb line to build by; and it must be used constantly. All the showy ornamentation that a man can put on his edifice amounts to nothing, if his walls are not perpendicular. Sometime we see a flimsy structure whose bulging walls are shored up by props and skids to keep them from tumbling into the street. I am afraid that there are thousands of reputations in trade, in politics, in social life, and even in church life that are shored up by various devices. No Christian can defy God's inexorable law of gravitation. It is a mere question of time how soon every character will "fall in," if it is not based on the rock, and built according to Jesus Christ's plumb-line. It may go down in this world; it is sure to go down in the next. Let every one therefore take heed how she or he buildeth; for the last great day will test the work, of what sort it is.

Finally, let us all bear in mind that if we are Christ's workmanship, we must let our wise and loving Master take his own way. We must allow him to use his own tools. Oh, how much cutting and chiseling we often need! How keen, too, and sharp is the chisel which he sometimes uses! The sound of his hammers are constantly heard; and with it are also heard the wondering cries of some sufferer who exclaims, "Why are you applying to me the file, the saw and the hammers?" Be still and know that whom he loveth he chasteneth! If we are Christ's building, then let him fashion him according to his divine ideal of beauty, at whatever cost to our selfishness or pride, or indolence, or vainglory. Christ working in us, and upon us—and we working with Christ and for him—that is the process that produces such structures as he will present before his father and the holy angels.

Nothing is too small—and nothing is too great, that involve as Christian's influence before a sharp-eyed world. We are to be his witnesses; Jesus Christ builds Christians to be looked at and to be studied. He rears us to be spiritual lighthouses in a sin-darkened world. Michael Angelo said that he "carved for eternity." In an infinitely higher sense is every blood-redeemed Christian carved and fashioned and upbuilt to be a habitation of God through his Spirit, to his praise, and to his everlasting glory.—Standard.

### The Minister and His Critics.

The old time minister held a position of great influence. He was called "the parson" because he was the person of the community. His word came well nigh being the absolute law for his fellow citizens. He was consulted on all occasions and his advice had almost the weight of divine commandment. With changing times, thought and customs, a change has taken place in the position occupied by the minister in the public mind. To-day he is only one man of many men. He has only such authority as his tested wisdom, good judgment and sanity may win for him. The popular assumption probably is, in the majority of cases, that the minister is less qualified than the average man to judge wisely on questions of public interest, especially those lying outside the domain of religion.

The minister is the subject of severe and constant criticism, not only when we consider the individual, but the class as well. It is to be expected that those who prey upon the public and seek to maintain themselves through the degradation and wickedness of their fellow-men, will have no good word to speak concerning that class of men which is constantly arrayed against evil and evil-doers. Neither is it to be expected that men who hate religion and all who strive to promote the religious life of the community will commend those who devote their lives to the promotion of the interests of the spiritual life. The constant abuse heaped upon the Bible, Christianity, ministers, and all who are engaged in building up the kingdom of God, by certain anti-religious organizations, need not cause us any serious apprehension or worry our ministerial friends. The untruthfulness and malignity of such criticism rob it of all power. But the minister is also criticized by those who have no antagonism to religion or to the Christian church. Such criticism frequently finds its cause in the selfishness of the human heart. Does the preacher speak upon political subjects, the politician whose party may be affected injuriously comes to the front at once with the assertion that ministers have no business in politics. Does the preacher address himself to the consideration of labor troubles and venture in any way to criticize labor unions, the union leaders at once arraign him as the cowardly mouthpiece of the capitalist. Does the minister criticize the attitude of capital toward the laboring class, the capitalists indict him for "playing to the grand stand" and seeking to carry favor with the masses.

Whenever the preacher holds himself to the consideration of high themes bearing upon the spiritual life, especially if he chance to call attention to the unseen world, he is charged with being other-worldly, and told that he would do well to keep his feet upon the earth and discuss ques-

tions which have to do with the present material of humanity. Does he venture to consider the questions of the day from his pulpit, he is called to account for not "preaching Jesus," and assured that he can serve the public weal and discharge his duty to God and men only as he confines himself to topics which have to do with spiritual interests. If a minister undertakes to keep himself abreast with the best thought of the day and brings to his people the result of careful study, he is liable to be charged with unsettling the faith of his hearers. If he ignores current discussion, theological unrest, changes in religious thought, is assumed by not a few that he is guilty of intellectual dishonesty and fails to tell his people what he really believes.

There can be no question that much of this criticism is due to hasty and imperfect generation. If one minister proves himself to be a mountebank, it is assumed by some that all ministers are mountebanks. If one minister is proved to be guilty of plagiarism, there are not wanting those who immediately declare that plagiarism is the common sin of the ministerial profession. It needs no argument to show the weakness and injustice of such an assumption. We hold no brief on behalf of the ministry. Not all ministers are great men. Now and then may be found one lacking in moral qualities or in true gentleness. They are human and make mistakes; but, as a whole, they are honest, hard-working, earnest and fairly capable men. The value of the work which they do does not lie upon the surface. The cry of great preachers and great sermons seems to ignore work being done by men who are great only in moralities and in ability to serve the best interests of their fellow men.

In the great day when the secrets of hearts are revealed we doubt not that it will be seen that some of the world's best work has been done by men whom the world knew very little. Out of the obscurities of the earth men will come to receive as high commendation from Almighty God as will be given to those who have filled the eyes of the world. Service is determined by popularity. A man may gain for himself wide reputation for pulpit attractiveness and yet contribute little to the building of human character or the king of men towards God. A man may have little power to attract and hold great masses of delighted hearers yet exert a wide and potent influence for good. Wiser else the minister may be he is to discharge his function as a representative of Jesus Christ. It must be of him as of the good priest in Chaucer's tale:

"But Christ's love, and his apostles love  
He taught, and first he followed it heve"

Standard.

### The Sacred Sabbath.

BY J. W. CHAPMAN

History proves that it is absolutely essential that one day in seven should be set apart as a day of rest. Those who are accustomed to the moving of machinery and the running of railroad trains, all agree that machinery will last longer and the cars will be more likely kept in repair if they are given several periods of rest.

In the wisdom of God one day in seven been set apart. It is well to know that a less frequent rest day has been tried in the past; some have made one day in ten and some one day in twelve, but the human body soon goes to pieces and the human mind weakens, if God's order is not followed.

In other words, it is well for us to find a plan concerning our lives and follow it closely—a more disastrous for a man's arm to be out of kilter than for his life to be contrary to the plan of God, and no more disastrous for a planet to go swinging out of its orbit than for human society to break away from God's divinely ordained plan for a community. One ever yet has really put God to the test in the matter of Sabbath observance without being blessed in it.

In connection with my pastorate in Philadelphia a few years ago I came across a man who was very store owner on Sunday, and when reminded of his store that it was the best day of all the week, and that he could not afford to close. He finally became a Christian and determined that he would close the store when it cost him. One year after I met him and he told me for his opinion, and he said that though he felt he had not made so much money as in other years that what he had made had lasted him longer and a matter of fact, he had saved more in the year in which store was closed than when it had been open seven in the week.

The picture of the man with the withered arm is not only an illustration of Jesus' observance of Sabbath, but also an illustration of what it means for us to lay to rest upon eternal life.

Tradition says the man was a stone-mason that his head was practically dead; when Jesus him to stretch it forth, he commanded him to do possible thing. If the man had reasoned about it, he would have been healed, but when Jesus commanded the man to lay to rest, and a Carist put the arm into his arm and immediately he stretched it. The secret of joy in Christian living is immediate implicit obedience. In nothing is this more true than in the observance of the Sabbath, when God tells us to set apart the one day, we must do it, and since that which we now observe keeps us in mind of his rest, it is of all the week the best.

That individual, that community, that Nation disregarding God's laws concerning it, day, will, sooner or later, degenerate and decay. American Messenger.