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THE CHRISTIAN TREASURY

A FAMILY MISCELLANY

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WELL BASED AND WELL BUILT.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D.D.



HE chief business of this life is character-building. Our divine Teacher so regarded it when He concluded His memorable discourse on the Mount by that striking parable about the two kinds of builders. Both men constructed a house, just as everybody is constructing some sort of a character. One of the two persons, in our Lord's parable, thought only of appearances. So that he had a house to suit him, he regarded it as of no consequence whether it had any foundation. A sand-bank, or the soft alluvial on the margin of a stream, will answer as well as any other place. He thinks nothing of the future. So he 'built a house upon the earth without a foundation.' The wiser man cared less for show than for substance. He forecasts the possibility of high winds and high waters, and selects a solid rock as the basis of his building. When the rainy season comes, with its hurricanes and swollen torrents, the floods 'brake against his house and could not shake it; because it had been *well builded*.' His foolish neighbour's house encounters the same dash of the elements; but it '*fell in*,' and the ruin is both total and terrible.

What sort of a spiritual structure are you rearing? This is a fair question, a vital question, for each one of my readers. Some sort of structure you must build, either good or bad, solid or worthless. If your character is well based and well built, it will stand through a bright, blissful eternity; if not, your soul will be a poor, outcast, homeless soul for ever and ever. The chief thing to be regarded is the *foundation*. Just here it is that so many make a fatal mistake. They conclude that any sort of religious opinion will answer, so that it is honestly believed. If any plausible error comes to hand, they accept that. One of you may think that your own judgment or your own will-power is a sufficient basis. Another one of you had a religious training;

and that will answer. Another has undergone a temporary mental excitement which you called a 'conversion' (or some people told you it was); and you rest all your hopes for this world and the next on that. Either by entirely ignoring God's Word and accepting a false system of faith, or by resting on their own flimsy self-righteousness, or by some hasty, thoughtless process of so-called conversion and open profession of religion, there are millions of people who (in Spurgeon's phrase) '*scamp* their foundation.'

Now, if you did not know where to build, you might be without excuse. But God has distinctly told you not only where to base your structure, but has provided a foundation for you. 'Other foundation can no man lay than that which is *already laid*,' CHRIST JESUS. It is no more your business to create a religion, or to create a code of morals, or to create a basis for your faith, or to create a Saviour for your soul, than it was the business of the engineer of the East River bridge to create the bed-rock on which the two magnificent abutments of that structure rest. He had but to dig down under the river mud and find the rock. Your first step is to *come to Christ*. This is the initial step, the fundamental step, in securing the only character that will stand the test, both in this world and the next. On this everlasting Rock of Ages—a divine Redeemer atoning for his sins, a divine Teacher instructing you by His perfect commandments, a divine Regenerator changing and purifying your inmost heart, a divine Supporter strengthening your will, a divine Mediator with God, watching, keeping, befriending you, and putting His loving grace underneath your weakness—this is the only foundation that no floods of temptation can wash out or undermine. All else than this is crumbling dirt or shifting sand.

Observe, too, that the all-wise author of the parable speaks of a 'digging and going deep' to find the rock. A vast deal of rubbish has got to be thrown out, my friend. You have

got to use the shovel of repentance, and use it thoroughly. Whatever keeps you from Christ must go out, however dear it may be to you. Bible repentance means more than sorrow or shame for sin; it means abandonment of sin, and the earnest effort after a new obedience to Christ's rules of duty. In all this process the Holy Spirit will act as a sort of overseer of the work, and will guide and direct and help you. Call on His aid fervently and humbly. Don't be satisfied with anybody's say-so that you are a Christian. My friend Spurgeon tells us of a young lady who was in great trouble of mind, and was urged to attend an inquiry-meeting. 'I have been a dozen times already,' she replied. 'I have been told a dozen times already that I am saved; and yet I do not feel or live one whit the better.' What that woman needed, and what you need, is personal contact with and reliance on Jesus Christ. Not merely on the rock but *into* the rock, with iron bolts and clamps, is Eddystone Lighthouse built. So you must be built *into* Christ, by a living union of your weakness to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your poverty to His wealth of grace, your sinfulness to His divine righteousness. This is the faith that saves the soul; this is the grip that holds; this is the thorough work that goes down deeper than mere excitement, or emotion, or formal church-joinings, and binds your soul fast to the everlasting and omnipotent Son of God. Anything less than this is not true conversion.

Of a man thus based as to his heart-principle, it may be said that the best part of him is the *unseen* part. The vital part of a tree is its root; cut off the trunk, and the root will sprout again. The invisible portion of a house is its foundation. So the innermost, divinely implanted graces that lie, as it were, in the very depths of a Christian's heart, *next to Christ*, these are the most powerful, the most precious and enduring portion of the man. Another thing to be said of a well-based and well-built believer is that he can stand the strain of tremendous temptation. Christ does not say that when the floods come, he does not fall; He says the flood '*could not shake*' him.

So have I watched a conscientious merchant under a financial hurricane. It swept his money away, but his character could not be shaken. Sensual temptations could not move Joseph one hair. They will not move you, young man, if your conscience is in Christ's keeping. Scepticisms never ran at such flood-

tide as they do nowadays. They who are built into Christ, with a personal union, mind them no more than yonder colossal bridge piers mind the tides that sweep against their adamant. I was beside a dying-bed yesterday. Eternity was staring the man in the face; but he could not be shaken. The glory of all the noblest saints in the Bible—Noah, Moses, Elijah, Daniel, and Paul—was that they could not be shaken. 'None of these things moved' them.

Observe, too, what the Master says of the badly based and badly built house. '*It fell in.*' That tells the whole story of thousands of moral wrecks in the community. They are not swept away; they simply '*fall in.*' At unhappy Scio, after the earthquake, I observed that certain solid structures were as erect as ever, but the roofs and chamber-floors of the frail buildings had crashed down into a heap of ruin in the cellar. A terrible picture that, my friend, of your character and your eternal hopes, if you are not based on Jesus Christ and built up after the Bible pattern. If not sooner, then surely on the last great searching Day of Judgment, you will '*fall in,*' and the ruin will be remediless! Too late then to change houses, or build over! Begin now. Dig deep; base all on Christ; and then build for eternity.

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A WHISPER FROM THE WOODS.—The first wild flowers come to us with a sweetness all their own. No later blooms have quite the delicate illusive perfume, quite the shy grace of these early darlings of the spring. How glad we are when we discover them in our forest rambles, and how consciously they smile at us almost as if they, too, were happy to be the evidences of an ever-present love, which gives us the beautiful in its season. They have had no anxious care of the florist, but the great Gardener has sent them the sunshine and the ministries they have needed. So they are His tokens.—*Aunt Marjory.*

A FIRM BELIEF.—If I could choose what of all things would be at the same time the most delightful and useful to me, I should prefer a *firm religious belief* to every other blessing; for this makes life a discipline of goodness; creates new hopes when all earthly ones vanish; throws over the decay of existence the most gorgeous of all lights; awakens life even in death; makes even torture and shame the ladder of ascent to Paradise; and far above all combinations of earthly hopes, calls up the most delightful visions of the future, the security of everlasting joys, where the sensualist and the sceptic view only gloom, decay, annihilation, and despair.—*Sir H. Davy.*