

The Home Mission Journal.

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The Church and Its Goal.

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PART IV.

Is not this the spirit of the Christ, the founder of the church? Did he not say, "It is more blessed to give than to receive? Creating a fund of imitation fees and dues and out of that fund contributing to the needs of the order is not giving, that is paying. Did not Christ say, "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and give my life a ransom for many?" Did he not tell us that when we see a beast of burden, belonging to our enemy, lying under his burden, we should help that beast of burden? Did he not tell us to love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us. Mark that. Do good to them that hate you. That is what Christ, the founder of the church, did. That is what the church for nineteen hundred years has been doing, as is witnessed by the blood of the martyrs in every century. "Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that spitefully use you and persecute you."

That is the business of the church. Did not Christ say, "If ye love them who love you, what reward have you; do not even the publicans the same? If you salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?" More is expected of a Christian than of a publican. Did not Christ tell us of the good Samaritan? Who was he? He was a man who came upon a wounded man. And mark you, that man was not a member of his lodge, not a member of his church, not a member of his nation, but the Good Samaritan dislodged from his beast of burden, bound those wounds, put that man on his beast of burden, walked by his side, took him to the inn, cared for him, paid his bills and became security for future bills. That was benevolence. If Old Fellowship wishes to take the Good Samaritan as a symbol of its order, it should change its constitution and make the fundamental purpose of the order the caring for the needy outside of the order. That is what the Good Samaritan did.

If you would know the mission of the church, listen to the Founder of the church when he said: "I came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." If you would know the mission of the church, listen to Christ, the Founder, the night before the crucifixion, when in prayer to the Father, referring to the disciples, he said: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Not into the church, but into the world. Some people think the apostles were sent into the church, that missionaries and pastors are sent into the church. Not long since a local missionary reported 599 pastoral calls one year. He said he called on all the members of his church every week. I said: Was not that a waste of time? Why did you do that? "Well, he says, "half my members would not be in church services Sunday if I had not been in their home during the week." Do you want to know what has become of that church? It has dried up and blown away. That was the last pastor it ever had. Some people think that a pastor's business is to entertain and please his church; that the pastor is a king of society gentleman to call around once in so often, say sweet things to church members, pat them on the back, feed them sugar plums and give them taffy. Christ

sends the pastor and all his people into the world. Forget it not. Some people think a pastor's church is his field and he ought to cultivate it. Christ said: "The field is the world." A pastor's church is his working force to cultivate the world.

If you would know the mission of the church of Jesus Christ, listen to our Lord, after his resurrection, just before his ascension, when, in summing up his earthly ministry, he said: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations." Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. O church of God, that is your mission, and when you have accomplished it you have attained your goal.

If you joined the church to get something then you did not join it for the purpose that Paul joined it. Paul on the way to Damascus heard a voice and said: "Who art thou Lord?" and the voice replied: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." What did Paul say? Did he say, Lord, if I join your church, what will you give me? Nay, verily, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" What did the Lord tell him? "Paul, I am going to send you far hence to the Gentiles." Think of it. Paul at that time hated the very name Gentile, but he says he was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, and the Lord sent him on those three magnificent missionary journeys; sent him to persecution, to whippings, to stonings, to perils by sea, perils by land, to shipwreck, to prison, and to a martyr's death.

If you joined the church to get something if you joined the church to be rocked in the cradle of society, and carried to heaven on flowery beds of ease, if your supreme thought is to build up your church, to get together a company of respectable people who shall constitute a mutual admiration society, let me tell you that, to say the least, you are down in the muck, the mire, the malaria of Christianity.

A man, a member of a certain Grace church, taught ten years in a mission school. Then he examined the records and found that there were only ten people in Grace church who came into the church through his mission work, and he said, "It does not pay," and he told his pastor that he was going to stop teaching in the mission, and told him why. It was not long until the pastor had discovered that many members of other churches had been converted in that mission, had never joined Grace church, but had joined other churches, and he went and told his discouraged mission worker, and the man was meditative for a time and then said: "I see, I see, all these years I have been laboring to build up Grace church, but now I will go back to the mission and labor for the salvation of the unsaved." Let me tell you, when that man got that view of Christianity he had risen many, many degrees in his conception of what it means to be a Christian.

I am not saying that we ought not to build beautiful, attractive church edifices; I am not saying that we ought not to be neat, refined, cultured. I am simply saying that this is not our supreme business. An army may come out occasionally on dress parade, but coming out on dress parade is not its supreme business. I am not saying that church members ought not to be "kindly affectioned one to another." I am not saying that we ought not to "bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." I am not saying that an army ought not to care for its wounded. I am simply saying that caring for the wounded is not the supreme business for which the army was created. It was created to fight the battle. No general calls the battle off to care for some one who has been hit. Fight the battle the army must, and care for its wounded and the wounded of the enemy if it can do so without interfering with the progress of the battle.

I am not saying that the pastor ought not to "feed the flock of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." But why does a shepherd feed his flock? Is it simply that he may produce a fine looking flock and keep it forever fine looking? Does a manly man live to eat or does he eat to live?

In a prayer meeting of a church which had enjoyed a blessed ingathering the previous year,

it was asked: "Do we expect another ingathering this year, but one thing I do know, and that is that in these prayer meetings we have blessed feasts." Very well, but is a feast an end in itself? Suppose a dozen persons in this community living at one place, who rise in the morning, eat their breakfast and go back to bed, and at noon come out on dress parade and enjoy a blessed feast and go back to bed then come out at night and sit down to a banquet. Every thing is all right. They are perfectly satisfied. They tell the cook that they enjoyed the feast and then go back to bed. Sleep and eat; eat and sleep! What would you think of such people? And yet, many churches are doing just that. Peter wanted to build three tabernacles and stay on the mount of transfiguration, but at the foot of the mountain there was an unusual case of demoniacal possession, and Christ and the disciples were needed down in the valley to cast the demon out.

Now, brethren, go to prayer meeting and enjoy a blessed feast. Go to the mount of transfiguration and get a new—a fresh view of Jesus Christ, then come down from the mountain into the valley, come out of the prayer meeting into the world; come in touch with needy humanity and help cast out the demon of sin. O church of God, that is your business. Are you attending to your business?

The church is not primarily an insurance company. It is an arm; and its business is to conquer the world for Christ; an army to go forth with the sword of the Spirit, not to destroy, but to save; not to kill, but to make alive; an army to seek and to save the lost; an army to bring the blessed gospel of peace and salvation to a sin cursed, suffering, sorrowing world. That is our business.

IN LINE WITH CREATION.

The church, in fitting its goal outside of itself, is in line with everything else which God has created. Nothing which God has made legitimately finds the end of its existence in itself. The sun shines not for itself, but that through the ages it may send light, heat and energy to worlds millions of miles in the distance. The spear of grass exists not for itself, but for the ox. The ox exists not for himself, but for man. You may search creation from this world to the farthest star that twinkles at the midnight hour and you will not find a thing which God has made to exist for itself and the church in existing for a purpose outside of itself is simply in line with everything else which God has created. It is man-got-up institutions which are self-centered.

THE CHURCH WILL NEVER DIE.

In conclusion one thought. The church will never die. Christ said: "The gates of hades shall not prevail against it." Hades is the abode of the dead. The gates to hades are the gates to death. The church will never pass through those gates. Other institutions will rise, flourish, serve their purpose and go down through the dread gates of death, but the church never. Kings may legislate against her, warriors may slaughter her subjects. Foes without may persecute her; foes within may corrupt her, but she will overcome every difficulty and outlive every storm.

And when the last dollar has been given and the last sermon preached, the last Sunday school class taught and the last missionary sent, the last sinner invited, and the last soul gathered home, the last burden lifted, and the last tear wiped away—when the last moon has waxed and waned, when the earth has melted with fervent heat and the heavens have rolled together like a scroll, somewhere in God's universe the church of Jesus Christ will be radiant in glory.

THE END.

The Christian Register says that we have heard often about the Jukes family of degenerates which went on producing criminals and paupers until, in about 170 years, it had cost the community \$1,250,000. In the same number of generations, as Dr. Winship shows in the Christian Advocate, the family of Jonathan Edwards had sent out 285 college graduates, including more than 100 lawyers and 30 judges, 65 college professors, and 13 presidents colleges.