

The Home Mission Journal.

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The Church and Its Goal.

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PART II.

The New Testament church, therefore, is a COMPANY OF PEOPLE CALLED OF GOD, called out of the world into the church of God's dear Son. As Paul puts it: "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord of Hosts." The church is therefore a company of people who have heard and responded to God's call.

I fear there are those whose names are on our church rolls who in coming into the visible church did so, not in response to God's call. Not that God did not call them. God calls all, but it was not God's call to which these people responded. Perhaps it was the evangelist's call. The evangelist was persuasive. He urged an individual to join the church, and that individual with no thought of God, or his obligations to Jesus Christ, joined the church in response to the evangelist's call. Perhaps it was mother's call. Mother persuaded the boy to join the church and with no thought of himself as a sinner needing a Savior, or the necessity of a new heart and a spiritual life, the boy, to please his mother, joins the church. That was responding to mother's call. I never would persuade a person to join the church. With all my power I would persuade him to give his heart to God and center his life in Jesus Christ, but until he has enough of the Christ spirit in his heart to come and ask the privilege of uniting with the church, a church relation will be of little avail. The first and supreme need is not a visible church relation, but a divine life. The divine life, however, leads into the church.

Perhaps we responded to society's call. It was thought that there were social advantages in a church relation, and for social reasons the church was joined. That was responding to society's call. Perhaps it was a commercial call. The largest and wealthiest church was sought and joined for commercial reasons. That was responding to a commercial call.

The true church of God is composed of those who hear God's call and respond to God's call.

Under this general sense, the called of God, there are in the New Testament two applications of the word church. The word is used many times referring to a local company of Christian people who assemble to one place to worship God. We read of the church at Rome, the church at Antioch, the church at Jerusalem. We read of Paul and Barnabas going through Asia Minor ordaining elders in all the churches. This evidently refers to the local companies of Christian people meeting to worship in given communities.

The word is used a few times referring to all the saved. We read of the church which is the body of Christ, the church of the First Born whose names are written in heaven. All whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, all the saved, on earth and in heaven, of this age and all other ages, are the church in this broader sense.

In this broader sense, no visible organization is the church. Doubtless many Romanists are members of God's church, but the Roman church is not the church; the Episcopal church is not the church; the Baptist denomination is not the church. The church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood is broader than any one of these visible organizations or all of them put together. All who are spiritually born, all who belong to Christ's spiritual body are members of Christ's church.

It is interesting to note that the two times our Lord used the word he used it in these two senses. When he directed the disciples to report the trespassing brother to the church, he referred to the local company, but when he said: "Upon this rock I will build my church," he referred to something broader than any local organization.

A DIVINE INSTITUTION.

The church is, in an exceptional sense, a divine institution. It belongs in a peculiar sense to Christ. Christ calls it his church. He says: "Upon this rock I will build my church." All things belong to Christ by right of creation. He created all things. "Without Him was not anything made that hath been made," and so all things belong to Christ by right of creation. But you never hear Christ speaking of "my" creation. You do hear him speaking of "my" church. It seems to me that the church comes a little nearer to the heart of Christ than anything else in creation.

We have organizations and organizations within organizations. We have the Sunday school, but the Sunday school is not the church. We have our young people's societies, but the missionary department is not the church. We have our missionary organizations, our state conventions, our Home Mission Society, our Foreign Mission Society, our Publication Society, but these are not the church. The church is broader than any one or all of them put together, is the mother of them all.

We have our V. M. C. A., our W. C. T. U., and our secular organizations *ad infinitum*, but towering high above all these, far transcending all in power, position, influence and effectiveness is the church of Jesus Christ, and the man who is seeking first God's kingdom, puts the church upon the throne in his life. He may be a member of a dozen organizations, but the organization which holds the first place in the affections and in his devotions in the church of Christ. I have met individuals who think they have formed something which takes the place of the church, but, friend, there is nothing on earth or in heaven which can take the place of the church of Jesus Christ. It is the one supreme divine institution.

To be Continued.

Some one went to a lady, the beauty of whose life shone in her face, and said, "I have been a devotee of the world and its pleasures all my life, but I have seen nothing like your face; if Jesus Christ made your face like that I want to believe in him."

Was Jesus Begotten of the Flesh or of the Holy Spirit?

ON this question there is diversity of opinion. Not long since we heard a minister say in the pulpit that Joseph was the father of Jesus. If that is true, the

account we have by two of the biographers can only be regarded as mythical, and without the glory of miracle. The Scripture statements taken in support of him being the son of Joseph are as follows:—Luke 2:48, where Mary his mother says, thy father and I have sought thee three days sorrowing. But in speaking to his boy of Joseph sharing her sorrow in the loss of him, what else would she call him but his father, and it is not observable that Jesus at once gave her to understand that his real father was not sorrowing but pleased to have him in his house attending to his business? Again they rely on the genealogy of Jesus which is traced back from Joseph to David, Abraham and Adam. But Luke in chap. 3:23, begins his genealogy by saying Jesus was supposed to be the son of Joseph. And Mathew in tracing the genealogy of Jesus from Abraham, comes down to Joseph the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. It is remarkable that he does not say of Joseph, "And Joseph begat Jesus," but omits it and says he was the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus, and why did Mathew not say that Joseph begat Jesus who is called Christ? Simply because he was inspired to write the story of Christ's advent into the world as he gave it when he had finished the genealogy as seen in chapter first, beginning with the 18th verse to the close. A statement that Joseph begat Jesus would have nullified the whole account of the miraculous conception of Mary's first-born son. And not only so, but would leave the world without an incarnate Saviour. The fact of the incarnation of the Son of God; God manifest in the person of the Nazarene prophet is the essence of the gospel. Again it is claimed that Jesus called himself the son of man. But he also claimed to be the son of God. As the son of Mary he could call himself the son of a man. But it is noteworthy that Jesus never called himself the son of man to declare his identity with manhood. But really, are we to relegate the account given by Mathew in his first chapter, verses 26 to 36 of the immaculate conception of Jesus to the realm of myths? and must we reject the statements of Luke given in his 1st chapter, and 26th to the 29th verses, on to the close, be put aside as unworthy of acceptance? If the statements are not to be taken for facts of what value is the rest of the record that these writers have given us? To reject the divine conception of Jesus by the Virgin Mary, and to regard him as the begotten son of Joseph is not consistent with custom of betrothed couples in Israel; and to insinuate that Jesus was begotten of fornication, which some of the Jews did insinuate. See John 8:41. But the divine incarnation is a thread of prophecy that runs through the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelations. The first intimation of a Saviour provided for fallen man was given in Eden to the mother of the family she had ruined by disobeying the command of her creator, when He said that her seed should bruise the serpent's head. Observe, he did not say that the seed of the man should bruise the serpent's head.

The prophet Isaiah foretold of this divine Redeemer; and said, Unto us a child is born, and