

The Home Mission Journal.

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The Church and Its Goal.

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**PART III.
THE BODY OF CHRIST.**

THE Church is repeatedly declared to be the body of Christ. Christ is its head. As such, he is of supreme authority; he is the ultimate standard of appeal. It is the business of the body simply and promptly to obey the dictates of the head. My head says to my hand, rise, and it rises; to my feet move forward and I move; to my vocal organs, speak and I speak; to my eyes, see and I see. So is it the business of the body of Christ to respond promptly to the directions of Christ. If the members of the body do not respond to the volitions of my head, it is because there is disease in the body. If the church does not obey Christ, our Head, there is disease in the church. O for a sensitive nerve system to perceive the very volitions of Christ.

The church is Christ's body, his executive agency. Your head becomes effective through the mechanism of your body. Your mind accomplishes results through the agency of the body. Even so, our feet are Christ's feet to run on errands of mercy; our hands are Christ's hands to perform deeds of kindness; our ears are Christ's ears to hear the call of the needy. When our Lord was bodily upon the earth, he went about doing good. To-day He goes about doing good wherever the church, His body is thus engaged. We are here in Christ's stead; here to carry forward the Christ's work; here to make effective the Christ life.

The church is Christ's body; and not His spirit, but His body. The body, however, is the manifestation of the spirit. I had a mother once. I knew her life, her disposition and somewhat her motives, but I had no knowledge of mother except that which came to me through her human body. All that the world knows of you, of your life, your disposition, your motives, is what it learned of you through your body; and do you realize that all which many of this world will ever know of Christ is what they learn of him through his church which is his body? What will be the world's conception of Christ judging from the church, his body? What kind of representatives are we of Christ?

This is the church, so far as I care to-day to define it. It is a company of people who have heard and heeded God's call, belong in a peculiar sense to Christ, are permeated by His spirit and consequently constitute His body, His executive agency.

Second. What is the mission, aim, purpose, goal of the church?

I want to say in the first place that the goal of the church is outside of itself. If I make nothing else plain to-day, I want to make this fact plain. So far as this world is concerned at least, the church does not exist primarily, constitutionally, fundamentally, for the benefit of the members of the church. It is not a self-centered institution. There are many man-gotten-up institutions of which this can not be said. The majority of man-gotten-up institutions are self-centered. They exist primarily for the benefit of their members.

This is true of governments. This great Republic of which we are justly proud, exists for the benefit of the members of the Republic. The preamble to the constitution declares this. It reads: "We, the people of the United States, in order to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution of the United States of America. You see, "To secure blessings to ourselves and our posterity," this is why we exist. Our government exists for the benefit of ourselves. This is a government of the people, by the people, for the people—for the people of the United States. We elect our chief magistrate and expect him to look out first for the good of the people of this country. He may be incidentally a blessing to the inhabitants of other countries, but he must not jeopardize the interests of the people of this country. United States exists constitutionally for the benefit of United States.

This same thing is true of many a minor organizations. Most lodges are self-centered. They exist primarily for the benefit of the members of the lodge. Most clubs exist for the benefit of the members of the club. Some one has said: "The difference between a church and a lodge is, that one joins a lodge to get something, but he joins a church to give something." This expresses a fundamental difference between the church and the lodge. The Galveston disaster, so freshly in mind, gives us an illustration which will help us at this point. The wind and the tide combined and rolled the mighty water over Galveston and there was death and destruction everywhere. The sufferers were taken in the first place to temporary hospitals. A young surgeon from Chicago hastened to Houston near Galveston, and in one of these temporary hospitals cared for over seven hundred people. One morning a man came and called out, "Are there any Masons here?" Feeble hands were lifted and the Masons were all gathered out of that temporary hospital, carried to better quarters and cared for by Masons. That is all right for Masonry; that is what Masonry is for, to care for Masons. Later a man came and called out, "Are there any Odd Fellows here?" Feeble hands were lifted and Odd Fellows were gathered out, taken to better quarters and cared for by Odd Fellows. That is all right for Odd Fellows. Those sufferers had paid their initiation fees and their dues with the distinct understanding that in the hour of calamity they would be cared for, and Odd Fellowship in caring for Odd Fellows did simply what it was paid to do. That was business, straight business. Do not call that benevolence. It was business. The Knights of Pythias cared for Knights, and so on down the list of the lodges.

As I read this account, I was wondering who would care for the poor fellows who were not members of any lodges. Are there any Baptists here? and I am very glad that was not said. No one came saying, Are there any Methodists here? and I am very glad that was not said. No one

came saying, Are there any Christians here? We are going to care for Christians, the sinners may take care of themselves, we will care for all Christians. No one came saying that, and I would blush for Christianity if that had been done. The lodge may care simply for its own and no one criticises; but let the church go to Galveston and care simply for its own and there would be a howl of criticism from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Why? Because the church is a broader institution than the lodge.

The church did not single out its own, but what did it do? All over the country, Christian churches and Christian communities, led in many instances by Christian pastors, made up their purses and gathered their provisions and shipped them across the country to needy Galveston, and they did not send along a message saying, This is for Baptists; this is for Congregationalists; this is for Methodists; this is for Presbyterians; this is for United Brethren; this is for Disciples. They did not even send a message saying, This is for Christians. They did say, In Galveston is need, help the needy. Stop not to ask any man as to lodge relation or church relation or any other relations. Wherever you find need, there help.

And lying there on the damp ground is a wounded man, but his physical wounds are not his deepest wounds. He bears the scars of sin; he is plumed, degraded. Before the calamity came to Galveston that man was an outcast. And mark you, the lodges will not have that man. Let him apply for membership and they will black ball him, and so far as the lodge is concerned, that is the end of it. But let him tell you, that man is the man whom Jesus Christ wants. He wants to put character into him and help him work it out. O church of God, go to that man who has never paid you a cent and never will. Wash his filth, bind his wounds, lay him on a clean cot, give him refreshing broth, let him sleep, and when he awakes give him more refreshing broth, and then give him the gospel of Jesus Christ which is the power of God unto salvation, and then tell him about the blood of Christ that cleanseth from all sin. Church of God, that is your business.

I am not criticising the lodge. The lodge in caring for its own is doing what it was constituted to do. Neither am I saying what members of the lodge may do, outside of their lodge relation, in contributing to a general fund of relief. I am not discussing individuals. I am discussing the constitutionality of institutions. I am not discussing the exceptional acts of lodges. Lodges sometimes make purely benevolent donations, but this is the exception, and when they do these things they go beyond their constitution. I am discussing the constitutionality of institutions and I say the lodge is constitutionally self-centered. It exists constitutionally, fundamentally, primarily for the benefit of its members. The church of Jesus Christ is constitutionally fundamentally, primarily, emphatically not self-centered. So far as this world is concerned at least, it does not exist primarily for the benefit of its members.

To be Continued.

Mathew Arnold says that the Saxon's distinguishing characteristic is *steadiness*. To war successfully for Christ this must belong also to our character.