

## Devotional Service

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(These topics harmonize with the chapters of our Bible Study text-book, "Studies in the Apostolic Church," which is advertised in this paper.)

### MAY 21.—"MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY."

(STUDY 15, APOSTOLIC CHURCH.)

1 Cor. 12, 12-31.

The striking illustration of Paul in comparing Christians to the human body in its members and the performance of their functions, conveys a fundamental truth much needed in the Church to-day. With diversity of gifts all are necessary to make a complete organization for God. Mutual regard for one another, no matter how lowly the position may be in which one is placed, is a plain inference, and every one doing his or her part in the Church's work is an evident teaching.

#### THE BODY OF CHRIST.

Observe not merely, "Ye are a body," though that has been the burden of the chapter. The give and take of support and sympathy, and service, between part and part; the interdependence of part and part for life and growth; the diversity of capacity and function, all contributing to the welfare of the whole and of each part; all have been dwelt upon fully. All are as true of any organized society and corporate life, as of the Church of Christ. But this is only what the members are to each other. Here Paul goes further, "Ye are a body; ye are Christ's body, ye are a body united with him; we are a body for him; ye furnish him with an instrument analogous to your own. What your body is and for you, that ye are to and for Christ."

#### THE CONNECTING LINK.

To us a body is the link between us and the outer world. It mediates between the immaterial part in us and material existences outside us. The immaterial in one man communicates with the immaterial in another through their two bodies. Such analogies may not be pressed far, but hold good thus far. We influence the outer world through the instrumentality of our bodily part; the outer world is known to us and affects us largely through the organs and sensations of our body. In somewhat similar fashion is Christ pleased that his church should be (a) a body for him, mediating between him and the world. (b) In one particular also the world reaches him through his body. Take this latter first.

1. "Why persecutest thou me?"—not "my people." Saul reaches further, deeper than he thought, as he "hates men and women to prison," or "consents to the stoning of Stephen, persecuting those of the way unto death." Not the hand or foot alone is touched or wounded; the head is hurt; Christ feels the pain. The sufferings of the martyrs are the "afflictions of Christ." His earthly life of a few years and his church's life of many centuries were one life and one history, both of work and persecution; the centuries a continuation, an extension of the thirty years; he assuming to himself all the pain, as well as the toil and the success of a church's life. The first Adam and his race fell as one; the second Adam and the new race of those who are "in him" rise as one; those suffer as one. The old doctrine of federal headship, in the modern phrase, the solidarity of successive generations, is an attempt to express particular phases of the great principles underlying this "Touch a Christian, burn him, wrong him, persecute or hate

him; you touch, burn, wrong, persecute, hate Christ." Let persecutor and persecuted remember that Christ is to be taken into the count.

2. With freer use of the analogy, it may be said Christ reaches the world through his body, through the activities of his church. Whether man can act upon man and upon matter otherwise than through the body's powers and organs, may be open to discussion upon carefully gathered evidence. There is no doubt that Christ can and does. There is a sovereignty about times of visitation to churches and to nations and generations.

Christ sends forth wide influence, when the church has asked little, done less, or herself been a body of health, too feeble to effect or to initiate anything. He is independent of his body, as we are not of ours. Yet he does not only make large use of his organ and instrument, but was largely pleased to make his work depend upon, and be conditioned by, and executed through, the activities of his people. As the body is organic to the man, so the church is organic to Christ. Every member of a body is under the control of the will of the man. So the indwelling Christ rules in, as well as over every member of his body. Humanly speaking, if the church is not active, the world goes unreached, unsaved. Its activities are his, and are the usual and ordinary ones through which he expresses and effects his will and purpose in the salvation of the world.

#### CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY.

The church should always be at its best of spiritual force and health, a fitting serviceable instrument, always ready to do the will of the head. A ready test is provided, distinguishing between right and wrong activities of his church. In what enterprises should it engage—and in what not? What work should it or should it not undertake or be led into? Can the enterprise, the work, the activity, whether in fact or in proposal, be conceivably attributed to Christ himself, and identified with him? Could it be his activity? It is inconsistent that some forms of amusement and money-raising should be attached to the church and its enterprises; they could not be conceivably attributed to Christ; they cannot be the action of his body.

#### THE OTHER SIDE.

On the other side the principle makes some forms of activity obligatory upon the church, and upon the churches. For example, can anything else be supposed but that Christ should desire his Gospel carried to the heathen and to all lands? The obligation of missions, "come and tarry," upon the church of Christ, can never be an open question. He must desire it. His body is not revealing or expressing him if it is not activity, aggressively "missionary." It is no speculation that Christ's body and every part of it should express him. There are, happily, Christian men and women in whom every one who comes into contact with them feels he has come into close contact with, has seen Christ. The obligation not to misrepresent him, the obligation to represent him lies upon the church, because it is his body. Hearts are asking, the world is asking, "We would see Jesus." It ought to be possible to say, "Look at his body."

#### THE CHURCH UNIQUE.

This relation to Christ differentiates the church from all other organizations. It is not merely one amongst many societies and organized associations of the same order. No doubt, he who is the ruler of human society and its every movement takes care that there is no

form of association between man and man, but has the control of his hand. It subserves his purpose. It has a real relation to him. But this corporation is unique. It has a unique relation to him. He has assumed it into union with himself. He is "head over all things," for his body's sake. "He is head of the church;" himself dwells in every member.

#### POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

There are four or five distinct paragraphs in the exposition above on the topic for the week. You could not do better probably than assign these paragraphs to as many members of the League to expand for the meeting. It is rather a difficult subject to make interesting. Study it well yourself, and be in a position to throw light where necessary. The topic conveys one of the most important lessons that the church and its members need to learn.

### MAY 28.—"SUMMER SCHOOLS AND THE FORWARD MOVEMENT FOR MISSIONS."

The Summer School is a gathering open to all who are interested in the study of the Bible and Missions. The lectures and addresses are given by college professors, missionaries, and specially qualified workers and leaders. It has been said that the Epworth League discovered the young people to Methodism. The Forward Movement for Missions revealed the mighty force in these young people for the evangelization of the world. The development and use of this force in our young people demands trained workers qualified to lead. And the opportunity for this training is supplied by the Summer School through the lectures, study classes, practical methods of work, Bible study and addresses, all of which combine to make the school of educational value and helpful to the development of the spiritual life.

The aim of the Forward Movement is the extension of God's kingdom, and this can only be done by prayer, study, giving. The school is held for prayer, study and giving. These interests assemble at the school, not to talk about "How to study?" but to spend the time in studying our mission fields and methods of work, in increasing their knowledge of the Bible, in gaining a wider vision of the world we live in, and in planning to give themselves for the help of others.

#### ADVANTAGES OF THE SCHOOL.

These are well set forth by one who attended one of these schools. He gives at least four important advantages, as follows:

1. Rest and recreation have been most successfully combined with study and inspiration.
2. The social side of the Summer School life is strong and wholesome. The "esprit de corps" of Christian friendship grows from day to day.
3. Intellectually every session is replete with fresh, crisp, interesting and up-to-date information in all phases of church work.
4. The spiritual side of the Summer School work is, perhaps, the most helpful of all.

#### OBJECT IN VIEW.

The object of this new institution of Methodism, the Summer School, is concisely set forth in the following three paragraphs:

To deepen the spiritual life and missionary purpose of the church of the future.

To develop efficient leaders for the carrying on of a vigorous campaign