

The Ekklesia.

This is a Greek word which is translated church. It signifies a company, assembly or body of people bound or compacted together.

To-day there are many organizations claiming to be the church, and having various bonds of union; but we wish to know, upon the authority of God's Word, what ekklesia, body or church, Jesus established, and what are its bonds of union; secondly, we wish to show that every Christian should belong to that church; thirdly, the injurious effects of joining the wrong ekklesia or church; and fourthly, having joined the right church, what are the results of losing our membership.

First then, the church which Jesus began to gather during his ministry, and which was recognized by the Father at Pentecost after their ransom price was paid, was the little company of disciples who had consecrated earthly time, talents and life a sacrifice to God. They were organized and bound together as members of one society, and as such had laws and government, and consequently a head or recognized ruling authority. The bonds are bonds of love and common interest. Since all were enlisted under the captaincy of Jesus, the hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, and aims of one were those of the other; and thus they had a far more perfect union of heart than could possibly be had from a union on the basis of any man made creed. Thus their organization was of the spirit; their law for the government of each was love, and all as a whole were put under obedience to the "law of the Spirit" as it was expressed in the life, actions, and words of their Lord. Their government was the will of him who said, "If ye love me keep my commandments."

Thus we see the early church organized, governed, and in perfect unity and harmony under the rulership or *headship* of Jesus. Contrast this church organization with what now affects to be a continuance of the same—viz.: the various denominational organizations, each of which binds its members to a mental union on the basis of some creed or dogma of its own (many of them anything but lovely) and each having its own laws.

These laws emanate from their heads, or rulers and law-givers; so it is clearly seen that these present day churches, have and recognize

as heads, or directing, ruling powers over them, the ancient founders of their various creeds, each contradicting the other, while their clergy in conferences, councils, synods and presbyteries, variously interpret and enforce the "traditions of the elders" which "make void the Word of God." These take the place of the true head of the church—Jesus—and the true teacher and guide into all truth, the Holy Spirit. Hear the Prophet Isaiah express it chap. 9: 15.) "The ancient and honorable, he is the head, and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail." And the whole nominal system is described in the Revelation as "Babylon"—confusion—Papal mothers and Protestant daughters.

Will they own this to be so? No, for the lukewarm nominal church of to-day believes herself to be rich, and increased with goods, having need of nothing; not knowing that she is wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. (Rev. 3: 17.)

"These are hard sayings, who can receive them?" But these are not our sayings; it is the warning voice of the sure word of prophecy . . . whereunto ye do well that ye take heed." And it is a loving voice for again our Lord declares: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."

There are two senses in which the true church of Christ may be considered: All who like the early church were fully consecrated to the doing of our Father's will, amenable only to Christ's will and government, recognizing and obeying none other—These saints, from the beginning of the Gospel Age down to its close, when all of this class are sealed, constitute the "Church of the First Born," whose names are written in Heaven. These are all one in aim, hope and suffering, and in due time will be joint-heirs with Jesus Christ to the great inheritance—heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised for them that love him.

The other sense in which this same class is recognized, is by counting a part for the whole; thus all the living of this class may be spoken of as the church; or, again, any part of this class of living followers who may meet together may properly be called the church; for, by the word of Jesus we know that wherever two or three are assembled, he will be among them, consequently that would be a church

meeting—an assembly of the "church of the First Born." The general assembly will be, when all the church are made like, and glorified with their head—Jesus.

Such, then is our definition of the church of Christ; it is perfectly illustrated by Paul (Rom. 12: 4, 5) when he compares the church to a human body. In this figure Jesus represents the head, and all who are his constitute the body, over and through which the head rules. Jesus has been and always will be the head over his church as a whole; he is likewise the head and ruler of the entire living church and in every assembly where two or three meet in his name he is the head, ruler and teacher.

If it be asked, in what sense does he teach? we answer, by exercising the qualities of the head, or teacher; by using one or more of those present as his mouthpiece in unfolding truth, strengthening faith, encouraging hope, inspiring zeal, etc., just as the head of your body can call upon one member to minister to another. But here a word of caution; If one become as useful an instrument as a right hand, he should take care that he aspire not to become the head. Be not puffed up; pride will paralyze and render useless. "Be not ye called Rabbi (master, teacher) for one is your master (head) even Christ, and all ye are brethren." And let not the least member despise his office, "for if all were one member, where were the body?" "Nay, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary"—"God hath set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him."

How simple, beautiful and effectual is God's plan of salvation!—*Zion's Watch Tower.*

Merit Versus Charity.

Of all the callings in the world that of ministry is the farthest removed from charity. Its authority, its object, its incessant and varied labors, and the education and talent required to make it successful place it infinitely in advance of all trades and professions. Counterfeits in the pulpit are not the representatives of the pulpit and cannot be the measure of its usefulness. The Christian ministry has ever stood upon its own merit. Aside from all questions of the future well being of the race, its presence in every community, in every age of the world and under all conditions of society, has paid a thousand fold.

Making the largest reasonable reduction for all its mistakes, for all its failures, and for the evils which have grown out of its prostitution in unholy hands, and the truth remains; no body of men the world has ever seen has been so universally on the side of all moral improvement or has labored more earnestly for the general culture and advancement of the human race. Widely as theologians have differed in their creed, much as they have quarreled over their pet dogmas, and great as have been the discussions and splits of christendom, under their varied leadership, the steady tread of this host has been onward toward a brighter and more glorious civilization, and its record to day stands unimpeached before the world without a parallel. And yet, not a few still live who have never learned "The workman is worthy of his hire." There are those who believe poverty in a minister, if not an essential element of piety and preparation for his work, is yet a necessity to humbleness. Their estimation of this calling is, that it is not paid for but is designed of God to subsist on the scraps of charity it may be able to wring from the world by the sight of its tattered garments. With such, the preacher's salary is not a debt the Church owes him, but a donation it has generously granted and it is at liberty to stop payment when and where it pleases.

Not unfrequently the estimate for his support is solely on the ground of shelter, food and raiment. The farmer says, "I can live on five hundred a year and my preacher can do it. I wear jeans and my preacher can do it," and yet the farmer expects his pastor to represent his Church in councils, to stand among the most cultured, to be posted on all themes of the day, and be ready everywhere and at all hours to creditably sustain his religious interests at home and abroad, among friends and foes. He does not take it into account that to stand abreast of the thought of the day requires books periodicals, and books cost money. He does not take it into account that a minister needs the association of men of culture and brains to educate his own, and for this purpose he must visit conventions, lectures, and institutes, and this takes money.

There are hundreds of pastors complained of to-day because they cannot make brick without straw, and the straw is in the pockets of