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TEMPERED TRUTHS

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"The Church that is in their house." Romans 16:5.

The Church is one of our oldest institutions. Long before the Christian era the Church was recognized as a distinctive group. Paul quotes David thus: "I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee." Dr. Strong defines the word ecclesia, or ekklesia, "A calling out." "A religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in Heaven, or both) assembly, church." Hence, the Church boasts the prestige of longevity, and rare eminence.

That there has come into being such a dissimilarity of religious beliefs accounts for our multiplicity of different denominations and sects. How to correct this, the religious world has not yet learned. And some of us are quite ready to affirm that "liberty of conscience," in this respect, is one of the great blessings that the Christian church has made possible to men. May the day never come when such liberties are denied us. I am a "full-salvation" advocate, but I have no ambition to exercise any authority in this matter other than that which "God hath given me to edification and not to destruction." This being so, I feel at liberty to ask my readers to consider carefully, and without prejudice, what I have for you in this article.

It is not unusual for us to hear men say, "Churches make no difference with me; I can worship God just the same in one church as another." How fortunate! And yet, how unlike the rest of us. I presume the difference rests in that the last mentioned think, and the former do not. Beyond question, the Church is the greatest single factor (the Holy Spirit excepted) in molding the religious thinking and characters of men. The home has its influence, but it cannot take the place of the church in this respect. Our various religious communions have their peculiar beliefs and customs, and these invariably show in their members and adherents. You have but to see the followers of some groups on the street to ascertain their peculiar church affiliations. Tune in on a religious service on your radio and you will not find it difficult to determine to what "school of thought" the speaker belongs. His tone, his spirit, his statements, his "shibboleths" betray him. And the more intense, or dogmatic the group, the more evident will be the "mark." A few weeks ago, while walking along a street in Saint John, I saw several ladies come out of a store a few doors ahead of me, and when I saw them I made a mental note regarding their church affiliations. My deductions were proven correct a moment later when a young woman I knew came out of the same store and joined the group. They were not wearing

uniforms; however, I knew them by their dress. And you will agree with me when I say that a church that can influence women these days in their mode of dress has a weight of influence not to be overlooked. The church we attend is a mighty factor in our lives, and if we think it doesn't make any difference we are fooling ourselves. The Church sets for us our standard of ethics. If the church we attend endorses the movies, bridge parties, dances, smoking, Sabbath excursions, Sabbath visiting, etc., we will find it quite simple to acquiesce, yea, to argue that because our church allows these things they must therefore be alright.

The church also is the great Indoctrinator of men. Here, we listen, while the great doctrines of religious thought are discussed. Each church has its own interpretation of these important subjects, and your thinking and mine will be largely patterned after the message we hear Sunday after Sunday. Paul said, "So we preach, so ye believed." We wonder how people can read their bibles and pray to the virgin Mary, but we have not "so learned Christ." We wonder how people can accept the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy, of Brigham Young, of pastor Russell, and a dozen others. Well, there is a reason. Place one under the influence of these cults for a time and we will discover that man has within him a rare faculty of gullibility. Otherwise, how can men believe what they do! However, this is our argument and herein rests the danger of being too careless in this matter of choosing a church-home. Whether we live in Canada or the United States; whether we live near the Atlantic or the Pacific coast, may, or may not, make any material difference, but where we decide to place our church membership, can make all the difference between a glowing experience of full-salvation, or a formal profession, supplemented with a bit of church loyalty.

You will all admit that the first business of the Church is to bring men to Christ. To bring men to Christ that they might be saved. Paul lays down the church's task in his defence before Agrippa, namely: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Here is salvation. Forgiveness of sins, and sanctification, by faith. My friend, does your church thus represent the Gospel? If not, is there not a danger of your missing these great essentials to your salvation? But you say, "My church is one of the old established churches of America." That doesn't make any difference, if as you sit in your pew, from week to week, you are not made to see that regeneration of heart and sanctification of spirit is imperative to your seeing God. A young man testified in our church the other night: "I was ignorant of God's way of salvation until I came to this church." A young woman in

Moncton came to our church in that city while Brother Dow was pastor there. She listened to the sermon with great interest, and then under great emotion said, "I have attended church in this city all my life, but I never knew until tonight that I would be called upon to give an account to God some day, and I am not ready to meet Him." That is the story everywhere. Our pastors know I speak the truth when I say, that church members are everlastingly coming and saying: "I don't know what is the matter with our church. We never hear a sermon on definite salvation lines from one year's end to another. Our pastor never gives anyone an opportunity to get saved, and I don't believe he would know what to do, if one would ask him to help them to find Christ." But wonder of wonders, they talk like this, and know that they are as void of spiritual life as the preachers who preach to them. But did you ever hear of one of them making a change? May the Lord give them as much wisdom as they would exercise if it were their physical, they were concerned about. Some of them would change doctors before next Sunday.

I insist that the church we belong to does make a difference. I have, during the past twenty years, worked with and among many different denominations besides my own. Here are my findings: The members are spiritually, ethically, and doctrinally, what the ministry of their church has made them. I have worked with Nazarenes, Free Methodists, Wesleyan Methodists, Pilgrim Holiness, Friends, etc., and in the above mentioned respects, I have found them amazingly identical. I have worked in other churches where the message of full-salvation was given no place, and the difference was so pronounced that one found himself a stranger in the midst of friends.

If you have the experience of sanctification, and desire to live a sanctified life, my advice to you is: Don't make your church home where the blessing you enjoy will either be ignored entirely, or held up to ridicule. You will find those who will tell you that you can live it in their church just as well as elsewhere, but don't believe a word of it. There is something about the blessing of holiness that produces an atmosphere. And this atmosphere is necessary to its growth. Therefore, don't subject your experience to the chilling winds of ridicule and cunningly devised arguments. There are plenty of churches that will be glad to welcome you, and where you can find congenial fellowship and spiritual assistance.

But, I hear someone saying, "Why join any church?" "I don't believe in joining churches, because they make for divisions among God's people." Now, now, my brother, it must be that you are not thinking either. Don't you know that it isn't the matter of church-joining that makes the difference? It is the doctrines we teach. The most narrow-minded

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