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Need of Church Organization . .

A REBUKE TO CHURCHES.

CHURCHES as organizations are not popular. Clubs and Societies seem to be more attractive. Many honourable men and women declare that, while convinced of the truth and efficacy of religion, they will not subscribe to the creed and regulations of a church. Such people prefer to take a chance on the results of a righteous life without a church. This condition has come about, clearly, from the inadequacy of the churches, their failure to meet the needs of mankind. Had the churches satisfied spiritually and otherwise, the normal man who is essentially religious, they would have maintained their age-old pre-eminence.

WHAT IS A CHURCH?

A church is an assemblage or organization of a group of people who believe and worship alike, and who, in the main, have the same outlook on life. Sometimes, a church is merely a collection of people who worship in the same church building. The degree of coherence varies with the different churches. The members of a church, proper, believe in the existence of God; and those of a Christian church believe in the divine mission of Jesus Christ. Organizations of atheists and infidels are not called churches. The multiplicity of churches is so great, and the dogmas they teach, so different, that it becomes really difficult to define a church in terms of present-day church belief and endeavour. This great variation in belief and practice is one of the serious charges against modern religious organizations.

IN UNION THERE IS STRENGTH.

Strength comes when many men labour together for a common cause. The solitary man is the prey of his own weakness. One arrow may be broken against the knee of a child, but a bundle of them withstands the efforts of the strongest man. This justifies the existence of every assemblage of people of like belief. Organizations of men and women of like aspiration for common pursuits is the first step towards community and individual success. Religious life and action are not above this law of organization.

Therefore, the honourable, religious man, who refuses to join a church, must do so on the ground that the organization does not comport with his personal faith and views, or that it does not supply the needs of the members of the church. That in turn depends on the doctrine and life of the church. Whether a church is needed, or whether a man should join it, depends, of course, upon the church itself—whether it seems worthwhile to the man.

NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH.

A church acceptable to modern, thinking man, must offer to its members a body of doctrine which squares with all truth. A false doctrine is no more acceptable because it is sponsored by a church. In this day of increasing knowledge, truth has become sacred. Opinions of men, traditions of centuries, and superstitions of communities, are as nothing unless they contain truth—and the truth in them determines their sole and whole value. From church doctrine proceed church activity and personal direction. If there is weakness in the doctrine, everything derived from it is of diminished value. The erroneous doctrine held tenaciously by man-organized churches, is a main cause of the ordinary man's unwillingness to become a church-enrolled man. There should be no hesitancy to examine church creeds with this thought in mind. The church should be a conservator of truth, especially those phases of it that explain the meaning of life and direct the conduct of men. No isolated man can accept such a responsibility.

THE SUNDAY FALLACY.

To endure the tests of this enlightened day, a church must enter into every activity of life. Its principles of truth, its course of actions, its fundamental creed, must be susceptible of use at all times and upon every occasion. It must be the interpreter of life in all of its devious ramifications. Sunday can be no holier than other days; only different, in that it is entirely consecrated to formal worship of the Lord. Common sense forbids the classification of life's necessary duties as superior and inferior. All are indispensable, therefore sacred. Consequently, a church, rooted in truth, enters with equal zest the fields of teaching, recreation, professional life, daily labour, and every other honourable, useful, desirable or necessary activity of its members. It vivifies and sheds light upon all that naturally and normally belongs to life. A "Sunday Church" occupies only a corner of truth.

A solitary believer can not receive such help nor give it; he must dwell with his fellows in their common organization to enjoy such benefits.

INTO ALL THE WORLD.

Men or churches without a high, soul-filling purpose are as driftwood. A church, truly endowed, is the representative on earth of the Divine Father of mankind. It possesses the philosophy of life. It unites all men into one family, moving towards a common destiny, eventually to be attained by all. The duty of the church is to teach its truth to all mankind, to convert all who are touched by the message to membership in the church, there to receive its daily blessings; and to keep those who are in the faith happy in joyous activities. The acceptable church must have a world vision and a world mission, else it palls upon the taste of the man who knows truth as a world-redeeming principle. The group concerned only with itself and its members, becomes an offense to the man who is seeking the true church. Such world-wide labours can not be engaged in by one man, but must be forwarded by the union of many, each one, in his own way, contributing to the hoped-for result. This is one of the best reasons for the acceptance of a church.

AS ONE HAVING AUTHORITY.

The church speaks for God on earth. Then, it must have divine authority. That authority can not be borne separately by many men, for then there might be many conflicting voices. It must be centralized in the church. That does not mean, however, that the authority of the Lord, committed to the church, shall be held by a ministerial class. On the contrary, the mission of the church being directed into individual lives, everywhere, and into every vocation, its authority should be conferred upon all men who as faithful members are concerned in the carrying out of the prime purpose of the church. In like manner, several churches cannot possess divine authority, for again there might be, as there have been, conflicting voices, resulting in confusion. Only one church can possess the divine authority known as the Priesthood. That authority must have come direct from the Lord, by duly commissioned agents; and not as a result of an inward call, however impressive. The absence of such authority repels clear-thinking, truth-loving men and women from the many contending churches of the day.

MORE THAN A CLUB.

A church is necessary. It gives the strength of an organized body ; it is the conservator and teacher of unquestioned truth ; it enters helpfully into every interest and activity of each individual life ; it goes forward, with a world message, to reclaim or improve and advance all mankind ; and it holds the divine authority of the Priesthood, which it commits to its members for official and personal use. The church, then, is more than a club or society. It is the house and organization of the Lord, through which His mighty, eternal purposes are accomplished. The solitary wanderer, however virtuous, lives but a fraction of his possible life unless he enters the Church, the true Church, to be helped by it, and through it, to help others.

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST.

There is but one Church acknowledged as the Church of Jesus Christ. There can be but one such Church on earth. Jesus the Christ did not provide for two or more churches.

God lives ; we are His children ; His eternal plan for human salvation is worked out through His Church.

The Church of Jesus Christ, possessing the truth and authority of the Gospel, has been restored to the earth in this day. All mankind are invited to become acquainted with it, to test its truth, to accept its blessings, to obey the injunctions of the Master.

Will you do so ?

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