

The True Church

by John W. Kennedy

The true Church is a spiritual struggle for its own existence, and its continuance lies in the spiritual life of the Lord's people.

Scripture: Acts 2:42, Ephesians 4:3, Philippians 3:14, 2 Timothy 1:13, Hebrews 13:13, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "Ecclesiology", "Spiritual Life"

Description

John W. Kennedy preaches about the continual spiritual struggle for the existence of the true Church, emphasizing the importance of holding firmly to the fellowship of the Church and resisting temptations to compromise, organize, or become sectarian. He highlights the spiritual life and Scriptural order of the Church going hand in hand, with believers being priests and witnesses, and the assembly serving as the focal point of Christian service and responsibility. Kennedy stresses that the true Church is not meant to be attractive to the world but to witness to the life of Christ, leading others to a divine change and entrance into a higher spiritual life.

Transcript

The true Church is the scene of a continual, spiritual struggle for its own existence. "Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me," Paul exhorts Timothy (2 Tim. 1:13). If we do not hold firmly on to the fellowship of the Church, it will slip from our grasp. It is of all things most vehemently assailed. It is tempted to compromise with organized Christianity. It is tempted to organize itself in order to conserve what it has gained. It is tempted to sectarianism by limiting its growth to a certain emphasis of Christian truth. When it succumbs to any of these temptations, declension follows, for progress has been limited, and when it has reached the end of its possible progress, it must fade out as a spiritual power. This is the picture that history so graphically portrays, the picture of spiritual power followed by declension, but from every scene of declension God calls out His remnant.

The denominations of today are often the churches of yesterday. They each carried the torch of the testimony so far, then strayed from the path to rest content with what they had achieved. But the torch was taken up by others, and will be borne forward till the Lord Himself comes. The Church, therefore, knows no organizational continuance. Its continuance lies in the spiritual life of the Lord's people wherever it has the opportunity of manifesting itself by their coming together in His name.

The assembly based on the sure ground of Scripture faces a most subtle peril, the peril not of willingly accepting a denominational or sectarian position, but of allowing itself to be pushed into it. 'Exclusivism',

among those who are truly children of God, is an odious word. The assembly is separate from worldly and ecclesiastical organizations not to be exclusive, but to be inclusive, for it is only outside the camp of denominationalism and sectarianism that a welcome for all who are regenerate can be maintained, whatever their own religious background.

The spiritual life and the Scriptural order of the Church go together. The order is the outcome of life, but it is also conversely true that the continuance of life is dependent on the order. All believers are priests and all are witnesses. The assembly does not recognize any member of its fellowship as a non-participant. The assembly is the focal point of Christian service and responsibility. Its order must encourage the constant flow of spiritual life, otherwise the order itself will be destroyed.

In some countries today there is great concern among the large Christian bodies to make the Church popular. Every conceivable scheme is being brought into play in order to attract people to the Church. It is forgotten that the true Church can never be attractive to the world, and was never meant to be. It is something which is completely beyond the world's understanding. People are brought into the Church through the witness of the Lord's children who comprise the Church. When the life of Christ is expressed through a spiritual order, believers will maintain a witness that is spiritually effective. Others will be regenerated, and they will be added to the Church, not because they, as worldly people, were attracted to it, but because they have been subject to a divine change which enables them to enter into life on a higher plane. The Church's mission is not to fit into the world, but to see men changed so that they will fit into the Church.

The Church of the New Testament is no mere theory. It is a fact of the twentieth century, as it was of the first. The principles of the unchanging Word of God, having been demonstrated and tested for almost two thousand years, have proved themselves applicable to every age and every circumstance. The Church authoritative, holy, witnessing, invincible has continued and will continue, not in outward show and ostentation, but wherever the Lord has found a people willing to gather round Him in submission and obedience. It is a Church that is indissolubly one, bound by ties of the Spirit.

Amid the bitter conflicts and tragedies of so-called Church history, the life of the spiritual movement of the Church has flowed on through the ages. The splendid unity of a heavenly race, living a heavenly life passed down from spiritual generation to spiritual generation has never been broken. They are pilgrims and strangers still upon the earth, bearing the reproach of Christ outside the camp, pressing 'on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus'. They gather round Christ their Head, owning His Word their guide, bearing the torch of the testimony.

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