

September 20, 1940

Dear Mother & Dad:

It is now some time since I decided to make a change in my way of living, and I feel it a duty to give you an accurate account of my experience in coming to the saving Faith (for it must exist) and I want to tell you about it, and express my feelings, and how I stand in this matter.

Religion today is very complex, and many people readily admit there are many things they do not understand, and take them for granted. Many New Testament commandments are considered unnecessary, and not applicable to this day and age. They say religion must change with the times. But, I have found the religion of Jesus Christ never changes (Hebrews 13:8). I was one of those people, thinking as they did, going along with the crowd, taking part in their worldly pleasures and pastimes, and enjoyed myself, not realizing there is two kingdoms, one of this world and one of Heaven; two masters, one of this world and one of Heaven; not realizing that I cannot be of two worlds or two masters at the same time (Matthew 6:24; Matthew 7:21; John 18:36; Luke 16:13).

There came a time, about 4 years ago, when I became disturbed in my mind about my profession of religion. Up to that time the scriptures had no real attraction for me, and I, like many others, never opened the Testament to see what was in it. What education in the scriptures I received in Sunday School served as a guide for a moral life, but I did not know any of the basic duties required of a Christian, because I could not spiritually discern them. When I began reading the Testament, comparing it with my religious life, I discovered I was merely a moralist. This I learned quickly, -- I could not be a moralist first, and then a Christian; but rather I had to be a Christian first, and morality is a fruit of Christianity, for morality alone is carnality (Romans 8: 5-8) and is death to the Christian. The word of God is spiritually discerned -- not carnally, as many people try to understand it.

As I read the scriptures, I discovered there were many things there which were not practiced in the church of which I was a member. And conversely, there were many things done and taught which are not in the scriptures. Upon this revelation, I base the following reasons for leaving that religious body:

- 1) I realized I had to repent and be born again.
(Mark 1:15; John 3:3-7; I. Peter 1:23-25)
- 2) I could see there was little or no true spiritual love.
(I. Peter 1:22)
- 3) There was a great lack of unity.
(John 17; II Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 4:4-6;
Philippians 1:27; Philippians 2:2)
- 4) There was much worldliness and frivolity. (Titus 2:12)
- 5) All members did not believe the same things, some not believing certain scriptures at all. (Oh, what darkness!)
- 6) There was discord, gossip, foolish talk, bickering and backbiting, all of which are forbidden in the scriptures.
- 7) There was little humility, and much partiality.
(Philippians 2:3; I Peter 5: 5-6; James 2:1-9)

Although I was part of such a body but avoided these troubles as much as possible yet I was partaker of these evil deeds, as the scriptures say, because I was one of them. The Gospel plainly showed me these things cannot be in the Church of Christ, not being the fruits of love. When I knew these things in their proper light, and what my duty was, I found myself in a dangerous position; and since I could no longer reconcile myself with those things, I had to separate (Ephesians 4:17-25; II Thessalonians 3:6). I felt it was better not to profess at all than to profess and not to do. The Apostle James says, "To him than knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 1:19-26; James 4:17)

It is modern teaching that a man's religion is between himself and His God regardless of which "church" he belongs to, and that it doesn't matter what the other fellow does, as long as a person lives right. I have discovered this is contrary to the Gospel, for it breeds divisions; and the church of Christ cannot be divided. The whole Testament teaches that all believers must be of one heart and mind--**all** believing the same things, consequently there can be but **one** church, not many. Christ, in John 17, prays that His followers may be united in **one** body, as He and God are **one**. In many other places, unity of belief, faith, baptism, hope, church and love are taught. Not a single word is given that a man may believe as he pleases, disregarding or tolerating the other person's beliefs as it pleases him. This is an extremely pernicious idea, and according to Gospel reasoning, is the work of the devil; it is the cause of the many religious bodies. Christ does not teach one, one thing, and another, another thing; but He teaches **all** the same things, irrespective of persons or the age that they live in.

Because the scriptures teach unity in all religious points, I believe the church must be **one united body** of believers, now, as it was in the beginning when the church was established, all believing the same things in everything. The perpetuity of the church of Christ hinges on this, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8) I believe the true church has existed down through the ages just as the apostles established it, and that it exists as such today -- one united visible church, though it may be small in membership compared to the millions today. Christ Himself says it will be small, for He said, "Few there be that find it."

In Sunday School I was taught I had to be born again. This I believed, but did not know how because I could not receive it. Now the scriptures have opened this thing to me, without any other agency. I now know that in being born again a complete change is necessary. God does not want a reborn person to carry with him some of the things of his old life; but He wants a new man. Old things pass away, and all things become new -- a new creature is born in this flesh. (Ephesians 4:20-24) The change must be complete, and when it is, the desires of the flesh are held in subjection or pass away entirely. The old man is crucified in the death of Christ and the new man is raised up in the baptism of the Holy Spirit which is the baptism of the Spirit being poured out upon the repentant one. (Matthew 3:11)

Now, Mother and Dad, it has always been my desire to live a good life, and I am thankful you encouraged me to seek after the better things, but when I began to examine myself in the mirror of the scriptures I found there was much wanting. Besides the necessity of a rebirth, I found I had to be humble, to love God above everything else, to know myself and my sinful nature, to love my enemies as well as my friends, to return good for evil and not to resist it (Matthew 5:38-44) and to pray in the right spirit. Now my course was made plain -- either submit to my convictions and impressions, and the invitation of Christ, or remain outside the promise of eternal life which only a true believer shall receive. And in this frame of mind I had to separate from all unfaithful worship and my old worldly associations and pleasures. As I read

the Testament and became enlightened, I gradually lost pleasure in the enticements of the world, whose master is Satan. I no longer cared for the movies and other forms of entertainment. It seems they passed away as though I have never known them. And in their place I found a great deal of spiritual pleasure in a body of people who unitedly believe in the teaching and promises of the Gospel. I discovered there was a far greater pleasure in the fellowship, love, peace, humility and unity of a truly Christian people. As yet, I was not one of them, but felt very much at home among them. And now that I have cast my lot with these people of God, the spiritual pleasure greatly outweighs the few worldly pleasures I formerly enjoyed. (Let me say here that these people known as Reformed Mennonites are not associated in any way with any other church organization whatsoever. They constitute a single unit of Christians and are not divided into several independent congregations of churches using the same name. This church is one congregation, wherever the members live, and are the only true Mennonites.

As I came to know these plain people and the things they stand for I became convinced they are a truly Christian people, because they consistently believe, teach and live the things Christ and the apostles taught. In natural things we count the cost before we buy, and consider whether we will derive the benefit we expect. Now this I have done in deciding to become a member of the Church of Christ. The things of my past life were a small price to pay for the priceless gift of the Holy Spirit, which I believe I have received from God, only because I have humbled myself and become willing to accept Christ at His word. I have learned that Christ is the very essence of humility (Philippians 2:5-8), and that no proud or vain person can enter the kingdom of heaven, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." There was a time when this was dark to me, but now I see what Christ means by this, that we must forsake the vanity and proud nature of this flesh, and humble ourselves and have a childlike faith and obedience to His commands, coming to Him in repentance, just as our own children come to us, asking in their simple and innocent way, the things they do not understand. A little child is truly humble and innocent because it has not yet been affected by worldly contact and influence. This is why Christ took the little ones and blessed them. They are without affectation and pretence, and He uses them as an example of the harmlessness and innocence before the world of His true followers. If I am to be a child of God, I must remain in this condition, with an humble heart. And this is my desire, not by anything I might do of myself, but by the help of the Lord.

Now by this time you may be saying I have been influenced to think this way by the church. But I want it distinctly understood I have not, except by the word of God **itself**. I know how you feel about my change, and I cannot emphasize this enough. I have a mind to think as I please, and have gone into this thing with a free and open mind. I early discovered if I was prejudiced, then I would be narrow minded. But with an open mind I have carefully considered what I might lose and what I might gain. The gain has been much greater than the loss. "Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened, ask and ye shall receive." Only an unprejudiced person can receive this saying.

No man has told me what to do and how to do it, in dress, living and worship; but my conscience has told me these things, through the revelation of the Holy Scriptures. They are preached and taught and lived from the Word of God, conscientiously and sincerely. Religion to the people of God is not a cloak of piety to be put on for certain days or seasons, but it is a **reality**, to be lived day by day through the help of the Lord, and it is my hope and desire to continue faithful in this narrow way.

Often after a sermon I was asked if what the minister said was reasonable. I always agreed. They said if it did not agree with my understanding, I was to tell them. But, how could I tell them about things

of God when I was ignorant of them, but willing to learn? **They never once asked me to join the church,** because a willing heart is necessary. After I had become a convert, I was even told not to join the church if I found discord or lack of unity. I was not surprised by this, but rather comforted. The reason is that the church must be composed of souls who are of one spirit, and if it is not, then it cannot expect a seeking soul to unite with it. In other words, I had to understand and be in unity with the church, and the church with me. This is the reason for a probationary period for converts, that they may try the church and the church try them. This is entirely reasonable, and is a means of keeping a clean house.

These things I knew and believed before I became willing to accept them, and they appealed to me because I could see they were in harmony with the plain, humble, unshowy and unpretentious way of the Gospel. I could see there was a true spiritual love and unity among the believers. They (men with men, and women with women) greet each other with the kiss of peace as commanded; they esteem each other better than themselves through love; they show absolutely no partiality; there is no high, no low, all being equal in the sight of God; they are honest, even to the point of bluntness at times; they wash one another's feet in humility as Christ commanded; all believe the same things, are non-resistant, live a life of non-conformity to the world, and many other things are lived according to Gospel teaching.

It is practically impossible for an organization of any kind in these times to exist without rules and regulations, by-laws and what not. But the greatest wonder of it all is, in the Christian Church there is no ritual, no by-law or book of rules and regulations; there are no conventions or conferences to rule and govern the church, no decrees on deportment and dress. You may well ask why. I did too, at first. But I found only one answer: the law of love rules in the heart of each individual, and the book of rules is the New Testament. (John 13:34-35; John 15:12-17) Christ says, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Perhaps you don't believe this is possible in these times. I didn't at first, but I found ample proof that it is.

And so, when I finally made up my mind last January to try to serve the Lord in Spirit and in Truth, I think I made a wise choice. And now that I have given myself up to the Lord, I have received a peace and comfort and happiness, and a feeling of love for everyone, that I never believed existed, before I sought the way of Truth.

It was not my intention in writing this experience to make it so long, but one thought led to another. I am not ashamed of my Lord and His teaching. I want to live by them as closely as humanly possible. I am willing to discuss these things at any time if I know the subject is not resented. It is my sincere hope that you will accept this letter in the love it is written. If you wish to answer, I would appreciate it very much.

Please show this letter to Bob, Ray, Anna and Kathryn. I want them to read it also, that you all may know how I stand in this matter.

Hoping for the best in all things, I remain, in love,RH