

## *Why I Left the "Liberal" Church of Christ*

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**Introduction:** - There are few people who want to be called a "liberal".

- A. You will find no church sign "Liberal Church of Christ."
  - 1. If you ask various brethren the question: "Who is a Liberal?" You will get various answers!
  - 2. It is a relative term.
  - 3. I do not wish to call someone a name to produce prejudice. However there are attitudes and actions that need to be corrected. Let us see what God's will is and make any corrections in our lives.
- B. In the Bible there are those described as "going beyond" the limits of the word of God. This is a "liberal".
  - 1. Positively - **Col. 3:17; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17**
  - 2. Negatively - **1 Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9**
  - 3. Rather than being defensive, let each of us open our hearts to our Lord. If I make any misrepresentations of my brethren or of God's word, let me know.

### ***I. The Sinfulness of Division***

- A. **1 Cor. 1:10; John 17:20, 21** - This prayer of my Lord caused me to stand with others who claimed to be undenominational.
  - 1. I was taught to arrange studies with others who sought to follow our Lord and resolve our differences from the Bible.
  - 2. I was confident in this approach. My brother soon was to leave the Baptist church because of our studies.
- B. After coming out of denominationalism, it was a major shock to discover that brethren were divided!
  - 1. I decided to do something about it, first investigate, and then teach whoever was in error.
  - 2. I know of no other approach that one who loves the Lord would take!  
What is your attitude?

### ***II. Things Which Did Not Cause Me to Leave***

- A. **Personal Preference**
- B. **Friendliness, Associations**
- C. **Zeal, Activity**
- D. **Personal Offense**
- E. **Convenience** - No, this is a matter of truth.
- F. I was strongly motivated to justify my brethren. I tried for nearly two years to prove them right.
  - 1. I knew that God would not lead me wrong. (**Jude 3**)
  - 2. As I began to inquire among brethren as to why division existed among churches of Christ, I was shocked to find many who either did not know, or frankly grossly misrepresented others in an angry and crude way.

3. If someone was to ask you for a study on these questions, could you?

**(1 Peter 3:15)**

**III. What Are the Issues?**

- A. Please do not allow anyone to define the beliefs of another without first listening to both sides!
1. As a Baptist, I heard the Lord's people misrepresented as "believing in a works salvation", and as "denying the blood of Christ".
  2. When people do not want an open study of the Bible, it is easy to hide behind prejudice. It was common to find some try to represent others as a "lunatic fringe".
  3. Some depended on labels but never defined the points of differences. The common labels used are "anti", and "liberal". What do you mean by these words? ex. Ed Harrell - "anti-anti"
  4. Some concentrated on only one issue such as "orphan homes" and "limited benevolence"
- B. The truth is that many issues are involved. A study of the division that resulted in the "Christian Church" around 1900 will help one to understand the kind of differences that exist today.
1. See article "Why I Left the Christian Church" by Floyd Decker, 1944.

***"WHY I LEFT THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH"***

***Floyd A. Decker (1944)***

1. "The Christian Church has women Counselors, Directors, and Lecturers; the church of Christ does not (**I Tim 2:11,12; I Cor. 14:34**).
2. The Christian Church has Educational Directors, Associate Ministers and Youth Directors; the church of Christ has elders, deacons, evangelists and teachers (**Eph. 4:11; Phil 1:1**).
3. The Christian Church has Missionary, Benevolent, and Educational Organizations to execute the work of the church; the church of Christ does not. (**Eph 4:4;3:10,21**).
4. The Christian Church celebrates days of heathen worship, such as Easter, Mother's Day, and Christmas; the church of Christ does not (**Gal. 4:10**).
5. The Christian Church fellowships various denominations in their activities, leaving the impression that all are brethren; the church of Christ does not. (**Rom 1:16; 2 Jn. 9-11; Gal 1:6-10**).
6. The Christian Church seeks to get crowds with Youth Meetings, Campaigns for Christ, Rallies, Drives and Promotions; the church of Christ does not. (**Rev. 22:18,19**).
7. The Christian Church emphasizes society and the physical man by appealing to the carnal nature--with church carnivals, bands, plays, choruses, dramatics, church kitchens, church camps, and elaborate fellowship halls; the church of Christ does not. (**1 Cor. 10:7; 11:22-34; Rom 14:17**).

8. The Christian Church elevates its preachers above the rest of the members by using such titles as Pastor, Superintendent, President, Doctor, and Reverend; the church of Christ does not (**Matt. 23: 5-12; Job. 32:21,22**).
9. The Christian Church takes up collections at services other than on the first day of the week, and uses unscriptural means such as suppers, property rentals, and special collections to raise money for the church; the church of Christ follows **I Cor. 16:1,2** by having each member lay by in store on the first day of the week. This is the only way of raising money.
10. The Christian church misuses the name "Christian" (a noun) by speaking of "Christian nations", "Christian schools", and the "Christian Church"; the church of Christ does not (**Acts 11:26; 26:28; I Pet 4:16**).
11. The Christian Church owns and operates publishing houses, radio stations, hospitals, and other Benevolent Societies; the churches of Christ build nothing but churches (**Eph. 3:21**).
12. The Christian Church owns, supports, and operates schools for secular education, beginning with kindergartens and going all the way through theological seminaries; the church of Christ does not (**I Tim 3:15**).
13. The Christian Church has a compromising attitude and spirit, will not defend its doctrine, is nothing but a man-made denomination, has no regard for the authority of the Bible, bases its practice on the silence of the Scriptures, and appeals to the traditions of the elders rather than the simple unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ. The Christian Church is no part of the NT church, and should not be regarded as a friend of Christ nor of the truth."

2. I would also like to add to this list "the sponsoring church arrangement".

3. What may be an "issue" of difference will vary from congregation to congregation.

#### ***IV. Reasons Why I Left Liberalism.***

A. Many of the practices which developed were in an effort to "do good", but sadly were done without authority from God's word.

B. Departures from the Bible. (**Gal. 1:6-9**)

#### **Human Doctrines**

1. Authority - "No pattern", traditions, important men.
2. No difference in the local congregation and individual Christian.
3. Organization:
  - a. Orphan Homes
  - b. Colleges
  - c. "Sponsoring" Church
  - d. Missionary Societies
  - e. Unscriptural positions
4. Worship:

- a. Special Days
  - b. Contribution and business to raise money
  - c. Choirs, entertainment
5. Work: Spiritual, Social, Physical ("Fellowship Halls")

### **Bible Doctrine**

1. **2 Timothy 3:16,17; Matt. 15:9; 1 Thess. 5:21** - The Bible will give every good work. We must prove all things.
2. **Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Tim. 5:16** - There is a difference between the responsibility of an individual Christian and a local congregation.
3. **1 Pet. 5:1,2; Acts 20:28; 14:23; Phil 1:1** - God authorized elders and deacons. - **2 Cor 8:12-14** - May an individual also become a "sponsoring work?"
4. God's plan: - **Gal. 4:10,11; 1 Cor. 16:1,2; Eph. 5:19; John 4:23,24**
5. **Eph. 4:11,12; John 6:44, 26-27** - The work of the Lord's church is spiritual.

### ***V. Some General Observations***

- A. During my entire investigation I could not get preachers to defend liberal practices to me!
  1. There was one exception however, Gus Nichols.
  2. There were none would study with another preacher!
  3. This is still true today --- I am open to a study on these questions!
- B. While studying with faithful men, some assumed I knew more than I did!
  1. Instead of a step-by-step study, some drove right into points of difference. Many do not have enough knowledge.
  2. It is important to begin by studying points of agreement such as Bible authority.

### ***VI. I had to decide and so do you!***

- A. I wavered for one year before standing.
  1. I was often frustrated and confused.
  2. But I never lost faith in God's word! (**Rom. 3:4**)
- B. There were two things that opened my eyes.
  1. A brief visit I made to a church in Huntsville
  2. I tried to study with Kenneth Reed, the man one who had baptized me! He angrily refused.
- C. Please do not try to stand in the middle!
  1. Ex. J. W. McGarvey
  2. Apostasy will not stop here! I am amazed at the changes in just the last 20 years. Where will your children end up? (**Jos. 24:15**)
  3. Some justify remaining in error saying: "But these brethren have a do-nothing attitude, etc. ..." You can both stand for truth and do something! Please stand in the right way **yourself**, then work with others.

## *A DISTURBING CONVERSATION*

*Todd Clippard*

I hesitate to write this, but conscience, and more importantly scripture, necessitate it.

As many of you are aware, the **University Church of Christ in Tuscaloosa, Alabama** has invited **Baptist preacher Tony Campolo** to speak at this year's **Youth in Action (YIA)** in Birmingham, Alabama. The date is the weekend of December 27. Many false teachers and other apostates have been invited in years' past, including this year's lineup with **Jeff Walling, Buddy Bell** and **Acappella**, just to name a few.

I called the University church on three occasions in an attempt to speak with someone about the lineup, and about Mr. Campolo in particular. What follows are some of the responses I received during my inquiry.

I talked with two different ministers of the University church (one on Friday and one today) and each was asked this question: Are you aware that Tony Campolo is not a Christian?

Reply from the first: "He's not affiliated with the churches of Christ. I think he's a Baptist, but more non-denominational than Baptist. I don't know what he teaches in regard to the plan of salvation."

This was as far as I got with the first minister. He requested that I call the youth minister on Monday (today 8-25-98) and speak with him. So I did exactly that. The second minister was the organizer of YIA. When I asked him if he was aware that Tony Campolo was not a Christian, I received the following reply: "You mean he's not a member of the church of Christ." To which I replied, "What's the difference?" His response, "I believe God is a lot bigger than the Church of Christ. A person doesn't have to be a member of the Church of Christ to be a Christian." (I realize God is much bigger than the church, but this is not what he meant. He meant the church was a lot bigger than the church of Christ.)

I asked him if Mr. Campolo was going to extend the invitation, and if so, what would he say? Reply: "He is only going to tell people that if they want someone to pray with them, they can go to designated prayer rooms outside the auditorium." (The event is being held at the civic center in Birmingham)

After a lengthy discussion regarding the essentiality of baptism, I asked him if he would defend this statement, \*All accountable individuals must be baptized in order to be saved.\* He refused, and tried to use the thief on the cross as an example to prove his point! He then told me that a young girl (about 14 he said) came to him earlier this week and desired to become a Christian, but since her parents could not come that night, would it be OK to wait until Sunday. He then asked me, "Are you telling me that if that girl dies

before Sunday, that she will be lost?” My reply: “I don't have to tell you that. Mark 16:16 already tells you that. Just because I want something to be true does not change the word of God.” To which he replied, “I am not willing to go that far. Anyway, I have heard someone explain from the Greek that Mark 16:16 can be translated “because you're already saved.”” I pulled every modern translation I could get my hands on and told him I could not find a single one that so translated the text. He was not satisfied. (I suspect, in his confusion, he was referring to Acts 2:38 and the Baptist explanation of the phrase “for remission of sins”). He then said, “I just have a lot more faith in Jesus than in baptism.” I replied, “How can you separate Jesus from what He taught. Jesus commanded baptism.” At that point he said he was very busy and thanked me for calling. He offered to meet me in Hamilton to discuss this further. I told him there was no need, since I was going to stand by Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38 and 22:16, and Galatians 3:27 no matter if he is in Hamilton or Tuscaloosa, and that he could not disprove what they teach no matter how hard he tried.

We then concluded our conversation. I was satisfied I fully understood what he believes and he had no doubts about what I believe. I don't intend to pursue this any further, since I don't think anyone at University, at least in the leadership, cares about what God's Word has to say.

The only reason I presented this information to you is to **warn you about the University church in Tuscaloosa and any congregation that supports YIA.**

-- Seek the Old Paths – October, 1998

**Any questions or responses are welcome**

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