

The Bulletin

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“Why I Am A Member of the Church of Christ”

by Irvin Himmel

via *The Voice of West End*, Vol. 5, No. 23, Feb. 16, 1964.

People have offered a variety of reasons for their religious connections. I am here presenting my reasons for being a member of the church of Christ; but, first, some negative thoughts:

Not because of wealth.

The Roman Catholic Church is probably the wealthiest (in material worth) religious organization in the world. The Mormon Church ranks high in wealth among American churches. If I were interested in the material value of a religious body, I would not be a member of the church of Christ.

Not because of popularity.

The Southern Baptist Denomination boasts of the largest membership of any Protestant body in the United States. If I wanted to be lined up with something big and popular, I would not be a member of the church of Christ.

Not because of social prestige.

Most of the people in the church of Christ are just plain, ordinary folks socially.

Not because of convenience.

At times it would be much more convenient to belong to some denominational organization. One could remain in good standing with little effort, and could be considerably more lax in his living without anyone attempting to correct him.

Not because of family connection.

No one ever tried to get me into the church of Christ in order to maintain a family tradition. If he had done so, and I suppose such things may sometimes occur, he would have been using the wrong motive.

The Best Reason I Can Offer:

The reason why I am a member of the church of Christ is quite simple. I heard the gospel of Christ, I believed it, and was baptized for the remission of my sins. The people who taught me the gospel were content to stop where the gospel stops. They did not ask me to affiliate with any denomination. I have never done so. Hence, I became a Christian and a Christian only, was added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:47) and have since worked and worshipped with the people who did the same.

You might say that I am a member of the church of Christ for the same reason that I am a Christian; obedience to the gospel of Christ never makes one anything else. The same Lord who saves people (making them Christians) adds them to His church (the church He built).

If the Lord added to the Methodist Church such as should be saved, I would be a Methodist. If he added to the Lutheran Church such as should be saved, I would be a Lutheran. If He added to the Presbyterian Church such as should be saved, I would be a Presbyterian. But since He adds to His own church, that is where He put me and that is where I am to stay.

"Insufficient Evidence"

By Allen Dvorak

Perpetua and Felicitas were two young women who were martyred in A.D. 203 at Carthage, victims of the Roman persecution of the church. When they were condemned to die in the arena, Perpetua was a woman of 22 years with a young child and Felicitas was pregnant. Tertullian is believed by some to be the author of the story of their martyrdom (*Passion of Perpetua*). They died because they wouldn't renounce Christ and sacrifice to the emperor. The emperor Severus had forbidden conversion to Christianity in A.D. 201.

It is the year 2006, but some things don't change. Abdul Rahman was arrested in February in Afghanistan because he violated Islamic Sharia law. Mr. Rahman converted to Christianity several years ago, but was recently accused of being a Christian by his family during a custody battle over his two daughters. When arrested and questioned by authorities, Rahman was carrying a Bible and confessed he was a Christian. The case of Abdul Rahman has received international attention and a number of national government leaders have pressured Afghan president Hamid Karzai to arrange for Rahman's release. The penalty for Rahman's crime, apostasy from Islam, is death.

The prosecutor in this case, Abdul Wasi, is not shy when it comes to talking to the media about Rahman. This government representative of the "peaceful" religion of Islam is quoted by the Associated Press as saying, "He would have been forgiven if he changed back. But he said he was a Christian and would always remain one. We are Muslims, and becoming a Christian is against our laws. He must get the death penalty." The Chicago Tribune also quoted Mr. Wasi: "He is known as a microbe in society, and he should be cut off and removed from the rest of Muslim society and should be killed." The judge in the case stated, "If he doesn't regret his conversion, the punishment will be enforced on him. And the punishment is death."

It looked for a while as though Mr. Rahman's fate was sealed, but then the Afghan court dropped apostasy charges against Rahman "because of a lack of evidence and suspicions he may be mentally ill." I suspect the primary reason the case was closed was the international pressure brought upon the government of Afghanistan. The government floated the story that Rahman might be mentally ill for several days before he was finally released, probably to prepare Muslims for the "escape" from this difficult situation that they intended to use. Even when the Italians offered Rahman asylum, Afghanistan's parliament demanded he not be allowed to flee the country. "Peaceful" Muslim clerics criticized the government for releasing Rahman, claiming it was a "betrayal of Islam" and threatening to incite violent protests.

Of course, it is not illegal to convert to Christ in the United States nor will anyone be put into prison for the simple fact of being a Christian. However, would there be enough evidence to convict if we were arrested for being Christians? Mr. Rahman was quite clear about his claim to be a Christian. The Afghan court, however, decided Mr. Rahman's claim to be a Christian and even the fact he carried a Bible was insufficient evidence to prove he was indeed a Christian. The evidence against some "Christians" in this country would be little more than verbal claims and possession (but not use) of a Bible.

I don't know the nature of Mr. Rahman's "conversion," I don't know if he is a Christian in the sense that the New Testament speaks of Christians, rather than the denominational concept of a Christian (anybody who vaguely believes in Jesus). Although our government may not ever make conversion to Christ illegal, I do know that all of us will some day be examined by a higher court for evidence of a relationship with Jesus Christ. What will the Judge find in our lives in the way of concrete evidence that Jesus lives in us? I'm afraid simply carrying a Bible and claiming Jesus as Lord will not be enough (Matthew 7:21-23).