Identifying a “Liberal” Church of Christ

1 Cor. 11:19

Introduction:
A. In an ideal world, all “churches of Christ” would be basically the same (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17).
   2. Would have no need to investigate before traveling, vacationing, or visiting with relatives.
   3. Would have no problem finding a church for children away from home.
   4. Would not need to worry about bidding godspeed to religious error.
B. In the real world not all “churches of Christ” are the same. (Cf. Churches of Asia)
   1. Some differences may be insignificant.
      a. Procedural differences.
      b. Cultural differences.
      c. Developmental differences.
   2. Some differences may be very significant.
      a. Differences in basic structure and organizational.
      b. Differences in fundamental doctrine.
      c. Differences in congregational work and/or worship.
C. Among churches of Christ, “liberals” and “conservatives” have different approaches to the application of Bible authority.

Discussion:

I. Where One Is Less Likely to Notice a Difference.
A. In the appearance of the place of worship.
B. In the nature of the Lord’s day worship.
   1. Except in certain areas where “instrumental” churches of Christ meet.
   2. Except in some cases where liberalism is very far advanced: Solos, choirs, etc.
C. In terms used for church personnel: Elders, deacons, preacher, evangelists, etc.
   1. Except in advanced stages: Youth ministers, singles ministers, pulpit ministers, music ministers.
   2. Except in very prestige conscience churches: “Dr. Blank, etc.”

II. Where One Is More Likely to Notice a Difference.
A. The financial report.
   1. Among conservative churches:
      a. The revenue will come from Lord’s day contributions (1 Cor. 16:2).
      b. The expenditures will be for items for worship and preaching/teaching (evangelism & edification) or benevolence.
   2. Among liberal churches.
      a. In some cases other means of revenue used.
      b. In all cases expenditures will include some items not found in the scriptures:
         (1) Support of human institutions to do the work of the church.
         (2) General welfare and benevolence programs (N. T. limits it to needy saints).
         (3) Pay for facilities and personnel for social and recreational activities and programs.
         (4) Expenditures for community and school projects.
B. The “extra-curricular” activities lists.
   1. Things other than worship, preaching/teaching, benevolence.
   2. Listen for them in announcements or look for them in bulletin.
   3. Look either for the activity or the one who directs it.
C. The presence of facilities to facilitate “extra-curricular” activities.
   1. “Multi-purpose” buildings.
   2. Gyms, play grounds, dining (“fellowship”) halls, day care, schools, etc.
D. The kind of teaching/preaching they are willing to accept. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-4).
   1. If no difference, would they have a “conservative” preacher for a meeting?
   2. If no difference, will they let me preach come there an preach on work & organization of church?

Conclusion:
A. We are not proud of the difference, but we must recognize it.
B. We must be careful not to be a party to unscriptural practices — directly or indirectly.