**The Ugly in Christianity**

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For many, there is a deep-seated political hatred, racism, and bigotry hidden behind the guise of Christianity. And I’m tired of keeping quiet. As a person born into it, baptized into it—I went every Sunday morning and every Sunday night, and if my mother finished worked early enough, I even went on Wednesday evenings—I should know.

I’m not typically one to get into social media arguments or spend hours discussing political and religious discourse on a Facebook strand, but recently, one woman drove me to the point of no return. Of course, it began with: Trump vs No Trump. As per any Trump supporter, her main argument was that she was a hard working American and she shouldn’t have to pay such high taxes for “no-good illegal immigrants and poor people and their lobster-buying-food-stamps” and that was that. Her argument always stopped there. Always: “I’m a hard working American.”

Well, who the heck cares? Be proud of your country. Be proud of your military. Be proud of your heritage. But don’t use nationalism as a mask for your racism and bigotry. How about instead of saying, “I’m a hardworking American,” why don’t you say, “I’m a hardworking human being.” I guarantee you the person on the other end of the conversation would say, “yeah, me too.”

But, the thing that got me going the most was this: before the whole conversation, she claimed to be a Christian. A Church of Christ Christian. A Christian who said a certain group of people shouldn’t and doesn’t deserve to have the same rights we do. A Christian who says “Get those Muslims out.” A Christian who seems to forget that her own ancestors came to this land to escape religious persecution. A Christian who forgets that at one point, her family too, were immigrants.

Unfortunately, she isn’t the only one. I used to be a member of the Church of Christ. I proudly called myself a Christian. Now, I shy away from the term. I avoid discussions about it because I have family members I love so much who are still part of the Church.

But, I will never again be one of them. And I’ll tell you why: when I was 18, a freshman in college, on the cusp of adulthood, already questioning my faith and whether or not I even believed in organized religion, a woman stood up in a Wednesday Bible class and said, “Praise the Lord! Ted Kennedy is dead!”

I sat there slack-jawed, shocked and disgusted, and the dimming light to my already fragile faith flickered out as everybody in the room—even an elder—laughed. They laughed and laughed, and the woman said, “If I could, I’d go dance on his grave.” She did a little jig and turned around with her hands in the air and again, once again, there was more laughter. Louder laughter.

I wish I could say that was an isolated event. But things like that happened often. They happened and nobody stopped them, and judging by Facebook comments, I’m pretty sure they probably continue today.

The truth is, that kind of attitude and hatred cannot coexist with God in any form. And I refuse to be apart of any organization that would affiliate with that kind of rhetoric. Perhaps that one room doesn’t define the Church of Christ as a whole, but I’ve been to enough of them, met enough of the members, to know that the people who wouldn’t have laughed are the outliers.

And for every one outlier Church of Christ member I’ve met, I’ve encountered nine others who would dance on a dead man’s grave, or laugh at it, or tell somebody they’re going to hell because of their political affiliation, or collectively agree not to show up to another female member’s baby shower simply because a former member of the congregation (who they didn’t like or approve of) would be in attendance.

I loved that Church dearly. I truly did. But at some point, I learned that the love of the Church only extended to the end of its borders, to the end of the doors. Outside those doors, there was very little love to give. I felt betrayed by their laughter, by their dirty words. I felt disheartened, and I was turned away from God—most likely never to return. If that was an example of God’s love, I’d rather seek love elsewhere.

And if there are any Church of Christ members reading (I hope there are)—or any Church in particular—perhaps you’ll read this and say, “How sad. I’ll be praying for her.” And that’s ok. You can pray for me. But while you’re at it, you might want to pray for your Church. You might want to pray and learn how to operate with a loving heart, with loving hands, with open ears. Because if you don’t, you will fail. You will fail and you will lose souls and you will shut people away from God for good. And some of them, like me, will never come back.