

Christ Rescued Me From the "Church of Christ"

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Pt. 1

By Larry Wessels

Bible Text: Galatians 1:6-9, John 14:6

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The following are samples of some of the newsletters we have available: Does God believe in Atheists, part 1. Seventh Day Adventism, true or false? The agony of deceit. The origins of Muhammad's religion. Spiritual warfare. Are psychic mediums communicating with ghosts or demonic spirits? Testimony to the eternal Godhead, the Trinity. From tradition to truth: a priest's story. An evaluation of the Oneness Pentecostal Movement. Mormonism: counterfeit Christianity. Turn or burn. Jehovah's Witnesses: deceived deceivers. Links to these newsletters can also be found at our website www.biblequery.org. Once on the homepage, simply click on the menu icon at the upper lefthand corner, then click on the "newsletters" button. Feel free to print them out.

1 Peter 3:15 says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

Larry Wessels. Hello everyone, this is Larry Wessels with Christian Answers. My video man says that this particular video on the "Church of Christ" is over 3 hours and 38 minutes long and that's an awful long video for someone to sit through in one sitting, and I wouldn't recommend it unless you're listening to it over your cellphone, maybe at work or someplace where it's convenient to listen to it, but to just sit at a screen in front of your computer for 3 hours and 38 minutes, that might be difficult to do. So there is an easier way to go about this, and I would like to mention that we have time markers in the description box to help you along in this matter, that way you can go to the parts of the video that you'd really like to hear something about without having to watch the whole video to get through to the parts that you want to hear. In other words, you can skip right to the main topics in the 3 hour and 38 minute video that you'd like to hear and just leave out the rest and save yourself a lot of time.

Now we've done this in other videos and I'll give you a couple of examples. We have a video called "Hank Hanegraaff, Walter Martin's greedy Judas: the fake Bible Answer Man." Now that video is over 5 hours long, and at the same time we have 242,300 views on it and what we did in this case, is helped the viewer with such a long video. We put time markers in the description box and that's what we're gonna do with this "Church of Christ" video that you're now about to watch. If you look here on this Hanegraaff video and here's the description text from that video, you'll see down below we have time markers and all you have to do is click on those time markers. Okay, for instance, if you go to the 000 marker, it gives you biblical parallels between Hank Hanegraaff and Judas Iscariot. Then as you go down the description text and you go to the next time marker, you see at the 12:55 mark you have opening credits and how Hanegraaff asks for your money. Then at the 15:36 mark, if you click on that, click on those numbers, it'll take you right to the part of the video where this segment is, and you have these kinds of things answered. 1. Is Hank Hanegraaff really Walter Martin's hand-picked successor? 2. Why does Hanegraaff make over \$250,000 a year while Walter Martin only made \$40,000 a year? And so forth right there, and as you go down the page, you can click on certain parts of this video, this 5 hour video by just clicking on the time markers that you see on the page.

Another example, we have another video called "30 Bible Questions: Women pastors, tattoos, masturbation, suicide, cremation, mixed marriage, pets," and many more topics in those 30 questions, but if you look in the description text, you see time markers that'll tell you where specifically certain questions are answered such as if you want to know about women pastors and what the Bible says about them, you've got the time marker 2:56, you just click on that with your mouse and it'll take you to exactly that point in the video that covers that subject. If you want to know about tattoos, you look there and click on the 11:10 mark of the video and it'll take you right to that question. Then as you go right down the list, "Once saved, always saved," that's at the 12:41 mark, and one topic after another. You see it all there, "What does the Bible say about interracial marriage?" 16:01 is the time mark you click on, and so forth all the way down the page.

Well, likewise in this particular 3 hour and 38 minute video, you'll be able to do the same thing. Just go to the description text of the video, see the time markers laid out for you and you can skip to parts of the video that you are more particularly interested in hearing and also because you just simply don't have the time to watch the whole video in one sitting. So a little bit of information to help you get through these long videos that we seem to like to produce. Alright, God bless.

Announcer. Have you ever wondered where many pseudo-Christian American cults such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Christadelphians, Seventh-day Adventists, Christian Science followers, the Unity School of Christianity and others have come from? Most people have never really stopped to ask that question. The shortest definition of the word "cult" is "organized heresy."

It is interesting to note that the American cults began in the 1800s. Mormonism, 1830. Christadelphianism, 1848. Seventh-day Adventism, 1861. Jehovah's Witnesses, 1879. Christian Science, 1879. Unity School of Christianity, 1895. But why? What happened to cause all of these sects to suddenly appear on the face of the earth? The answer is Campbellism which began in 1823. Campbellism, also known as Restorationism, is the theological mother spawning all these groups.

The religious movement known as Campbellism, Restorationism, and adhered to by groups such as the Church of Christ, Christian Church and the Disciples of Christ, had its beginning primarily through the influence of two immigrants from Ireland. Thomas Campbell, the father, and Alexander Campbell, referred to by followers as the "Master Spirit," the son rebelled against Presbyterianism and ultimately created the Campbellite Movement after coming to America in the early 1800s. To make a long story short, these two "Restorers of the Ancient Gospel," as they were called by their followers, were joined by two other Restorers named Walter Scott and Barton W. Stone who discovered that the gospel message in the Bible had been lost and now they were going to restore it. Walter Scott actually claimed to have restored the gospel when he baptized a Baptist named William Amend on November 18, 1827. Utilizing a Campbellite interpretation of baptism verses found throughout the Bible, Acts 2:38 etc., the restoration of the lost gospel was water baptism in order to the remission of sins, i.e. water baptism plus other obediences was essential for salvation. Therefore the Campbellite restoration plan of salvation meant an adherent had to do the following to be saved: hear + believe + repent + confess + be water baptized by immersion + local congregation + Lord's Supper + giving on first day + non-instrumental singing + prayer + benevolence + Bible study + no creed + Bible name + second law of pardon + obedience to elders + good morals + no Christians in other denominations + spiritual marriage if married + no indwelling of the believer by the Holy Spirit, only in the word + believe whatever the evangelists preached as the word of God.

From this Campbellite religion then came its influence on the birth of other American cults such as Mormonism. Sidney Rigdon, for instance, a close associate of the Restorers left the Campbellite organization and joined up with Joseph Smith, Jr. to help begin the Mormon religion. The links between Campbellism and the various cults go on and on.

To discover the history of this strange occurrence, see our video "Rise of the Cults: Where did all these strange American religious sects come from?"

Christian Answers
of Austin, Texas
presents

Christ Rescue Me! ... from the "Church of Christ"

Narrated by:
Leslie Rosema

Announcer. Christ Rescued Me!from the "Church of Christ"

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Larry Wessels. You go down the list, you also have "Saved by works and water baptism," which would mainly be the Campbellites, the Church of Christ Restoration Movement.

And this is what kind of sparked the whole thing, got the Church of Christ people, and we'll refer to them constantly as Campbellites because basically there was no Church of Christ in history until the Campbells came along with this Restoration Movement as we've just talked about, and began one and so when we talk about Campbellites we're basically referring to Church of Christ people.

Bob L. Ross. And the reason that term is used, Larry, sometimes we're misrepresented. They say we're doing this out of ignorance or malice or prejudice or something. That's not it at all. When we talk about Lutherans, we're not doing this out of prejudice or ignorance or malice. If we talk about a Calvinist or if we talk about an Arminian or even in politics we talk about a Jeffersonian or a Reaganite or whatever, we're just identifying who is responsible for the theories and doctrines and practices, and despite the fact that the Church of Christ likes to broad jump and go back to the day of Pentecost and claim that it all started there, the fact of the matter is as their own history acknowledges, it goes back to the Campbells. And so Campbell, Campbellite, and that's why it's used.

Larry. Exactly, and at this point I'd like to tell the viewers that we've got three books here on our set here. I don't know if we can get a camera in on that or not, but I want to let the viewers know at this point that Bob L. Ross is probably one of the leading experts on the Church of Christ and their history and as you'll see, we've got three books here by Bob. The first one here is "Acts 2:38 and Baptismal Regeneration," and he's got a picture here of Walter Scott. What does it say? "The Restorer of the Ancient Gospel."

Bob. Let me say this about that word "expert," Larry. All I know about Church of Christ history is what they have in their own books.

Larry. Exactly.

Bob. So it's not something that I'm to be pinned a blue ribbon on for some reason, it's all in their books. Anyone can take it and read their books and dig out it the same information.

Larry. I guess why I say expert is that you simply took the time unlike most people in the world and researched it.

Bob. I will take credit for spending a whole lot of time researching their own books but it's something anyone can do. The books are there, they're available, and I don't have any franchise on them or anybody that can read and write can look at them and get the same information I got out of them.

Larry. Exactly. And I want to point out the next book here in the middle, this is called "Campbellism: Its History and Heresies." This is by, of course, Bob again and there's a picture here of Alexander Campbell on the front of it, and that's that Master Spirit of Campbellism.

Bob. That's what, that's what he was called by one of his associates, the Master Spirit.

Larry. One of the main instigators of this Restoration Movement we've been talking about. And your other book here on the set is called "The Restoration Movement" and it kind of traces a history of the Restorers coming from Brush Run on Buffalo Creek.

Bob. What this is is a serpent illustrated down through here, Larry, because, you know, the Scripture says that Satan was a liar from the beginning. Well, in the beginning he used the serpent as the instrument and he was a very sly and cunning creature, and so I think Campbellism has been very sly and very cunning in some respects, in other ways they make big blunders, but certainly it has been a lie from the standpoint of the teaching of God's word.

Larry. So with those books referenced to here for the viewers, I also want to make mention that these books are also available from Pilgrim Publications for anyone that would be interested in those things. They're outstanding books on Campbellite history and it also takes on...

Bob. I'm being chased down here by a Campbellite. [laughter]

"Church of Christ, True Church or Cult" video.

Speaker 1. I don't know anybody that hadn't heard as far as Texas is concerned or the southern United States, of the Church of, well, really called the Church of Christ, Campbellism, Campbellites, all of that.

Dr. Morey. The Christian Church. Disciples of Christ.

Speaker 1. Right, and these people thrive on the subject of debate. They're always wanting people to debate them and I'm glad to have Mr. Ross with us because whether he wants the tag or not, you're supposed to be the expert in this area and so I think what we're gonna begin to do today is this, first of all, I think it's always important to examine the roots of any movement. If I understand anything, roots determine what's on the branches ultimately, but for those listening, we're talking about the Church of Christ. Now I'm not sure, is there the United Church of Christ, the Disciples of Christ, they're basically all out of the same vein, correct?

Dr. Morey. We simply are pointing out that theologically and historically we have to label them as cultists. These institutions are not really Christian churches.

Speaker 1. Now for that person out there listening, Dr. Morey, define cult, just the word "cult." What is a cult?

Dr. Morey. The cult is a religious organization based upon the teachings of a central individual or group of individuals whose authority was viewed or in practical nature is viewed as being equal to Scripture and whose doctrines are in opposition to that of historic Christianity, in this case dealing with the Campbellite movement, we're talking about the leaders who established this religious movement in the past which today is known as the Church of Christ, the Disciples, etc. would be the Campbells.

Now I do want to make a distinction between that and the United Church of Christ. Now that has to do with an ecumenical thing that took place in the '50s when they brought together some of the evangelical brethren and they put together various denominations, and up north where I'm from, every little town has a UCC, United Church of Christ, and that is the local liberal mainline church on the block, and this has no relationship whatsoever to Alexander Campbell.

Speaker 1. Yeah, I'm glad you brought that out.

Dayspring Evangelism Presents:

Narrator. Is the Church of Christ organization a cult founded by men such as Thomas and Alexander Campbell and others, or is it the true church on earth today? We regret that another Church of Christ minister, Mr. Bill Jackson of Southwest Church of Christ of Boston who also has challenged Dr. Morey, failed to take advantage of this opportunity to meet Dr. Morey in debate despite two invitations.

Speaker. Now I'm not here to defend Alexander Campbell no more than I'm here to defend you still being a Baptist. Now maybe one of these days when you receive more enlightenment, that you can leave the Baptist church as Campbell did and his father and come all the way to the truth.

Bob L. Ross. Alexander Campbell was never a Baptist.

Speaker. I said, remember, the Baptist association....

Bob. He was never a Baptist.

Speaker. ...and I said he was aligned to the Baptist church.

Bob. He was never a Baptist church member.

Speaker. No. I did not say, listen, I said that he was in the Baptist association, that he was more aligned to the Baptists than he was to...

Bob. He was never in a Baptist church. The organization he was with affiliated with the Redstone Baptist Association as an affiliating organization. They were never a Baptist church and he was never a member of a Baptist church although he had been baptized by a Baptist preacher.

Speaker. Now look, I'm gonna say something here, okay, and what I want to say is the fact that you misrepresented what I said because I said that Alexander Campbell at the point you mentioned in 1811 was associated with the Baptist Association. He was not a member of the Church of Christ.

Bob. He was not a member of the Church of Christ, he was not a member of the Baptist church because there was no Church of Christ.

Speaker. I did not say he was....

Bob. There was no Church of Christ there.

Speaker. Listen, you misrepresented me again and on the tape it's gonna show I said that he was associated with the Baptist Association. He was a preacher at the Bull Run church, and that church was in the Baptist Association.

Bob. In 1811, they were not in the Baptist Association. They did not get in the Baptist Association, if you'll look at the book I gave you beforehand, until 1813, and it wasn't the Bull Run, it was the Brush Run.

Speaker. Oh, the Brush Run. Okay. I stand corrected.

Bob. You've got to get your history right, these dates and places and people.

Speaker. Correction granted, but still the point that I made, the point that I made that I want you to answer, is that Alexander Campbell was not a member of the Church of Christ during the time he was associated with the Baptist Association.

Bob. Exactly right because there was no Church of Christ. There was no Church of Christ.

Speaker. No, no, there was no Church of Christ in America.

Bob. The Church of Christ developed after all this as a result of the Restoration.

Speaker. Wait a minute, wait a minute.

Bob. You see, Mr. Elkin shows that they were [unintelligible] so there was no Church of Christ. That's why he went to the Baptist Association.

"Is Water Baptism Essential For Salvation?"

Dr. Morey. The only rational way to deal with that is to divide up the commands of Christ into two groups. In this chart here, for example, Jesus tells us there are things to do, things to do before you are saved, these are directions given to the lost who are the children of Satan, people who do not know God, their sins are not forgiven, they're yet in a lost state, and these deal with the issue of justification, how can a man be just before God, deal with conversion, and everyone agrees be they Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Mormon, Church of Christ, Jehovah's Witness, whoever they are, that the New Testament is very clear that you must repent and believe in order to be saved. Everybody agrees with that because there are so many verses.

Now Acts 20:21 gives us the gospel plan in a nutshell. The Apostle Paul gives a summary of his gospel preaching. He said, "I preached repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Now the reason that repentance and belief are always put together is because they are one action. When you turn away from someone, you turn toward someone. I cannot turn toward Brother Ross without turning away from you. That's why you have places that will mention repentance but no reference to belief but it's assumed that this is a believing repentance, or there will be places that mention believe but it doesn't mention repent. John 3:16 says, "Whosoever believeth," *pontes pisteuo*, but it's assumed it means a repentant belief, and thus these two terms which are one action, they're an invisible action in the heart, we are told clearly that if you want to become a child of God, you must repent and believe and then you become a child of God. After you become a child of God, now you have a whole list of hundreds and hundreds of commands because you're not dealing with justification, you're dealing with sanctification; you're not dealing with conversion, you're dealing with the Christian life; you're not dealing so much with things to do to be saved but things to do because you are. Baptism and the Lord's Supper, Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me." Is that necessary therefore to be saved? You have to take communion? Baptism? Church membership and attendance? Giving of offering and gifts? Wives, be submissive to your husband. Husbands, love your wives. Kids, obey. And the list goes on and on and on, hundreds of commands in order to be saved.

Now the United Pentecostals who are like a sister to you, would say that baptism should go on this side of the ledger, baptism of the Holy Spirit goes on this side of the ledger, speaking in tongues go on this side of the ledger, and there's always the attempt to add something. The old Judaizers put circumcision. Others put other things. Church, you've got to be a member of our church. That's why in the Spiritual Sword we have the statement that if you are not a member of the Churches of Christ, meaning that particular religious movement, you're not a Christian, you're a cult because you deny everybody else salvation, whereas we believe anyone who trusts in Christ alone for salvation is a child of God.

When you turn to the Scriptures, you will find consistently that we are to repent and to believe because these two things are the invisible action of the heart. They can be done anywhere, anytime, any place. In the frozen north of Alaska. In the desert of the Sahara. Faith can work anywhere. Baptist, you need water. You need somebody to baptize you. What if you don't have enough? What if you're an Eskimo, you can't be saved. Jesus never baptized anybody. Baptism doesn't save anybody. John's baptism didn't save. Baptism is simply one of the things you do as a step in the Christian life. That's why we never find the order: be baptized, repent and believe. It's always: repent, believe and when you do, you're a repentant believer, and thus as a reality as a believer you become a candidate for baptism. The issue was Cornelius a child of God or a child of the devil when he came to the baptismal waters. Thank you very much.

"Church of Christ Debate" July 7, 1990

Speaker. Now he made the erroneous statement that nowhere in the Bible do you find baptism connected with justification. Well, I gladly remind my able opponent of 1 Corinthians 6:9 and following. What Paul talks about, you were the servants of sin, you did all of these things that he talked about, he said, but now you have been washed, washed in what? I want to know was that, what was it that Jesus or that Paul was talking about they were washed in. You have been washed. You have been justified. You have been sanctified. So I'm calling my friend to go back and do some study on 1 Corinthians 6.

Now in Acts 10, I will briefly state to you in Acts 10 we have a situation where this man was the first Gentile convert to Christianity. Peter had to be made ready to even go to his house. He was up on a rooftop and God sent him a vision and he says, "God, I have never eaten anything unholy, anything unclean," and God had to tell him, "Peter, don't you call anything unclean that I have cleansed." And so then Peter had to go to the house of Cornelius and there God baptized him with the Holy Spirit and I ask Mr. Morey, is Holy Spirit baptism for salvation?

Bob L. Ross. You claim that all the saved are in the particular church of which you are a member which wears the name Church of Christ.

Speaker. Yes.

Bob. We say that all the saved are those who believe or trust in Jesus Christ and there's somebody that does that besides those that are in your church. There are no Christians, there are no Christians who are not members of the Church of Christ?

Speaker. I agree.

Bob. No Christians?

Speaker. I agree.

Bob. Methodists, no Christians? We're all going to hell, right?

Speaker. Okay, let me tell you a situation where I believe that there may be a Christian.

Bob. No Christians?

Speaker. Now let me give you a point...

Bob. You're the only saved on earth?

Speaker. He might be the kind of Christian that you find in a Baptist church.

Bob. Is he saved, then?

Speaker. No, no, I'm, I'm asking you a question. That's what I said, that's why I said it. You may find some apostate Christians in the Baptist church.

Bob. Oh, apostate? Apostate.

Dr. Morey. I'll never forget this one Church of Christ pastor who really was desperate that I could receive him as a Christian and he wanted the churches in the community to receive him as a fellow Christian while at the same time he rejected all of us as fellow Christians. This is why evangelical scholars continue to have a great problem with the Churches of Christ, the Christian Church, the Disciples of Christ. Not only do they fight among themselves and cut each other's throat over musical instruments and Sunday schools and mission boards and whatever, but they also would cut off out of Christ those who believe in Jesus regardless of what other historical label that they happen to come up with, Baptist, Methodist. The only important thing you've got to remember is that Jesus Christ is what makes the difference. On the day of judgment, God is not gonna say, "Which group did you belong to?" He's gonna say, "What have you done with Jesus?" Neutral you cannot be for one day I will be asking what will he do with me? It's Jesus, gentlemen, not baptism, not church membership, not belonging to the right group. It's that personal faith in Christ and that means that I could say brother in Christ because you love Jesus. As long as you reject evangelical Christians, we cannot accept you. What is sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose. We must view you as but one more Restoration

Movement that came out of that period of time, one of many that all claim exactly the same thing, all argue exactly the same way, and you can't all be right and I believe you're all wrong.

Thank you for this opportunity of talking with you and I do appreciate your willingness to do so, and I will continue to pray that Jesus will open up your eyes and that we might be able to embrace you as brothers in Christ who trust in Christ alone, by faith alone. Thank you an awful lot.

"Is the Church of Christ a Religious Cult?" video.

Larry Wessels. I just want to read Galatians 2:16 and kinda just look at that quickly. It says, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Now to me that sounds pretty clear.

Dr. Morey. Paul looked forward to being found in Christ not having a righteousness which was of his own, but which was by faith in Christ Jesus, and I think what these poor people are not seeing is that, yes, God does demand a perfection, "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect," God does demand obedience, but our salvation is based on the perfection and the obedience of Jesus Christ. It's on his finished work in living a substitutionary life for us and dying a substitutionary death for us, and it's lamentable that they do not see trusting in Jesus and Jesus alone as the source of salvation.

Bob. L. Ross. Since we're going to Scripture more now in the latter part of this discussion, the closing part, I wanted to read a verse in Acts 15:1 which pretty much parallels what we have not only with these particular Church of Christ people but many others today who look for some form of work for salvation. It says, "Certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren and said, 'Except you be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved.'" Now circumcision was an ordinance of God. It was a good thing. There was nothing evil about it. It was a work of God. It was commanded and all this, and it had its own significance and purpose. Now they took something that was holy and made savior out of it.

Dr. Morey. That's right.

Bob. They took circumcision which was of God and put it in the place of the Son of God.

Dr. Morey. Now just substitute baptism for circumcision.

Bob. Now that's exactly what I was thinking about. You can take baptism, you can take the Lord's Supper, you can take just anything which within itself, I mean, you know a lot of times when we're standing against this teaching on baptism, we're pictured as if we're against baptism.

Dr. Morey. Oh, most assuredly not.

Bob. We're not against baptism, we've been standing for baptism for years and years and years and we've baptized people, we've been baptized ourselves.

Larry. You're a Baptist.

Bob. We have nothing against baptism. That's where the very name Baptist comes from is because we baptize.

Dr. Morey. I would even go so far as to say that a Christian who doesn't get baptized is a disobedient Christian.

Bob. Oh yeah.

Dr. Morey. You have to be baptized. It's not to become a Christian but to be obedient to the Christian life.

Bob. And the point that we're making here is as they took an ordinance of God and made a savior or made it essential to be saved, so people today will take something like baptism, a church affiliation, a church practice, singing or offerings or prayers or whatever, and they make saviors out of holy things of God which God... Well, Paul said maintain good works for necessary uses, but he never did say that good works, that one of the uses for good works was to save you.

Larry Wessels. Lee Ann Ferguson, a former life-long Church of Christ member, has done the true body of Christ a great service through this excellent book. It exposes the multitude of heresies contained in the cult of Campbellism and its related sects also known as the Restoration Movement, which was founded in the 1820s by religious charlatans. I have been in Christian apologetics and counter-cult evangelism since 1981 and I can assure you that Lee Ann's book will not only help protect God's sheep from wolves and false prophets, that's Matthew 7:15, but it will also serve as an excellent theological resource and witnessing tool to be shared with Church of Christ members themselves. I heartily recommend her book to all. Larry Wessels, Director, Christian Answers TV, Christian Debater, Austin, TX.

Announcer. This video presentation does not include an audio version of the entire book but only certain chapters due to time limitations, thus we begin with chapter 3, followed by other selected chapters. Those wishing to read the entire book can either order it from True Gospel Publications or go to the back of this video, see the time marker in the description text under this video.

Narrator. Chapter 3. Proud to be humble. "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." Proverbs 16:18. "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy." Luke 12:1. In order to live with such glaring contradictions, we have to learn to disassociate our religious convictions from reality or else go mentally insane from having to face what we were not spiritually equipped to handle. The biblical word "predestinate" could especially trigger a psychotic episode, so when we would read the Bible, we had to learn to compartmentalize what we had read from what we were taught in church, for any ray of light threatened our COC conditioning and had the potential of forcing us to face the truth that would have set us free, the truth that we were unknowingly trying so hard to run from, God's sovereignty in salvation. Instead, we were driven like addicts to the obsessive compulsion of perfectionism where some very abnormal behavior patterns inevitably emerged, adrift with moral lapses, inconsistencies and mental breakdowns, but due to a preconditioned and artificially induced standard of evaluation of our symptoms, we were plunged into a socially sanctioned pseudo-science perspective rather than a purely biblical perspective.

So consequently, we became perfect candidates for being duped into big pharma's diagnosis of "chemical imbalance," a medical myth that has been successfully debunked for decades. Far from promoting spiritual growth in the midst of life's problems, the COC system of theology served to promote neurotic and psychotic tendencies, yet there was such a deep denial of these kinds of dissociative disorders and delusions, especially within the family context where our theological views were actually lived out instead of being led to Jesus Christ as our only hope. The need to be saved by him was minimized and the true meaning of mercy was distorted. Although ours was a more socially accepted form of dissociative dysfunction, we still unknowingly utilized the concealment of devices of the COC's psychotic system which allowed us to live out our delusions under the pretense of religion and what was falsely called science. 1 Timothy 6:20.

Sadly, what we really needed was spiritual regeneration rather than dead religion. Church attendance was compulsory and sermons were cold and dry, however, we learned some basic facts about Jesus for in order to appear Christian, we had to at least be programmed to intellectually acknowledge and confess his existence as the Son of God who died for our sins, but not as someone who fully satisfied divine justice so that we could fully entrust our souls to him. Instead, "our part" had to supplement his. This warped view was due to Christ's death merely being portrayed as only a suffering and dying for our sins rather than a substitutionary atonement where he actually satisfied God's wrath and achieved redemption on behalf of those he died for. Hebrews 9:12. In other words, we were not taught the true meaning of the term "propitiation," Romans 3:24. If there had ever been true testimonies of salvation in the COC, one would have been thought to be prideful and arrogant in the least, or mentally imbalanced and disorderly at the most. This was due to the COC teaching the lie that humility meant not being sure about one's salvation. Certain verses were pulled out of context. Example, 1 Corinthians 4:5-6, 1 Corinthians 7:17 and 1 Corinthians 4:36. To try to prove that God doesn't specially call any particular person to salvation which contradicted the context as well as the other verses, it's so clear that there is a general call for all sinners to repentant and turn to Christ, but that God effectually calls his people with "a holy calling not according to

works but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," 2 Timothy 1:9.

There was such a deep resentment in the church toward anyone who seemed to live holier than we did, especially if they gave credit for their godly living to the power of God's grace rather than the oppressive COC doctrines we had to follow. Because we took pride in the fact that we believed one must live right, we were hypocritical in how we actually lived due to our false humility and self-imposed religion, that we had no true power against sinful indulgences. "These things, indeed, have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh," Colossians 2:23. No wonder there was such a vicious animosity and jealousy toward any who claimed to actually be saved. I remember verses, example, Romans 12:3, that were pulled out of context and used against them to try to make them look like they were evil for daring to have blessed assurance in Jesus' power to save and change them through the simple faith in him alone.

It was falsely assumed that all who claimed such assurance were abusers of grace, who thought they had a license to sin. The COC system contained no knowledge of how a truly saved person would battle sin and serve Christ out of love rather than legalistic fear, therefore it had to resort to obedience-based control in order to keep its unconverted members in line. So consequently, we were theologically trained to believe that if anyone had a right to God's favor, it had to be us because we worked for it. Since our doctrines nourished the belief that we were better than others, we were inevitably led to believe that God was indebted to us, so sadly we were not only set up for boasting but for inevitable failure for we were paradoxically proud to be "humble."

"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt, but to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Romans 4:5. Although our doctrines indicated that we had to be absolutely perfect or end up in hell, deep down we all knew that we couldn't really pull off perfection so we excused our sins (especially the sin of self-righteousness) by constantly and legalistically performing what we thought was repentance for our sins according to our "second laws of pardon" doctrine. This man-made idea is similar to the Roman Catholic sacrament of "penance" (the so-called "second plank" of justification), where one must try to regain the salvation one initially had in baptism but lost again and again due to sins committed after baptism.

In summary, subsequent works were necessary after baptism as a secondary means of justification, so although I was constantly performing what I thought was repentance, there was never true removal of guilt for the sins supposedly pardon through repentance, one minute was replaced by another sin in the next, and it had the potential to land me in hell just as surely as the one previously pardoned. So without the true gospel, I had to try to stay sane by either adopting an antinomian view of sin (an abuse of God's grace as an excuse to live in sin), or else become an obsessive-compulsive perfectionist. Although our "second laws of pardon" were conditioned a par on works, the COC claimed that these works were exempt from Paul's condemnation of works salvation because they

were supposedly works of a different category, those that baptism had made acceptable for salvation.

The COC would also elusively dodge Paul's condemnation of works salvation by giving lip service to the fact that one couldn't earn salvation but what was really meant was that one could not "initially" earn salvation, for one could not lay the sacramental groundwork for salvation which Jesus supposedly did when he instituted baptism, but after baptism "works" of repentance, faith, etc., could be meritorious for they were now "baptized works" acceptable for meriting or earning salvation. So the gist was that one couldn't earn salvation by works until after baptism which was still a salvation by works, just misleadingly worded different.

But despite the COC's deceptive language, I still remember being torn to pieces when I would read in the Bible about how Esau sought repentance with tears but couldn't find it, Hebrews 12:17. That alone planted a seed in my heart that God watered over the years to help me realize that I needed to pray for him to grant me repentance, 2 Timothy 2:25. Just because one is sorry for sin doesn't mean one has a godly sorrow that leads to true repentance which is realizing one's repentance even needs to be repented of. True repentance is realizing that we can never repent enough to cover the sins we've committed and that Jesus' righteousness is our only hope of heaven for we have no saving righteousness of our own. Our only hope was that God would accept the righteousness of Christ in our stead, just like the song "Rock of Ages" says, "Could my tears forever flow, could my zeal no longer, no, these for sin could not atone, thou must save and thou alone." Although we passionately sang these words with great religious zeal in the COC, we just didn't get it. It's not that we didn't carefully contemplate our beliefs, but we were just not spiritually equipped to "test the spirits" in order to recognize and reject false doctrine. There was no true freedom in a religion that lacked means to detect lies. If we had been given discernment by the Holy Spirit, we would not have remained indifferent to the consequences of deception.

Intimate involvement in the COC was a strong contributing factor in the way my family and I viewed God and religion. It also affected how we related to each other for our approval of one another was always based on performance instead of unconditional love. The false standard of comparing ourselves with others rather than God's holiness led to pride, superiority and cookie-cutter conformity, 2 Corinthians 10:12. No wonder grandma and all five of her daughters strangely became duplicate valedictorians and my mother still struggles with depression in the external pressure to perform.

In Luke 10:41-42, Mary had an exalted view of Christ for she knew that everything she needed was in him alone. She was content to sit at Jesus' feet even at the expense of losing others' approval and praise for he meant more to her than anything else in the world and he promised that his blessing would never be taken away from her because it was eternal. Martha, on the other hand, had to be reminded of what was most important for she was caught up in the temporary cares of the world, working in her own strength, distracted from "the only thing needful." Likewise, we were all like "Martha's on a mission" and the COC basically dictating to Jesus how he needed to reprimand those who

weren't as "good" as us, and how he needed to back us up and reward us for all of our earthly efforts to perfect our lives and impress others "for him," of course.

Since our obedience-based system started with man and reasoned outward from man's God, we ended up with a God that was a lot like man so we became the center of our own universe where a superficial joy for human peace had to be forged through our own performance because when human reasoning is at the starting point of religion, it always ends up centered with a sound biblical view of God. This is why it cannot be stated strongly enough just how far these dangerous errors led us away from the truth. Although we sincerely thought we were "doing right," we were actually being led further and further away from the true God and Savior of Scripture.

Sincerity is no guarantee of heaven. As it has often been said, "the road to hell is paved with good intentions," but God looks past the white-wash of "doing right" for he sees the heart. Though the COC passionately practices what appears to be "obedient faith," repentance, worship, baptism, communion, etc., without true salvation it's all in vain, empty and void of life, power and true godliness. The COC denies the power of the true gospel by replacing it with a false gospel that claims man has the power to spiritually please God apart from divine intervention. Good works done by a fallen will that's never been set free from the love of sin and truly regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit are actually an abomination to God and have no saving merit. They are done out of legalistic fear and attempts to bribe God by obligating him to save based on works, but dead religion can never produce spiritual life.

Chapter 4.

Replacing the gospel with disputable things. "Ye blind guides which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel," Matthew 23:24.

Although the cross and Christ were always mentioned in the COC, their glory and truth were emptied of worth and value by heavy emphasis upon works and disputable things that caused us to be in constant dispute, but sadly that was preferred over the offense of the cross which is how God saves. Instead, we unknowingly became "enemies of the cross" by constantly looking for a loophole. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God," 1 Corinthians 1:17-18, Philippians 3:18-19.

The offense of the cross is that it doesn't make appeals for us to do anything to be saved. The cross proclaims that there is nothing anyone can do to be saved. It reveals our desperate need to have our sins imputed to Jesus and his righteousness imputed to us through the gracious gifts of repentance and faith in him in his perfect obedient life, and in his finished work on the cross because faith itself is obedience to the gospel, Romans 1:5. But this was unheard of in the COC which taught the opposite, that obedience itself is faith. It taught that faith is a meritorious work that we do rather than a work that God does in virtue of Jesus' merits, 2 Thessalonians 1:11. Thus it incorporated more into faith than just faith in Christ, and those who opposed its unbiblical view were falsely accused

of isolating faith from "other biblically sanctioned means of salvation," such as baptism. Rather than being honored with the privilege of suffering for the offense of the cross, Galatians 5:11, our church attracted worldlings by soft-pedaling another gospel that avoided the topic of imputed righteousness like the plague, despite the fact that Scripture is saturated with it. Romans 4 alone mentions it many times.

Our plan or "loophole" was far less offensive to our religious pride and far more in line with our sacramental system which was central to how we were to save ourselves with "a little help from Jesus." Some Bible passages such as Acts 2:40 were taken out of context and misinterpreted to mean that trusting the Lord merely meant trusting him to help us do what it took to save ourselves when in actuality Jesus made it abundantly clear that even if we've done all that is commanded of us, it is still unprofitable for salvation for it is only our reasonable duty, Luke 17:10.

When the apostles were asked, "What must I do to be saved?" they simply said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," Acts 16:30-31. However, the COC would stress the doing of God's will in verses such as John 7:17, but would leave out the fact that doing his will meant believing solely upon Jesus Christ for eternal life, John 6:40, and how everything else would fall into place after that. So instead of being humbled at the foot of the cross, we were taught to "walk in the light" of our own prideful works due to a fundamental denial of the sufficiency of Jesus' work on the cross. So disputable peripheral things were turned into essential for salvation things, for the COC severely confused categories by systematically basing part of our salvation on marginal issues, and by picking and choosing which commands to keep and which ones to reject.

Consequently by majoring in the minors, its convoluted logic cause our "dogmatic" doctrines to vary and the cross of Christ to be made ineffective in our lives for no one could ever agree on what were the most important "salvation works." So one COC would be dogmatic about how a kitchen in the church would damn to hell, yet would hypocritically be okay with snacks for children or a water fountain. Another would be dogmatic about how it was essential to be baptized only in a creek, while another would have a build-in baptistery. One would be dogmatic about how the Lord's Supper had to be taken while standing, whereas another would teach that it was okay to sit. One would be dogmatic about women only wearing dresses while another would not, and on and on the crazy inconsistencies and variations went.

To be biblically blunt, our "dogmatic" doctrines were like shifting sand, always changing because one can in no way, shape or form be consistently dogmatic about peripheral things that are disputable and questionable. However, these silly scenarios are seen in many arminian sects. For instance, some COC's have the same head covering theology as Mennonites and Amish and just like them, some will have women to partially cover their head while other sects will have them cover their whole head. The irony is that the face is a major part of the head yet none of them wear face veils, and even their forehead is exposed which is the most prominent part of the head and the part that is first noticed. But when any of these legalistic sects are questioned as to why such inconsistencies exist, the answer is always in the lines of, "Well, we just don't do it that way." Muslims also

have variations in their different sects with some being more consistent with head covering doctrine than others, so one must wonder how most legalists would feel if they had to encounter consistent Muslim women every day that might make them think they're going to hell for not covering their entire faces and foreheads. Perhaps they would then get a taste of their own medicine and repent for dogmatizing things that are so unnecessary, things that have nothing to do with salvation. True modesty is simply dressing decently so that one doesn't draw inappropriate attention to one's self, yet legalists draw an incredible amount of attention to themselves by an outer show of vainglory which causes them to stand out like sore thumbs as the "spiritual elite," such as the pope.

The trivial differences between the Amish and the Mennonites which are both of the Anabaptist movement, are similar to the trivial differences between the "Churches of Christ" and the "Disciples of Christ," and the so-called "Christian Church" of the Reformation movement. For example, the Amish heavily emphasize attaining salvation based on having "no phones, no light, no motorcars, not a single luxury," whereas Mennonites place more emphasis on a different set of works for obtaining salvation. Likewise the COC system heavily emphasizes attaining salvation and avoiding hell based on how there are no musical instruments in the church, whereas the Disciples of Christ and the Christian Church allow musical instruments yet they place more emphasis on a different set of works for obtaining salvation.

The International Churches of Christ or the Boston Movement, have a more aggressive methodology for recruiting members which has caused them more exposure as a cult than the typical "fly-under-the-radar" COC's, yet they still hold the same basic theology. All of these groups still have the same soteriology, or salvation theology, no matter which way they slice it or dice it and this is why they often set up false dichotomy between Paul's writings and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in order to try to set the stage for their own earthly kingdoms of human reformation based upon works. No wonder we were never encouraged to pray, "Thy kingdom come," for the COC teaches that Christ's kingdom has already been completely consummated and that the COC is it both now and forever.

All arminian sects mix Bible terminology with work oriented phraseology in order to try to sound more biblical and to make self-righteousness seem more palatable. These deceptively contrived phrases are jam-packed with theological connotations that have nothing to do with the true gospel. For example, the Anabaptist sect calls its system of works "an obedient love/faith relationship with Jesus Christ." Roman Catholicism calls its system of works "faith working through love," and the COC eloquently calls its system of works "appropriating God's promises through obedient faith."

The first "Church of Christ" I grew up in had formerly been a "one cup" church. A particular preacher began teaching that everyone had to drink the fruit of the vine from the same cup or else they wouldn't have "obedient faith" on an "essential for salvation work." This stance was based upon a single Bible verse concerning the Lord's Supper which was grossly exaggerated and taken to a ludicrous extreme, Matthew 26:27. After that fad died out, another preacher came in among the gullible and had them focusing

more on the second half of that verse to promote a different "essential for salvation" twist on the Lord's Supper. Since it says "drink ye all of it," it was taken to mean that anytime they took the Lord's Supper, they had to make sure they sip down every last drop of juice in their individual cups or else be in danger of hell-fire.

A major cause for such confusion was the COC leaned heavily upon a discretely elusive system for interpreting Scripture and for coming up with modern innovations of ancient heresies. This unspoken system enabled COC's to become the "harbingers" of unique doctrines and commandments of men that would set them apart as the only ones "in the right." For example, Jesus first instituted the Lord's Supper on a Thursday, Matthew 26:17-19, Matthew 28:1, Mark 14:12-16, Luke 22:7-15, and Luke 23:54, yet the COC dogmatically chose every Sunday (assuming the meals in Acts 20 were the Lord's Supper although the cup isn't even mentioned there). Ironically another cult could just have easily been formed by trying to base salvation on dogmatically taking the divine ordinance every Thursday or every single day, Acts 2:46. Like most arminian sects, the COC put human logic on par with God's divine decrees which created a prison of performance where our religious identity became heavily shackled to a man-made system. As a deadly consequence, disobeying the COC system became equal to disobeying God, the same pit Romanism leads to and what Paul warned about, Colossians 2:22.

No wonder Jesus described this kind of nonsense as "straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel," Matthew 23:24, for it leads to eating and drinking damnation to one's own soul, 1 Corinthians 11:29-30. One can only imagine just how guilty the COC may be of the body and blood of Christ by implementing a system that displaces and distorts the truth concerning Jesus' body and blood insults the Spirit of grace and replaces his gospel with nonessential assumptions and commandments of men that are hostile to the gospel. The irony was that the most crucial aspect of salvation which is saving faith (in the true Christ of Scripture) being a gift from God apart from any human effort, was replaced with disputable things that dishonored the name of Christ and eclipsed the biblical view of the gospel.

No wonder Romans 14 strongly warns against making "disputable things" essential to salvation. In Jesus Christ there are no "doubtful disputations," but the COC complicated the gospel by reducing Christianity to a mere system of moral codes that even the heathen would adhere to in order to feel better about themselves, because the spirit behind the COC system wickedly attempts to put God within human reach by reducing Christianity to mere formalities that can be accomplished by natural human abilities. However, Jesus said, "Verily I say to you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven," Matthew 18:3.

So until COC members become as totally dependent children upon the righteousness of Christ alone, they will not be able to enter into God's heavenly kingdom. "For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able," Luke 13:24. When a religious philosophy centers on the false notion that "God won't just reach down to us, we must reach up to him with our works," then its revelations on salvation will vary, but since

God must reach down to us, his revelation remains consistent. Jesus warned of thieves and robbers who climbed up another way to try to gain entrance into God's kingdom for they would rather do anything than come to the true gospel of Scripture and submit to God's supreme sovereignty in salvation, John 10:1, even if it means replacing the true gospel with the false one that leads to eternal damnation.

Chapter 5.

Moth-eaten patterns. "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in," Matthew 23:13.

Our desire to be on the cutting-edge of "Restoration" revelation and the fleshly desire to feel that we had a corner on spiritual superiority caused our church to lose all scriptural integrity. The "divinely revealed pattern" theology that became so integral to our religion was diametrically opposed to Jesus' doctrine of unity based upon truth. Instead of unity in his person, emphasis was placed on unity in a pattern. The results were nothing less than catastrophic. Jesus was reduced to being a mere pattern for us to follow toward our own godhood rather than an actual person of the Godhead. This is why Christ profits the Church of Christ system nothing, even though it assumes his title, Galatians 5:2.

I can remember distinctly in Sunday school how there was always a tremendous amount of emphasis placed on Noah's ark and all of the "patterns" that he had to build by in order to get it just right, but the ark was used as a perpetual illustration of how he had to get the pattern just right in order to be saved. We were never taught that the ark represented Christ in all of his perfection or how his perfect righteousness is all that can keep one afloat through the destructive waters of sin and death. That was unheard of in the COC for it sinks like the Titanic for having the wrong Christ.

The heretical implications of pattern theology are staggering because if Jesus was just a pattern or example for us to follow, that would mean that he fulfilled God's commands for himself which is blasphemous. Jesus was completely sinless which is why he was able to fulfill God's perfect standard of righteousness in order to justify his people from their sins. He was the perfect lamb sacrificed to cover their sins. It was not just so they could have a pattern to go by in order to fulfill God's commands for themselves, as if anyone could ever even come close to doing such a thing. No wonder severe division has always existed among the COC's. Although they were initially established on the basis of forming unity on the "New Testament pattern," each group's idea of unity had to be centered on that certain group's interpretation of what it thought that pattern was because when doctrines are built upon speculation and private interpretation rather than absolute truth, then each group just ends up picking and choosing what it thinks will best suit the interests of that particular group.

The COC is a classic example of how "group think" operates and how local man-centered authority is established in order to control converts. This self-styled hierarchy of power promised us liberty but brought us into bondage so that we feared to even question

authority, 2 Peter 2:19. Words cannot describe the overwhelming influence that was exerted over our mind. It was even far more acceptable to question Scripture than to ever question our religion. To question church authority was equivalent to questioning God. It was even implied in every COC that all other COC's were headed for hell if they didn't follow that particular church's pattern. The old saying is "the proof is in the pudding," and in the COC's case, it seemed to be banana pudding for I just recently obtained a photo of one of its church signs illustrating its threats of "divine retribution" toward anyone who would even think of leaving. It states, "Remember the banana: when it left the bunch, it got skinned." This was our fear.

The COC's controlled opposition, Leroy Garrett, straightforwardly admitted in his book, "What must the Church of Christ do to be saved?" "We must face the fact that this tragic habit of splitting into sects and sub-sects is largely due to a faulty 'restorationist' hermeneutics which says that there is an identifiable pattern for the work and worship of the church which spells out details which when adhered to 'restores' the true church." Page 40.

"We have erred in our claim that there is a uniform pattern of organization and worship in the New Testament churches and that we have duly restored that pattern. This is evident in the fact that we can't even agree among ourselves as to what the pattern requires. We have not only differed but divided over almost every aspect of the life of the church. Are we to conclude that God has given us a prescribed norm or pattern that is so obscure that we ourselves cannot make head or tail of it?" Pages 131 and 132.

By peeling away the essential doctrines of the faith and replacing them with disputable things, the solid foundation upon which a consistent view of the gospel should stand, gave way to a slippery slope of sin-filled sludge. By trying to patch up a faulty framework with patterns that have nothing to do with the gospel, our man-made system ended up usurping the authority of Christ. This is what happens when the microwave mentality of man comes up with his own methods rather than trusting in God's divinely intended purpose to convert his people by way of the Holy Spirit, convincing them of the absolute truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Consequently, the COC system fell off the ledge of legalism into the deep abyss of apostasy. By constantly chipping away at the gospel, sanding off its rough edges and replacing it with the fig leaves of work righteousness, the spirit behind the COC hides Jesus under legalistic layers that redefine the gospel into obscurity. By "suppressing the truth in unrighteousness," Jesus is hidden from the people, suggesting that he must first be found in the waters of baptism. This way the COC's sacramental system could gain the monopoly on salvation by appearing to be the only means of obtaining it, thereby making its "church" all the more authoritative for baptismal regeneration is the "golden calf" replacement system of the Restoration Movement.

Scripture reveals who is really behind all false doctrines that hide the gospel from people. It also makes it clear that it's only the true gospel that can set them free from the curse of a false one for, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost in whom the god of this

world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them," 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.

"The doctrines of grace separate the Christian faith from the work-based religions of men. They direct us away from ourselves and solely to God's grace and mercy. They destroy pride, instill humility and exalt God and that's why so many invest time in the vain attempt to undermine their truth. The religions of men maintain authority over their followers by, 1., limiting God's power; 2., exalting man's abilities; and 3., channeling God's power through their own structures. A perfect salvation that is freely bestowed by God for his own glory is not a 'system' that can be controlled by a religious body or group."

Although we religiously tacked the name of Jesus to the end of all of our prayers, we were not taught what it really meant to pray in his name, that he was our only hope, our only access to God, that we can have direct access to God through Christ by faith in his finished work on the cross and in his righteousness alone as our only hope of salvation. Through him "we have access by faith into the grace in which we stand," Romans 5:2, for through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father, Ephesians 2:18. Even the absence of physical water cannot keep us from the love of Christ and access to God through faith in him, Romans 8:35-39 and Ephesians 3:12. No external circumstance can prevent "whosoever will" from partaking of the water of life freely by God's grace alone, in Jesus alone.

The COC denomination (though it deceptively claims not to be one), teaches that it alone is a "place of sacramental encounter with God," but true salvation is not in its so-called "church membership package deal" which comes with a load of legalistic luggage. There are no fig leaves to gather in order to try to hide our sins and no baptismal waters to swim through to get to Christ. There are no tedious tenants of legalistic patternism, no mechanical sacramentalism, no self-proclaimed hierarchy of power with a monopoly on salvation, no complicated steps, no baptismal mediators to go through, and no patterns to appeal or perform to get to Christ. There are not many ways to salvation, only one way. Jesus said he is the way. He never said that he merely paved a way through a pattern of performance or a lock-step, five step check-off list. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man but the end thereof are the ways of death," Proverbs 14:12.

Not surprisingly, the COC authority pattern of organization is completely void of any real evangelistic outreach for its idea of reaching out is to get the lost to come to its church and perform all of its unbiblical mandates of moral reform without the power of the true gospel to genuinely transform them. I can remember wracking my brain to try to figure out how in the world I could ever get others to come to my church and go through with all of this. Naturally, I would become so very discouraged and confused. Our legalistic system created stumbling blocks and obstacles that kept us from true living faith in Christ and from true evangelistic outreach for it dishonestly hid Jesus behind a scripted blueprint that is nothing like biblical Christianity but only the Lord can give the discernment needed to renounce the "hidden things of dishonesty" in the COC where God's word is not being rightly divided but is being handled deceitfully which causes

division, 2 Corinthians 4:1-2. And Jesus said, "A house divided cannot stand," Matthew 12:25. Not only is the COC's version of repentance a mere outward reform, its version of faith and confession is also a mere mental assent to a minimal set of facts concerning Jesus for the COC does not represent true biblical Christianity at all, which is also why its loosely knit, moth-eaten pattern of theology unravels at the seams. So in order to be a true church of Christ, its false gospel and pattern theology would have to be completely moth-balled and replaced with the true gospel of Jesus Christ which glorifies God's grace and mercy, not man's high opinion of himself and his man-made doctrines.

Although Jesus preached the gospel, which is himself, the COC claims that the gospel wasn't preached until after Pentecost, hence its obsession with Acts 2:38. However, the Bible shows that John the Baptist preached the same "remission of sins" doctrine before Pentecost, that Peter preached on Pentecost and both pointed to the righteousness of Christ for the remission of sins, but COC leaders claim that their church didn't come into effect until Pentecost although the Bible reveals that God's church was in full function way before Pentecost. Examples, Matthew 18:7; Luke 12:32; Acts 2:47.

So considering the fact that the COC teaches that one must be baptized into its church and that salvation is only in its "church membership package," it must first answer the question exactly what church did John's baptism put people into if there was supposedly no church until Pentecost. So far no COC leaders have ever been able to give a biblical explanation for such heretical inconsistency, for then they would have to admit that their religion did not originate at Pentecost but in the early 1800s by their false prophet Alexander Campbell. But sad to say, even after learning the truth, many would still rather follow in the footsteps of Esau and forfeit an eternal inheritance for a bowl of Campbell's soup.

Apostle Paul asked, "Is Christ divided?" 1 Corinthians 1:13, for when spiritual leaders are elevated to the point of usurping the role of Christ in people's lives, the inevitable result is always confusion and division, but the Bible says that "God is not the author of confusion but of peace as in all churches of the saints," 1 Corinthians 14:33, and Christ is not divided. The true body of Christ is his sheep indwelt by the Holy Spirit who never leaves them despite the fact that they are often scattered by wolves in sheep's clothing as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Those who belong to Jesus are drawn to him by the Father who teaches them the truth and builds their faith and trust in him so that they are led to true repentance and an obedient like-minded unity in the Spirit, John 6:37, 44 and 65.

Chapter 6.

Pulpit perversions. "There may be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ," Galatians 1:7.

Like most modern churches, there was an invitation set up at the end of each church service where emotional appeals combined with songs such as "Just as I am," were used to signal to the congregation what emotions or duties were to be called forth in order to

settle the issue of salvation by taking some kind of physical action. The assumption was that a physical coming to the front of the church to soothe a guilty conscience was automatically equivalent to a spiritual coming to Christ. This was due to an extreme emphasis placed on the will of man and the idea that man's choice has the final say as to whether one is saved or not.

Due to growing up under COC indoctrination, I was always under extreme pressure to unpeel many legalistic layers to try to get all the way to Christ. The first layer was going up to the COC preacher and accepting Jesus by publicly giving a mental assent to the fact that he was the Son of God. The next layer was being baptized by a COC preacher. So by the time I was 15, I made a so-called "decision for Christ" and went up to be baptized. From there, the "process of salvation" had supposedly begun. I was told that I was now a Christian and would have to "grow in Christ" for the rest of my life to finally be saved in the end. I was taught nothing about being eternally indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit who permanently ensures that one will grow in Christ. Rather than being given the proper antidote for a sin-sick soul, COC baptism was administered as an inoculation against such truths which built up a resistance to true Christian conviction and faith.

As a sad consequence, I became very discouraged and let down for I had previously been under such deep conviction over sin that I had hoped for a miraculous change to occur once I was baptized, but when that didn't happen, I became even more disillusioned and rebellious than ever. I had truly wanted to obey the Lord but was heavily influenced by false doctrines that led me to believe that he had done all that he could for me and the rest was now up to me, so I developed a very low view of Christ and his love. Although I believed in God with all of my heart, I had a hard time believing in a Savior that would supposedly die for everyone but allow many that he supposedly died for to perish in hell. Our doctrines made me think that whatever he did for sinners, it must not have been enough to save us from ourselves, let alone save us from hell. So although I thought I had come to Jesus to be saved, I still lived in constant fear that he would allow me to perish in hell if I didn't do everything just right, but I didn't realize then that I had come to another Jesus, one not represented in the holy Scriptures. It was a different Jesus and a different Spirit that I had received, a Jesus who was unloving and untrustworthy unless I "did my part," a Savior who couldn't really save unless I saved myself, a task-maker who would meet me in the waters of baptism but leave me as soon as I rose out of the water and sinned again.

So I began to feel as if I would have had more hope if I had drowned in the waters of baptism, yet while going through the physical process, there was this grand delusion of resurrection to new life because that's what we were led to believe baptism literally did. While under such suggestive baptismal regeneration conditioning, one couldn't help but to imagine that one's sins were literally being washed away in the water due to the trick terminology used, but in practical reality, it never played out that way. Inwardly, I had become even worse for to my former guilt I had added the sin of self-righteousness. But even though I was told that I was now Christian, my conscience was still far from being purged from guilt no matter how hard I tried to believe that I had actually come to Christ in baptism. I was told that I had peace where there was no peace, Jeremiah 6:14.

Instead of carrying God's pardon sealed in my heart by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus, I then had to carry the added burden of trying to earn God's pardon by throwing myself into the COC's "second laws of pardon," for although we were taught that baptism was supposed to initially put one into Christ and initially put one into right standing with God, we were also taught that one could fall from grace out of Christ as soon as one sins. This was a classic example of tap water theology where one turns the grace of God on or off at will. One minute I would repenting for a certain sin that would immediately be replaced by another, and then another, and yet this was the vicious cycle that I had to learn to live with as one who was still dead in sins and trespasses, for I had not been truly changed and born again by the sanctifying power and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Instead I was deceived by a false support system that could only support me as long as I supported myself by fulfilling the "second laws of pardon" that allowed me to "grow in Christ," which meant gaining more salvation brownie points.

So like many, I became extremely "religious" but still lived just as worldly as any other lost sinner because in the COC anything went as long as it was a socially sanctioned and/or popularized on television. Since we didn't have formal doctrinal positions to safeguard any kind of true biblical structure for our lives, we could believe or do anything outside of the church we wanted as long as we kept a misguided trust in the COC's outward codes of behavior and its unique interpretations of Scripture. This conditioning process produced a type of religious schizophrenia for we had to disassociate our legalistic and perfectionistic theology from our worldly lifestyles and our lust for worldly entertainment. This was the only way we could still claim to be Christian and yet still fit in with the world, so predictably we ended up blending in perfectly with the world.

Instead of being separate from the world as "salt and light," our selective perceptions allowed us to choose those things which were of the devil, disassociate them from our theology and still maintain our social status as a "Christian," after all, it was still fashionable to be considered a Christian, but in instances where it wasn't, we kept silent and made sure to never "rock the boat." Compulsive conformity was the name of the game. We were chameleons when convenient, and conformed to the world instead of Christ. If the public school system promoted a dance, it was suddenly alright to go against the COC's policy against dancing, so although I was a strict COC member by day, I became a "dancing queen" by night. Martial arts and yoga were also accepted for church members, even if transcendental meditation and guided imagery were involved, as long as they were still socially sanctioned, promoted in a positive light on tv, or Christianized. No wonder I became a third degree brown belt in karate while in high school. So I was heavily initiated into Eastern thought and trained to access my "inner power" which seemed to parallel perfectly with the COC's inner power concepts of absolute human autonomy and free will.

Although sound doctrine (orthodoxy) is supposed to lead to sound practice (orthopraxy), that couldn't happen as long as I was under the influence of the COC and a superficial adherence to its doctrines which led to being even more desensitized to evil, so I was a prime candidate for New Age deception which eventually led to even deeper levels of the

occult. Sadly, by the time I was 18, my parents severely shunned me from marrying a guy they disapproved of, but not because of any true Christian convictions. Jesus was never mentioned at home and not even a single word of prayer was ever heard in our house, for anything biblical was reserved only for church, so I had heard more about how I needed to be good for "goodness sake" so Santa would come or so the "bad man" wouldn't get me, yet my family had still hoped that I'd marry someone more up to "status quote" according to their external expectations, but in actuality he and I had a lot in common. We were both heavily influenced by the world and disillusioned by religion. He was raised in a Catholic family where he too was duped into believing that he was initially saved by a rite of baptism, and that "God helps those who help themselves." We only differed on exactly how we were going to go about "helping ourselves." For me, it meant that I had to do all that the COC told me to do. This included the COC's unique version of "growing in Christ" which included religiously taking the Lord's Supper every Sunday, religiously attending church every time the doors were open, and never worshiping God accompanied by music or else.

So instead of truly growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, I was growing more and more distant from him and the truth that he came to proclaim. I never once remember hearing that Jesus would never leave or cast out those who truly come to him, John 6:37, Hebrews 13:5. But of course, I hadn't truly come to him, I had come to another Jesus that could only be found in the waters of baptism and lost again when I would sin. I never once heard anything about Jesus' propitiatory sacrifice to obtain and secure the salvation of all who would fully entrust their souls to him except through the gospel songs we would sing, Isaiah 53, 1 John 4:10. But hymns such as "Nothing but the blood," contradicted what was preached. "You contact the blood in the water" is what they say around this section of eastern Kentucky. "You meet the blood in the water" is what others have stated. In this regard, Campbellism parallels Romanism. Romanism says that the blood of Christ is in the wine, Campbellism says it's in the water. The only difference between the Romanist and the Campbellite is the kind of liquid used and the actions relating to the liquid. The Romanist will drink the liquid of wine in order to reach the blood, while the Campbellite will be immersed in the liquid of water in order to reach the blood.

In the COC, we had to learn to filter gospel hymns through the philosophy that Jesus' blood could only make us "savable" depending on our response to it. For instance, nothing but the blood was filtered through the philosophy that nothing but the blood made it "possible" for us to save ourselves by our own free will response. And Amazing Grace became an unbiblical version of grace that only made it possible for a wretch like me to conjure up enough self-generated faith to make it effectual. As a sad conclusion, our COC lens-filtered gospel songs through the Roman Catholic idea that God's grace is necessary to do everything it takes to be saved but not sufficient to save without our help or cooperation despite the fact that Jesus said his grace is sufficient, 2 Corinthians 12:9. But naturally, when doctrines of devils deceive people into believing their salvation is dependent upon them, they will end up having no blessed assurance, another song legalists can't sing in sincerity.

So the prevailing mindset was that we had to do something to be saved which logically led to thinking that we had to do something to keep it rather than believing we could be kept by the power of God through an irrevocable gift of faith that could only come from him. Example, Romans 11:29; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 1:29; and 1 Peter 1:5. The irony was that John Newton, the writer of Amazing Grace also wrote, "This is faith, a renouncing of everything we are apt to call our own and relying wholly upon the blood, righteousness and intercession of Jesus." And the Rock of Ages was written by Augustus Toplady who also wrote, "Free will is an arminian idol. A man's free will cannot even cure him of a toothache or of a sore finger, yet he madly thinks it is in its power to cure his soul. The greatest judgment which God himself can in the present life inflict upon a man is to leave him in the hands of his own boasted free will."

No wonder gospel songs sung in arminian churches always contradict the false water-down gospel that's preached behind their pulpits. The end result is always a kind of compartmentalized thinking that distorts the truth which was why the dutiful singing of gospel songs in the COC took on a monotonous quality that could not be scripturally accounted for because sincere praise was replaced with mechanical ritualism. Gospel songs such as Down at the Cross clearly proclaim where Jesus' blood was literally applied to his people and they have it personally applied at God's appointed time by direct operation of the Holy Spirit "whereby his word becomes indispensable to guide them in faith and repentance," not by an indirect operation through an outward ceremony. Example, Ephesians 2:13-16. In fact, none of the gospel songs ever insinuate that it is, because it's not. It is only applied by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ.

Although we could sing about the cross under the COC's influence, we were unable to grasp the message of the cross, that there is nothing anyone can do to save themselves, not even after baptism. However, when Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith, we can sing gospel songs with a sincere heart, a new heart that's enabled to obey him out of love and gratitude rather than legalistic bondage where sin has dominion, for only God can "make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen," Hebrews 13:21.