



*The Churches of Christ  
'Restoration Movement'  
and Campbellism*

Terry Arnold

Scriptures are extracted from a  
(KJV)/Greek Interlinear Bible.

All Scripture is shown in ***bold*** and ***italicised*** print.

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## **Contents**

<b>Introduction; history</b>	<b>P. 4</b>
<b>Campbellism and the Restoration movement;</b>	<b>P. 7</b>
<i>The doctrines</i>	<b>P. 7</b>
<i>Christology</i>	<b>P. 7</b>
<i>The Gospel; Salvation and the Holy Spirit</i>	<b>P. 9</b>
<i>Baptismal Regeneration</i>	<b>P. 15</b>
<i>But what about Baptism in the ‘early Church’?</i>	<b>P. 18</b>
<i>Those saved and not baptised in water</i>	<b>P. 19</b>
<i>Scriptures used for Baptismal regeneration by the Restoration Movement: Acts 2:38</i>	<b>P. 19</b>
<i>The Campbellite hypocrisy</i>	<b>P. 23</b>
<i>Campbellism: other doctrines and philosophies</i>	<b>P. 24</b>
<i>Original Sin</i>	<b>P. 25</b>
<i>Creeds</i>	<b>P. 27</b>
<i>Arguments from silence</i>	<b>P. 28</b>
<b>The Campbellites and the Cults</b>	<b>P. 29</b>
<i>Campbellism and Mormonism</i>	<b>P. 29</b>
<i>Campbellism and Christadelphianism</i>	<b>P. 30</b>
<i>Campbellism and Jehovah Witnesses</i>	<b>P. 30</b>
<b>Queensland Churches of Christ</b>	<b>P. 30</b>
<i>The first Queensland church of Christ - the untold takeover</i>	<b>P. 30</b>
<i>The takeover of a Queensland church in 2013</i>	<b>P. 33</b>
<i>Their ‘Identity’ statement</i>	<b>P. 36</b>
<i>Their Ecumenism</i>	<b>P. 38</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>P. 42</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>P. 47</b>

# **The Churches of Christ ‘Restoration Movement’ and Campbellism**

## **Introduction**

The following article is written in the hope that Churches of Christ pastors, elders and members will consider what the roots of the ‘Restoration movement’ are and what this movement taught and still teaches today. The Queensland Churches of Christ openly state they are committed to seeing the ‘Restoration movement’ adopted within the Queensland Churches of Christ.

The author of this article is a pastor of a Bible church and was an elder in a local affiliated Churches of Christ for over 16 years.

This article was written to be more relevant for Australian Churches of Christ rather than churches in other western countries. In particular, it was written to be especially relevant for the Queensland Churches of Christ since some of the views and events relate to developments within Queensland.

## **The History**

The ‘Restoration movement’ is based on the ‘Stone-Campbell Movement’, or what some call ‘Campbellism’. This movement began in the 19th century under the leadership of Thomas Campbell and continued under Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone and Walter Scott.

The Restoration movement believed that denominationalism was error, in apostasy from the gospel, and that there needed to be a ‘restoration’ to ‘restore’ the church to the ‘ancient gospel’ and a ‘unity’. The belief was that the denominations had ‘drifted from 1st Century Christianity’.

In 1809 Thomas Campbell, after moving from England to the American continent, was censured by the Presbyterian Church for ‘false teaching’. This led to debates between Thomas and the Presbyterians (and later the Baptists).

At a meeting at Brush Run on Saturday May 4, 1811, an organisation was formed and Thomas Campbell was appointed elder, while his son Alexander was licensed to preach the gospel. Four deacons were also chosen (John Dawson, George Sharp, William Gilcrist and James Foster). On the following day (Sunday) the church held their first communion service. (1) That the founders of this new movement considered this the true ‘reformation’ and a return to the true church is clear. Alexander later wrote: *‘The ancient gospel and ancient order of things, distinguish it most easily from every other cause plead on this continent or in Europe since the great apostasy. This great apostasy occurred in 250 A. D.’* (2)

(1) *Memoirs of A. Campbell* Vol. 1. P.367, 368.

(2) *Millennial Harbinger*, Vol.2, P.390 1831

In 1835 Alexander Campbell published a book titled ‘*Christianity Restored*’ in which he stated: ‘*Not until within the present generation did any sect or party in Christendom unite and build upon the Bible alone*’ (P.5)...‘*The first piece that was written on the subject of the great position, appeared from the pen of Thomas Campbell, senior, in the year 1809. An association was formed that year for the dissemination of the principles of reformation, and the piece alluded to was styled ‘The Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington Pennsylvania’*”. (P.6)

The ‘*reformation*’ referred to here is not to be confused with the Great Reformation of just a few centuries before under Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, etc; but here a new ‘reformation’ or ‘restoration’ of the gospel. (In this article I have used the terms ‘*reformation*’ and ‘*Great Reformation*’ to distinguish the two).

The 1809 ‘*Declaration and Address*’ mentioned above by Thomas Campbell functioned as somewhat a ‘creed’ for the young movement. The people who attended the meeting were arguably somewhat confused in their various views of what Christianity should be. Thomas himself was still a Presbyterian and had not yet fully abandoned infant Baptism when this address was written. His desire was to develop Christian ‘union’. The principles set forth in the thirteen propositions of the ‘*Declaration*’ are summed up as follows (as by the homepage for the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ) (1):

1. That the church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures.

2. That there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions among [local congregations]. Any division amongst Christians is a ‘*horrid evil fraught with many evils*’ and ‘*anti-scriptural*’. Christians of all denominations are brethren and should be united.

3. That nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith; nor required of them as terms of communion; but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them, in the Word of God.

4. That the New Testament is as perfect a constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament church, and as perfect a rule of the particular duties of its members, as the Old Testament was for the worship, discipline, and government of the Old Testament church.

(1) Lawson, LeRoy ‘*What Kind of Church is this?*’ Christian Church Today, 2008

5. That no human authority has power to impose new commands or ordinances upon the church, which our Lord Jesus Christ has not enjoined.

This ‘creed’ had good intentions but soon the underlying sentiment was propagated by Alexander Campbell that Christianity had apostatised and the true Gospel had to be ‘restored’; and ‘creeds’ were divisive and all that was needed as a standard was the New Testament.

In 1820 Thomas’s son, Alexander Campbell debated the Presbyterian John Walker. Three years later the Redstone Baptist Association was preparing to censure the Campbells for false doctrine after a sermon preached by Alexander in which he stressed that there was no need to preach the Law to compel people to accept the Gospel. (1) The Campbells promptly resigned and set up an independent Baptist Church. In the same year, Alexander, still claiming to be a ‘baptist’, debated McCalla. At this time the Campbells were calling themselves ‘Reformed Baptists’.

Although the Campbells were influential in the ‘Restoration movement’ that followed, they were only one of six groups contributing to the ‘Disciple’ or ‘Restoration’ movement. The largest of these groups at one time belonged to the influence of Barton Stone.

However, two main groups are usually cited as being prominent in developing this ‘Restoration’ movement. The ‘Campbellites’, as they were nicknamed, were united in a loose association of autonomous churches known as the ‘Disciples of Christ’. Meanwhile, Barton W. Stone, a former Presbyterian minister who, even before the Campbells came to America, had been teaching along similar lines to the Campbells, formed an association of churches known as the ‘Christian Church’. Barton Stone began at Cane Ridge, Kentucky and when the Stone’s and Campbells’ churches met one another, they united at Lexington in 1832 (along with similar smaller groups), and eventually were known by the name ‘Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)’.

(1) This is a most important point of doctrine. The Law shows sin (Rom.7:7; 3:20). The great and effective evangelists of old were first and foremost *preachers of the Law*. They knew that the Law is ‘*perfect for converting the soul*’ (Ps.19:7). The Law is the evangelist’s sharpest tool *to show the sinner his inability* to save himself or even to keep any part of the Law itself. ‘*The Law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ*’ (Gal.3:24). All the great revivalists and evangelists used the Law to show sin. The reason why we have a huge ‘fall away’ rate in modern evangelism (statistics show 80-90%) is precisely because modern evangelism rarely preaches the Law to convict sinners of their sin. The author has dedicated an in depth chapter to this problem in his book ‘*Foundations for Evangelism*’. In this work many quotes are shown from a wide range of early evangelists and revivalists to show the necessity to the use the Law in evangelism. Alexander Campbell and other ‘Restoration’ leaders strayed dramatically from this long held and biblical premise of salvation and evangelism doctrine.

It then became a unity movement as much as a ‘restoration movement’, in that their aim was to see Christians united, rather than ‘divided’ into denominations. Both groups were against any ‘creeds’ and believed that such creeds (or Confessions of Faith) divided Christianity and were human expansions or constrictions. Alexander Campbell was believed by many to have been raised up to restore the true ‘apostolic’ church.

Another key figure in the Restoration movement was Walter Scott who moved to Ohio in 1826 and began working with the Campbells. In 1827 he was hired to work as an evangelist. Conflicts began to grow with the Baptist movement and in 1839 Scott and the Campbell disassociated themselves from the Baptists. *Scott was to become an important influence in the Restoration movement’s doctrine of salvation, evangelism and the Holy Spirit.*

Originally no music was allowed in these churches as they saw this as unscriptural. By 1860 this view eventually caused a split between the ‘Churches of Christ’ and the ‘Disciples of Christ’. Today there are still ‘Churches of Christ’ that refuse to have music of any kind in their services. By 1920 over a hundred controversies had split the movement on such issues as musical instruments, head coverings, communion cups, schools, orphanages, Sunday School, divorce, re-marriage, etc. Thus the ‘Restoration movement’ has since divided into multiple groups. Over many years some groups have moved away from their original ideals. Many local churches within the affiliation of ‘Churches of Christ’ now have ‘creeds’ in that they have ‘statements of faith’, often which are quite dissimilar to the original tenets of the Campbellite movement.

### **Campbellism and the Restoration Movement**

The Restoration Movement emphasised a necessity to follow the practises of the ‘early church’. A number of slogans have been used in the movement to express distinctive themes:

*‘Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent’.*

*‘The church of Jesus Christ on earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one’.*

*‘In essentials, unity; in opinions, liberty; in all things love’.*

*‘No creed but Christ’.*

The movement was also against the use of names such as ‘Baptist’, ‘Presbyterian’, etc. Rather, they used such names as ‘Disciples of Christ’, ‘Churches of Christ’ or ‘The Christian Church’.

## The Doctrines

The doctrines of the Campbellite or the ‘Restoration movement’ can be gleaned from the various publications by the leaders of the movement. The Campbells began to published the *Christian Baptist* in July 1823 and this was followed by the *Millennial Harbinger* in 1830. Scott also published several works which are acknowledged further in this paper.

### Christology

Barton Stone went on to flatly reject the doctrine of the Trinity, and denied that Jesus was fully God on earth. Today in the ‘Disciples of Christ’ and a small number of the Churches of Christ and some other churches, there is still a tendency to avoid doctrine on the Trinity, although most Churches of Christ accept the doctrine in word or in substance. I have personally met Queensland Churches of Christ leaders who dislike the word ‘Trinity’ despite this term being used in early centuries to explain what is a biblical fundamental of the earliest Christian belief. (1)

Barton Stone was also involved in the ‘Cane Ridge revival’ in August 1801. People flocked to campgrounds where many preachers would preach until the food ran out or the excitement died down. At these revival meetings there were strange manifestations with people jerking, laughing, falling down, screaming and even barking. Stone called these manifestations ‘miracles’ and claimed the ‘presence of God’ was in these meetings. He claimed this was ‘true religion’ and that Jesus was exhibited in these peoples lives. However, these manifestations were not considered by most to be Godly or of the Holy Spirit. They have no biblical warrant and defy the ‘self control’ that is a fruit of the spirit (Gal.5:23). These manifestations were again evident in the 1990’s when the so called ‘Toronto Blessing’ spread with bizarre manifestations around the world. But the movement produced no real growth and a host of false prophecies and carnal disruptions to many churches. (2) Yet many Churches of Christ in Australia quickly adopted this movement wholesale, despite the turmoil and splits it caused to many churches. The movement ultimately did nothing to change societies or add souls to churches.

John Wesley had earlier encountered such manifestations and had stated in his diary of 1740 that such people were ‘*buffeted by Satan in an unusual manner, by the spirit of laughter*’. So too, Jonathan Edwards during the ‘great awakenings’ did not attribute any such ‘true religion’ to these manifestations.

(1) See author’s website for the history of the Trinity in the first few centuries: *Trinity and Deity in Early Church History*: <http://taministries.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Trinity-Deity-in-Early-History-v2.0.pdf>

(2) See the author’s booklet *The Toronto Blessing - A Critique*’

The philosophy of the ‘Restoration movement’ was, and is, such that it tends to accept much variation of error within its ranks. The proof of this is in the fact that the movement accepted Barton Stone and his teachings which should have been considered as serious heresy. This acceptance of Barton Stone should be alarming to those who know church history and the battles the early church fathers had to defend these vital doctrines. But it is no less alarming today that the Churches of Christ have a huge tolerance for false teachers and false doctrine. Testimony to this is the variation of speakers the Churches of Christ in Australia has accepted to various conferences. Some speakers have had outright heretical views of God, salvation and the Holy Spirit. As was in the case of Barton Stone, the doctrinal boundaries are either barely discernable or non existent.

It is no wonder that in later years members of the Restoration movement were prime targets for the cults, such as Mormonism and Jehovah witnesses. Many Campbellites left and either started or joined these cults (see later section ‘*Campbellism and the cults*’).

### The Gospel; Salvation and the Holy Spirit:

Although some classify the Campbellite doctrines and the original Restoration movement as cultic because the leaders sometimes claimed to be ‘restoring’ the true Gospel, it arguably cannot be classified as a ‘cult’ considering they do teach the divinity of Christ and most profess to the Trinity and other major doctrines. Nevertheless, some of the statements made by those in the Restoration movement show a mindset that speaks close to the premise that ‘*all denominations are wrong and we are restoring true Christianity*’. This is in fact the philosophy of most cults. Yet, unlike most cults which develop a definitive set of laws and rules, the modern day Churches of Christ allow for local churches to practically teach whatever they want. (More will be said on this when later in this article we look closer at the Queensland Churches of Christ).

Alexander Campbell divided the process of salvation into four stages. The first saw an enlightenment and a change of view in the sinner. This led to a change of affections of reconciliation. The third phase involved a quickening or rebirth. The final step was a conversion. But the idea that departs from orthodox or evangelical teaching is that the first step, the initial approach to God, was something the person could do of himself without supernatural assistance from the Holy Spirit. The other departure from biblical teaching was that baptism was the culmination of the human response and was the point at which the convert had a change of state and became a member of the family of God and received God’s Spirit.

Alexander's view of faith was inherited from his father who taught a *rational* acceptance of the salvation message. In this he was influenced by the earlier philosophers and pastors, Thomas Reid, Locke and Sandeman. These men had taught rationalistic and liberal ideas and were far from orthodox in theology. Reid taught that the human mind was capable of apprehending divine truth without the assistance of an enabling grace. What many today fail to realise is that the leaders of the 'Restoration movement' were *Pelagian* or at least *Arminian* in their doctrines of salvation. The Pelagian and Arminian tenets of salvation taught that man could apprehend to various degrees divine truth without the aide of the Holy Spirit and that man's will was ultimately the deciding factor in salvation. Both these Pelagian and Arminian doctrines were considered heresies by the church, in Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism in early centuries; and in Arminianism after the Great Reformation. (1)

In the doctrines of salvation Walter Scott had much influence in the Restoration movement. It was Walter Scott who in 1827, '*arranged the several items of faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life; restored them to the church under the title of the ancient gospel, and preached it successfully to the world...*' (2) His most important written work was '*The Gospel Restored*', published in 1836. In this work he taught a six-phase plan of salvation, with three phases taken by the individual and three by God. The three phases by the individual were faith, repentance and baptism; the three phases provided by God were remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit and eternal life.

Between 1827-1830 Scott developed the 'Five-Finger Exercise', an illustration for the gospel plan of salvation. This has been used in the Restoration movement ever since. He based this plan on Acts 2:38 and taught that salvation requires faith, repentance and baptism. When working as an evangelist Scott would often go into a community, find a group of children and ask them to hold up a hand. He would then point to each finger and say '*faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, gift of the Holy Spirit*'. He would have the children learn this off by heart and then instruct the children to recite it to their parents at home and tell their parents that he would be preaching this in church at the next meeting.

However, nowhere in the Scriptures are there 'steps' spelled out as being necessary or required for salvation. Yet various 'steps' have been consistently

(1) The author's book '*Calvinism and Arminianism - Out of the Maze*' has a chapter with a concise history of the heresies of Pelagianism and Arminianism.

(2) '*The Gospel Restored*' by Walter Scott, P.6

used in the Campbellite Restoration movement. This is salvation by works, not by Grace alone through faith alone. It is ‘another gospel’ and not the Gospel of Grace as set out in the Gospels and the epistles.

When examining the Restoration movement, of special concern is their doctrine of salvation with water Baptism. According to the *Christian Restoration Association* publication (USA) ‘*What You Must Do To Become a Christian*’ involves four things: You must believe, repent of sin, confess Christ, and be baptized for the remission of sins. One must admit his or her sinfulness and need for forgiveness, then repent and accept Jesus as Lord of his or her life. One must then be baptized by full body immersion for the remission of sins. At this point, it is believed one begins a new life, and is reborn. *This is historically the Campbellite and ‘Restoration’ gospel.* This fact is recognised by modern writers within the Churches of Christ. Graham Carslake in his book ‘*DNA of Churches of Christ*’ writes: ‘*Among the Reformers Baptism was clearly seen as a part of the total experience of salvation for all believers...key components were seen to be Faith, Repentance and Baptism into Christ that guaranteed the Forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was a total package of the waterfall of God’s grace from Jesus...Campbell connected the remission of sins with Baptism...You are formally saved when you are baptised...He stressed that baptism is the act by which one formally enters into a relationship with God*’. (1)

This doctrine directly contradicts the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone, without the added condition of any works or anything ‘*of ourselves*’ (Eph.2:8-9). It is true that one must ‘believe’ and with that faith in Christ comes a repentance towards God (Acts 20:21) and a confession of Christ (Rom.10:9,10). But to add to this saving faith such things as baptism clearly adds a pre-requisite for salvation. Salvation cannot be any combination of baptism and Grace. (This baptism issue will be dealt with further on in this article).

Campbellism further contended that salvation could be forfeited through neglect or apostasy. It was therefore necessary for Christians *to work at maintaining their faith*. The Restoration movement’s belief was that in order to remain a Christian, one must do four things. According to the *Christian Restoration Association*, it is to pray, study the Bible, worship and remain faithful. But if these are requirements to maintain salvation, then it is obvious that it would be possible to lose salvation. Yet for anyone to think that the works of man can play a part in either earning, or keeping Grace, is to devalue this infinite gift to the level of human effort. Paul declares ‘*...if by Grace,*

(1) ‘*DNA of Churches of Christ*’ by Graham Carslake, P.31

*then is it no more of works; otherwise Grace is no more Grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more Grace, otherwise work is no more work* (Rom.11:6).

Against the Campbellite doctrines, the preservation of the saints is also proved by a *mass* of scriptural texts which clearly state that true believers *have* eternal life *now* and that is not something which might be 'lost': '***Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life***' (Jn.5:24); '***And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which sees the Son, and believes on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day***' (Jn.6:40); '***And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand***' (Jn.10:28).

This 'eternal life' is not something that *we* keep, but something which *God* preserves: '***Being confident of this very thing, that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ***' (Phil.1:6); '***Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy***' (Jude 24). One of the most compelling scriptures that testifies of a salvation preserved for the future is Paul's Ephesian statement on the '***sealing***' of the saints '***until the redemption of the purchased possession...until the day of redemption***' - speaking of the surety of the glorified body (Eph.1:13,14; 4:30).

Yet over and above all these scriptures for the truth that God preserves ones salvation and that it cannot be lost, is a passage that is arguably irrefutable - Romans 8:29,30. This scripture is surprisingly not used often to argue for 'eternal security' or the 'preservation of the saints': '***For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also GLORIFIED***'.

Many miss the tenses here which irrefutably show an unbroken chain of salvation. The Greek tense of the verbs and that of the word '*glorified*' is 'Aorist Indicative Active' - it is a snapshot of something God sees as having already happened ('aorist'); it has been done once in time and is unrepeatable ('indicative mood'); and the action is done by God ('active voice'). As we have seen, Paul speaks of a 'glorification' here as something God has *already* decreed in the past as being finished! However, in our time we know that on this earth 'glorification' has yet to come to pass. This is a remarkable passage

that irrefutably shows a salvation and a promise that is preserved until the very end of this life *and into eternity!*

The ‘Restoration movement’ taught that there needs be no initial direct contact between the Holy Spirit and the sinner and that all that was needed was what the written word of God produces. Alexander Campbell stated: ‘*If the Spirit of God has spoken all its arguments, or, if the New and Old Testament contains all the arguments which can be offered to reconcile man to God, and to purify them who are reconciled, then all the power of the Holy Spirit which can operate upon the human mind is spent and he that is not sanctified and saved by these, cannot be saved by angels or spirits, human or divine*’. (1) The seriousness of this doctrine should be noted. To separate or minimise the Holy Spirit from the Word of God and conversion is to separate the very *life* from Christianity. It is the Holy Spirit who gives life in conversion, not the Word of God on its own. What was it that made some of the ground ‘good’ in the parable of the sower? (Matt.13:8-23). Is the Father’s Spirit not involved in the drawing of souls to God? ‘***No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day...And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father***’ (Jn.6:44.65).

Walter Scott’s theology on the Holy Spirit was decidedly distinct from standard evangelical doctrine. In 1831 he published a discourse on the Holy Spirit in which he taught that the Holy Spirit worked *externally* through scripture and teaching to convert the sinner, rather than any internal experience or operation. He believed that a sinner *rationally* decides to respond to faith before repentance and baptism.

This is similar to much of the understanding in Churches of Christ today in regard to the term ‘Born Again’. When I have used this term I have personally been asked by Churches of Christ leaders ‘*what do you mean by born again?*’ Many simply do not believe this is firstly an *internal* work of the Holy Spirit in *regeneration*.

The Campbellites denied or minimised the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation in that they saw the work of salvation to be in the hearing of the message by man. They saw that it was simply the Word of God that began the process of any re-birth. But the Bible teaches that man is ‘born of God’ and that this is literally ‘*out of [‘ek’] God*’. In every instance where the new birth is mentioned the language is the same. The Holy Spirit cannot be divorced from the word of God in the Gospel and the preaching of it. The preaching cannot stand on its own without the effectual calling of the Holy

(1) ‘*Christianity Restored*’ P.350

Spirit. The heart must be opened as in the case of Lydia - ***‘whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul’*** (Acts 16:14). If there was no internal work of the Spirit in Lydia’s heart then what exactly did the ‘Lord’ do here?

Campbellite doctrine denies the very heart of regeneration, which is to be ***‘born from above’*** (John 3:3). But this error then leads to other errors such as a low view or no view of the eternal security of the believer, since *obedience* of man becomes prominent in the hearing and receiving of the word of God. But *the Gospel is not about man or his obedience but about Christ and His obedience!*

The Bible itself is clear that both the Word of God and Holy Spirit are active in the regeneration of a man’s heart. ***‘Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance...’*** (1Thess.1:4,5). Paul preached ***‘in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power’*** (1Cor.2:4).

Walter Scott who claimed to have ‘restored the ancient gospel’ also went further and taught that one is not born of the spirit until the resurrection of the body. (1) This doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit’s work or lack thereof in salvation has caused some splits within the ranks of Churches of Christ. (2)

The ‘Restoration movement’ denied the doctrine commonly called ‘Total Depravity’ - that man is wholly unable to respond to the Gospel in and of himself. The Restoration leaders were semi-Pelagian or Arminian in their understanding that man is capable of himself to be able to respond to the Gospel by his faith. But the Holy Spirit cannot be divorced from the word of God and made to be an external operation only. At the root of this is the denial of the depravity or inability of man to do anything towards his own salvation within himself. The work of the Holy Spirit, often expressed as the ‘effectual calling’, must be understood in the light of the ‘depravity’ or ‘inability’ of man. The plight of unsaved man is real and must not be reduced to a *rational* hearing of the word of God. Did we ever seek him?... ***‘There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God’*** (Rom.3:11). Did we ‘will’ to be saved?... ***‘He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the***

(1) *‘The Gospel Restored’* P.558: *‘No Christian is yet born of the Spirit; this event is the resurrection...still in the future’*.

(2) At a special meeting held in Memphis, USA in 1973, the differences in this doctrine were discussed and was the cause of a split in the *Herald of Truth* radio program out of the Highland Church of Christ, Abilene, Texas.

*sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God* (Jn.1:11-13). Did we ever have the ability to obey God and to thus be in obedience to His laws?... *'...the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be'* (Rom.8:6,7). These scriptures and many more bluntly express the inability of unsaved man. The solution to this inability is the 'effectual calling' by God and again it must be seen in the light of the truth that *'no man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day...Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father'* (Jn.6:44,65). The work of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the hearing of the Gospel is supernatural in that it, as with Lydia, 'opens the heart' and begins an *inner work* whereby man is drawn to understand God's salvation.

*The work of the Holy Spirit cannot be reduced to a rational acceptance of man by an external hearing and teaching of the word of God. The Gospel cannot be made a gospel of grace that has 'steps' as in the Restoration movement which include obedience and baptism.*

### Baptismal Regeneration

The biggest point of contention between the Campbellite Restoration movement and evangelical Christianity is the doctrine of water baptism. Evangelical doctrine teaches salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Nothing *'of ourselves'* can be added to that (Eph.2:8,9). Evangelical teaching has taught that obedience in baptism is important, an 'ordinance', and a command, but that it must play no role in the salvation of a soul. Water baptism represents an outward sign of what has happened within by grace alone.

However, the Campbellite Restoration movement went on to teach that baptism was *'unto remission of sins'* and an essential part of salvation. By 1827 Walter Scott openly preached 'baptism unto remission of sins'. When Scott baptized William Amend: *'The people were filled with bewilderment at the strange truths brought to their ears, and now exemplified before their eyes, in the baptism of a penitent for a purpose which now, on the 18th of November, 1827, for the first time since the primitive ages was fully and practically realized'*. (1)

At times the Campbellites exhibited some 'double speak' with the issue of Baptismal regeneration. They contended that 'justification by faith was

(1) *'Memoirs of A. Campbell'*, Vol.2, P.212

the only assurance of salvation'. But on the other hand, they argued 'where obedience (that is, of baptism) is wanting there can be no faith'. While Campbell would state that this institution of Baptism was required for admission into the Church, he would add that Baptism was simply the human response to real faith. He believed this took the person through the final phases of rebirth. In a debate with a Presbyterian, N.L. Rice, Alexander Campbell stated: '*Christian baptism is for the remission of past sins...*' (1) '*When Paul was immersed, it was declared and understood by all parties, that all his previous sins were washed away in the act of immersion*'. (2) Later Campbell stated: '*...immersion and regeneration are two Bible names for the same act...*' (3) '*That in and by the act of immersion, or soon as our bodies are put under water, at that very instant our former or old sins are all washed away, provided only that we are true believers...Who will not concur with me in saying that, Christian Immersion is the Gospel in Water?*' (4) '*If immersion be equivalent to regeneration and regeneration be of the same import with being born again, then being born again and being immersed are the same thing, for this plain reason that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another*'. (5)

The Campbellite gospel replaced the blood of Jesus for water. The Restoration gospel was ultimately by water since this is added to the blood sacrifice as being the means by which we are saved. Let the reader be clear on what Alexander Campbell taught on this from the following quotes: '*He has given it an extension far and wide as sin has spread, far and wide as water flows, wherever water, faith, and the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are there will be found the efficacy of the blood of Jesus. Yes as God first gave the efficacy of water to blood, he has now given the efficacy of blood to water*'. (6) '*I am bold therefore to affirm that every one of them who in the belief or what the apostle spoke, was immersed, did in the very instant in which he was put under water, receive the forgiveness of his sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. If so, then who will not concur with me in saying that Christian immersion is the gospel in water*'. (7) '*I assert that there is but one action ordained or commanded in the New Testament, to which God has promised*

(1) 'Campbell/Rice Debate', P.472; Indianapolis, Old Paths Book Club.

(2) Ibid, P.524.

(3) 'Millenial Harbinger', Vol.1 , 'Extra', P.27,28,42

(4) 'Campbell/Rice Debate', P.443; Indianapolis, Old Paths Book Club.

(5) 'Millenial Harbinger', Vol.1 , 'Extra', P.28

(6) 'Christianity Restored', P .220

(7) 'Christian Baptist', P .417

*or testified that he will forgive our sins. This action is Christian immersion*'.

(1) *'No man has any proof that he is pardoned until he is baptized...'* (2)

If our sins are forgiven by water baptism as these quotations clearly state, then how can they be left at the cross? Then it must be baptism, and not the blood sacrifice and atonement of Jesus Christ, that saves.

Often the modern language of this Campbellite doctrine is couched in terms that are vague and elusive, but a close look at the publications adopted and recommended by various current Churches of Christ leaders will show the admission of Baptismal Regeneration. Books recommended to this author by a recent Queensland Church of Christ Conference president show clearly the teaching of Baptismal regeneration. In one of those books, titled *'Original Sin'*, by a former Churches of Christ leader and Woolwich Bible College principle, A.W. Stephenson, the following statements are made: *'This baptism is a death and burial of the old life and a rising to a new life in Christ (P.7)...children are not born sinners but may have a bias to sin. They are not sinners until they sin. Until they sin, they are not in need of forgiveness nor of baptism'*. (P.10)

The Restoration movement is not complete without this teaching of Baptismal regeneration. What many do not realise is that this teaching was new, apart from earlier teachings of baptismal regeneration which the Roman church perpetuated.

Some current leaders in the Churches of Christ in Australia have a strange tendency to play down that this Baptismal regeneration was taught in the 'Restoration movement'. But the quotes and the history show clearly this was one of the tenets of the movement, particularly as the movement progressed.

Campbellism holds strongly to the idea of the 'possibility of the believers apostasy'. Baptismal Remission for sins thus implies strongly that the security of the believer is not eternal. At its core it denies the preservation of the saints and that God has Justified and Glorified his people (Rom.8:29,30) and sealed them unto the day of redemption (Eph.4:30).

The fact that faith is not enough but must have Baptism after it and therefore added to it, denies the doctrine of faith alone through the imputed righteousness of God (Rom.4). We are cleansed only by the blood of Jesus (1Pet.1:18-19). We are justified by Gods grace (Tit.3:7) and the blood of Christ (Rom.5:9). If water Baptism were to remit sins then the work of the cross is not finished, since man would be able to do something towards this. We are simply not saved by any *'works of righteousness'* (Tit.3:5-7; Eph.2:8,9).

(1) Ibid, P .520

(2) Ibid, P .530

The Lord also says: ‘...but he that believes not shall be damned’ (Mk.16:16). It should be noted that this negative statement does not include a reference to baptism, making it clear that what saves a person is true living faith in Jesus Christ. This is made clear in Ephesians 2:8, ‘**For by grace are you saved through faith...**’ The word ‘*saved*’ is from a Greek word which is a perfect passive participle - it means that this salvation took place at some point in the past and is continuing on in the present (perfect tense), being accomplished by Jesus Christ Himself with no action on our part (Greek ‘passive voice’). If water baptism is necessary for salvation, then Ephesians 2:8 and many others verses should read: ‘you are saved through faith and baptism’.

### *But what about Baptism in the ‘early Church’?*

Some advocates of ‘Baptismal Regeneration’ and the ‘Restoration movement’ argue that the ‘early church’ believed that the waters of Baptism was the element or means of salvation. Quotes by some Church Fathers in early centuries may appear to give this notion. The problem with quoting from ‘Church Fathers’ is that *there were many variations in teaching amongst the fathers themselves*. It is also easy to take many quotes out of context. Certainly in later centuries and even by the third century this teaching of Baptismal regeneration became more evident. (1) Yet in the very early church the condition of *repentance* and *faith* was universally required. Scripture, rather than the Church Fathers, must be our first priority in establishing doctrine. It is evident that the church apostatised from the faith of sound doctrine within, or soon after, *the first two centuries*, and most scholars view the writings of the Church Fathers with decreasing value each century after the apostles. (2)

It is no small measure of hypocrisy that the Restoration movement was based on the premise that ‘*this great apostasy occurred in 250 A. D*’ and that ‘*Christianity*’ and the ‘*gospel*’ was not ‘*restored*’ until the leaders of the restoration movement arrived. (3) However, the teaching of Baptismal regeneration came in centuries *after 250 AD!* (Churches of Christ has a sorry

(1) For a full discussion on baptismal teaching in history see the article ‘*Water Baptism - Meaning, Mode and History*’: <http://taministries.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Water-Baptism-Meaning-Mode-and-History.pdf>

(2) This apostasy did not mean the Gospel was ‘lost’ and had to be ‘restored’ as was taught by the ‘Restoration movement’.

(3) See footnotes No.2, P.4 and as taught in *Millennial Harbinger*, Vol.2, P.390 1831. In 1835 Alexander Campbell published a book titled ‘*Christianity Restored*’ in which he stated the same sentiments.

record of re-writing history or painting it with a broad brush to be their ally, as will be seen in the Queensland Churches of Christ ‘Identity Statement’ later in this paper).

*Those saved and not baptised in water*

A difficult passage for the exponents of Baptismal Remission is the passage referring to the penitent thief (Lk.23:32-43). The penitent thief who died on the cross next to Jesus was not baptised with water and yet was saved by faith. This penitent thief simply believed, was saved and was promised eternal life! The Campbellite argument is that he was saved under the Old Testament way of salvation. But Christ had already died on the cross and finished the atonement before the thief died. The thief belongs on the ‘New Testament side of the cross’, and not ‘the Old Testament side’! The repentant thief on the cross received the eternal life of God in spite of the fact he was never baptised in water.

*Scriptures used for Baptismal regeneration by the Restoration Movement: Acts 2:38*

Apart from Roman Catholic history, it is largely the ‘Restoration movement’ and its leaders who attempted to re-introduce ‘Baptismal Regeneration’. Their key reference was Acts 2:38: ***‘Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost’.***

In 1820 Campbell debated a Presbyterian, John Walker, on infant Baptism. During this debate Campbell stated: *‘Baptism is connected with the promise of the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit’*. (1) This was Campbell’s first known public statement of such a doctrine. The doctrine of Baptismal Remission was further developed by Campbell in a debate with McCalla in 1823 in which he stated: *‘The preposition ‘eis’ here [Acts 2:38] means in order to - in order to the remission of sins’*. (2) In another debate he stated: *‘I am bold therefore, to affirm, that every one of them who, in the belief of what the Apostle spoke, was immersed and did in the very instant he was put under the water, receive the forgiveness of his sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit’*. (3)

(1) ‘Campbell/Walker Debate’, P.13; Holly Wood, Old Paths Book Club

(2) ‘Campbell/McCalla Debate’, P.124; Kansas, Old Paths Book Club

(3) ‘Campbell/Rice Debate’, P.443 Indianapolis, Old Paths Book Club

Baptismal Remission proponents are apt to take Scriptures out of context, such as Acts 2:38. However, if we read *elsewhere in Peter's teaching* we soon see that he teaches our only cleansing is by the blood of Christ (1Pet.1:18,19). The problem with the Campbellite argument on Acts 2:38 is that they work from an isolated scripture and apply it to the bulk of scripture. Sound hermeneutics (interpretation) will rather work from the majority to any minority of texts that may appear to disagree. *Scripture interprets scripture.*

But a study of Acts 2:38 will show the error in the Campbellite doctrine. ***'Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost'***. Many do not read the next verse - ***'For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call'***. The *'promise'* was not water baptism but the *Holy Spirit Himself!*

The preposition *'for'* in the phrase *'for the remission of sins'* is the Greek *'eis'*. Literally here in context it means *'for the purpose of identifying one with the remission of sins'*. This same preposition is used in 1Corinthians 10:2 in the phrase *'and were all baptized unto ['eis'] Moses'*. Here these people identified themselves with the work and ministry of Moses. The context is important. The Campbellite interpretation of *'for'* in Acts 2:38 disregards some important interpretation principles:

1. The *wider usage of this word*
2. The *context*
3. The *interpretation of other Scriptures* on this topic.

1. The *wider usage of this word*

The *'eis'* here simply does not mean *'in order to'* as the Baptismal Remission exponents and the Campbellites taught. Greek scholars agree that the preposition *'eis'* has no such one strict meaning in Scripture. A. T. Robertson, in his grammar (P.120), states: *'the theological bearing of the preposition eis can come only from the context'*. This preposition *'eis'* is translated 47 different ways in the New Testament by King James translators. It is in fact one of the most varied prepositions found in the Greek New Testament, being found about 1,775 times. An example of this is in Matthew 12:41: *'they repented at ['eis'] the preaching of Jonah'*. If one were to insert the meaning *'in order to'* or *'for'* in the place of *'eis'* here (and in numerous other Scriptures), the reader might see the error of such a restricted

interpretation of 'eis'. In Matthew 12:41 the 'eis' is rather the basis or ground - ie. on the basis of the name of the prophet Jonah.

## 2. The *context*:

The word 'for' in English obviously has a wide context of usages. The various categories of meanings can be grouped as follows: 'into', 'unto' (direction); 'in', 'among', 'upon' (position); 'as', 'for', 'against' (relationship to); 'because of' (causative); 'for the purpose of' (purpose).

Matthew 3:11 is arguably a key passage in understanding the use of 'eis' and could be seen as the closest parallel to Acts 2:38. It is the first New Testament use of the verb 'baptizo' followed by the preposition 'eis': ***'I indeed baptize you with water unto ['eis'] repentance...'*** If we were to insert the meaning 'in order to' or 'for' here we would have baptism 'in order to' get repentance! Similarly, with many other Scriptures: eg. Matt.28:19 - ***'baptize in ['eis'] the name of the Father, Son...'*** - if we were to insert the meaning 'in order to' or 'for' here we would baptise to get the Trinity, (see more examples in Mark.1:9; Acts 8:16; Acts 19:3; Acts 19:5; Rom.6:3,4; 1Cor.1:13; 1Cor.10:2, etc).

*The context is important.*

## 3. The *interpretation of other Scriptures* on this topic.

Did Peter intend to teach baptism in order for the remission of sins? Lets follow him and see...***'And his name, through faith in his name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know: Yes the faith which is by him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all'*** (Acts 3:16); ***'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord'*** (Acts 3:19). These are Peter's words soon after Pentecost and Acts 2:38. As a result of this preaching 5,000 are converted (Acts 4:4). Many of these 5,000 were not baptized at the time of their conversion, as Peter and John were arrested while preaching and put in prison (Acts 4:3). Baptisms are not recorded here.

The same Peter later tells us plainly that baptism is a '***figure***' (1 Peter 3:21).

An important interpretation principle to consider is *Scripture interprets Scripture*. There are numerous verses that never mention baptism, but only faith (Acts 16:31; Jn.1:12; 3:14-18; 3:36; 6:47; 20:31...). From the bulk of Scripture it should be obvious that water baptism is not essential for salvation

(1Cor.1:13-24; 15:1-5; Rom.1:16; 10:9-14; Eph.2:8,9; Acts 10:43; 13:38,39; 16:31; Jn.3:14-18,36; 5:24; 1Jn.5:1). It is also a fact that many were saved or forgiven without water baptism (Matt.9:1-7,22; Mk.5:34; 10:52; Lk.7:48; 17:19; 18:9-14, etc). Multitudes came to John for baptism, but he refused to baptize any unless they would bring forth ‘fruits worthy of repentance’ (Matt.3:8; Lk.3:8). People asked John what they should do and he never included water baptism. If John’s baptism was ‘in order for remission of sins’ then why were his disciples re-baptised (Acts 19:1-7)? If John’s baptism was ‘in order for the remission of sins’, then was Christ also baptized for that purpose?

In Acts 2 the disciples received the same life of the Holy Spirit without Christian water Baptism. When the Campbellites and the Restoration movement exponents of Baptismal Regeneration use Acts 2:38 ‘...***be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...***’, they also fail to mention the *Gentile parallel* to this in Acts 10:43, which says: ‘...***whosoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins***’. In the latter passage no mention is made of baptism in this entire passage of the salvation of the Gentiles until after they had received the Holy Spirit and been saved! In Acts 10:47 Peter says ‘***Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?***’. The Gentiles here were saved by faith alone (Rom.4:9-11,16,23-5:2). This passage in Acts 10 clearly refutes Baptismal Regeneration. Cornelius was saved and baptized by the Holy Spirit *before* he was baptized in water (Acts 10:44-48).

Other scriptures misused by exponents of Baptismal Regeneration are: 1Peter 3:21,22; Jn.3:3-6; Heb.6:2; 9:10 and more which I have dealt with in other articles. (1)

The Bible clearly states that the water has no significance without a sincere belief in God. In the Book of Acts, the eunuch said to Philip, ‘***See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptised?***’ Philip made it clear to the eunuch the message of the Gospel and that he must believe first and then be baptised (Acts 8:35-37, see also 2:41). Throughout Our Lord’s teaching, there is the insistence of a conversion of the heart as a necessary condition for admission to His kingdom. Jesus simply said, ‘***Except a man be born again He cannot see the kingdom of God***’ (Jn.3:3).

(1) For a full discussion on baptismal teaching in history see the article ‘*Water Baptism - Meaning, Mode and History*’: <http://taministries.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Water-Baptism-Meaning-Mode-and-History.pdf>

Baptismal Remission is in fact a dangerous heresy because it strikes at the heart of Justification by faith alone through the imputed righteousness of God alone. It sets up a standard for salvation that is the work of man instead of God. It introduces exceptions and controversies that oppose the spirit of grace; for ***‘if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work’*** (Rom.11:6).

In Campbellite doctrine faith is not enough. *Obedience* to God’s Law must also take place, or salvation is not possible. It does not depend on how sincerely in your heart you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior. Without Baptism it is not real salvation ‘unto remission of sins’. But to add this baptism to faith is nothing more than adding works to grace (Rom.11:6). Some attempt to evade this by claiming that baptism is ‘part of faith’ which is not linguistically, grammatically or scripturally possible. If obedience to God’s commands such as baptism is what ‘faith’ is, then why stop with baptism?; what about all the other commands? A works-salvation can never say when enough works have been done!

Baptismal regeneration confuses faith and obedience. It confuses justification with Sanctification. It also takes away from the work of the Holy Spirit to change a person heart in order to believe. This is surely the essence of the new covenant and the power that changed Lydia, ***‘whose heart was opened’*** before she was baptised (Acts 16:14,15). ***‘A new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgements and do them’*** (Ezek.36:26,27).

### *The Campbellite hypocrisy*

If the Campbellite doctrine on Baptism is true, then the ‘Restorers’ were not originally saved men. Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott and Barton Stone were never baptized ‘unto the remission of sin’ *as Presbyterians or Baptists*. The Campbellite doctrine contradicted the early salvation experience of the very men who founded ‘Campbellism’ and the ‘Restoration movement’. Barton Stone had been ordained in the Presbyterian church in 1798 and the Campbell brothers, Alexander and Thomas, had themselves in the beginning claimed salvation before they were water baptised by a Baptist pastor!

Thomas Campbell and Alexander, his son, at the time they started this new ‘Restoration’ movement, now known as ‘The Churches of Christ’ were members of the Seceder branch of Presbyterians which had the belief of infant baptism. Some members in that church were not baptised at all. The first immersion to take place in this church was when Thomas Campbell immersed three of the unbaptized members in Buffalo Creek, 4th July, 1811. (1)

### *Campbellism: other doctrines and philosophies*

#### *Arminianism*

As time went on and the Campbellites separated from mainstream denominations, they rejected the doctrines of predestination, the effectual call of God (Jn.6:37-44) and the perseverance of the saints as they had been taught for centuries. Instead, Campbell re-interpreted many of these doctrines to be similar to that of semi-Pelagianism and Arminian doctrine which were denounced centuries before as heresy. (2) Campbellism taught that those choosing to respond of their own ‘free will’ elected themselves, and thus through a decision which must culminate in the obedience and act of baptism.

The vast majority of members in all of the Restoration churches reject the distinctives of the ‘Doctrines of Grace’, especially predestination, sovereign election and the perseverance of the saints (popularly known as ‘eternal security’).

It is in this area of the ‘Doctrines of Grace’ that there has been much misunderstanding. Modern authors writing of the roots of the Churches of Christ commonly reiterate the misconceptions of their founders. One author writing of the history of the Churches of Christ writes of the ‘*strong principles*’ of the historic roots of this movement and claims that one of the principles of the early founders was to: ‘*reject Calvinism’s idea that only some are elected to be saved and replace it with the biblical concept of faith*

(1) Memoirs of A Campbell. Vol. 1. pp. 872-3: ‘*He consented, therefore, to perform the ceremony, which took place on the 4th. of July (1811) in a deep pool in Buffalo Creek, about two miles above the mouth of Brush Run, and on the farm of David Bryant. The pool was narrow, and so deep that it came up to the shoulders of the candidates when they entered it. Thomas Campbell, then, without going into the water, stood on a root that projected over the edge of the pool, and bent down their heads until they were buried in the liquid grave repeating at the same time, in each case, the baptismal formula. James Foster, who was present, did not altogether approve the manner of the baptism, neither did he think it congruous that one who had not himself been immersed should immerse others*’.

(2) For a full study of these doctrines see the author’s book ‘*Calvinism & Arminianism - Out of the Maze*’

*that is available to anyone who chooses to believe*'. (1) However, while historic 'Calvinism' does accept the principle that only some will be elected, it does not deny that salvation is available to anyone who '*chooses to believe*'. (2) In reality historic 'Calvinism' does not deny that anyone who truly believes is given faith and can be saved. In many writings by early and modern Churches of Christ leaders there is consistent confusion between historic 'Calvinism' and hyper-Calvinism. The same Churches of Christ author above exemplifies this lack of understanding of 'Calvinism' and hyper-Calvinism when he states that the Restoration movement was in '*stark contrast to the Calvinistic Presbyterian way of seeking a special experience to discover if you were selected by God to be saved or not*'. (3) However, this is a description of hyper-Calvinism, not historic Calvinism! The great Charles Spurgeon was a 'Calvinist' yet he refuted such hyper-Calvinism that would deny the Gospel to all and seek to ascertain who '*were selected by God to be saved or not*'. Modern Churches of Christ writers and leaders seem to be oblivious to understanding the difference.

### *Original Sin*

Stemming from the rejection of the historic Doctrines of Grace is the Campbellite Churches of Christ position on original sin. The historic position of the Restoration movement is to oppose this doctrine. In a booklet titled '*Original Sin*' (by a former Church of Christ leader and Woolwich (Churches of Christ) Bible College principle, A.W. Stephenson) recommended to this author by the Queensland Churches of Christ Conference President, is detailed the Churches of Christ historical position. Babies are '*not born sinners*' but born innocent and are '*not sinners until they sin*'; and that a person only sins when they understand the breaking of God's Law. It is here that Churches of Christ leaders misrepresent the teachings of the early church by claiming that '*infant baptism was introduced into the church*' because '*some early church leaders believed babies were born sinners*' (4). However, this statement lacks in historic context. It was not '*some*' early church leaders that believed babies were born in sin. The teaching of 'original sin' was in fact the consensus of the early church. *It was there long before infant baptism was introduced*. Irenaeus (130-202) (against the gnostics) taught original

(1) '*DNA of Churches of Christ*' by Graham Carslake, P.2

(2) For a full study of these doctrines see the author's book '*Calvinism & Arminianism - Out of the Maze*'

(3) '*DNA of Churches of Christ*' P.9

(4) '*Original Sin*' by A.W. Stephenson, P.3

inherited sin. He was a disciple of the very early Polycarp. The reason why this issue might not feature much in early writings is because the first few centuries the church fathers were busy writing on other things. (The Trinity also does not feature much until the third century when aberrant views on the deity of Christ began to surface, such as in ‘Arianism’). It is misleading to say that original sin was not taught in early centuries. Until Pelagius, no church father openly opposed the teaching of original sin. Pelagianism which denied original sin was deemed heresy. Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, Ambrosiaster, and others, all taught original sin (there are many quotes available, beginning with the early Irenaeus, to show that they believed man is born with inherited sin. In addition early apocryphal books also state the same).

The Churches of Christ teaching also ignores the fact that *death cannot be separated from sin*. Sin causes death. The scriptures do not separate these as did the Pelagian heresy and the above author (Stephenson). Again, Churches of Christ authors often redefine history with assumptions that do not stand up to scholarship. ‘Baptising infants’ was not introduced because of this doctrine of ‘Original Sin’ alone, which was held to long before Infant Baptism became a general practise in the 3rd Century.

Stephenson continues with the idea that *‘A person cannot be held responsible for an action if there is no law given to him to act this way or that’*. (1) This flatly contradicts scripture. ***‘For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law’*** (Rom.2:12). The Bible also says the law is already ***‘written in their hearts’*** (Rom.2:15).

The Churches of Christ and the old Pelagian error is to confuse human logic with scriptural fact. In the above book *‘Original Sin’* recommended by the Conference president of Queensland Churches of Christ, Stephenson states: *‘This suffering of children was a consequence of the parents sin and not of the children’s’...We must not confuse the act of sin with the results of sin...’* (P.5). However, children being born in sin, suffering, child birth pain, weeds in the garden, etc, are all the result of the *inherited* consequences and results of sin from Adam and Eve. Human logic (the Pelagian heresy was saturated with this) does not always agree with scripture. How can one divorce the ‘results’ of sin with the ‘act’ of Adam and Eve’s sin? If sin is not inherited from Adam and Eve, then why is there death? Why do babies die? *Death comes from sin*. There is no escaping the ‘result’ from the ‘act’ of

(1) *‘Original Sin’* by A.W. Stephenson, P.4

Adam and eve. *In scripture these are not separated!* How can one separate sin from death in the following verse?: ***‘Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men...’*** (Rom.5:12).

Yet Stephenson states: *‘The children cannot be held guilty for the actions of the parents, even if they do suffer for them’* (P.4). But no one is saying children are *‘guilty’* because of any *‘parents’* action. This is somewhat a *‘strawman’* argument. Scripture states unequivocally sin was inherited (***‘passed on’***) from Adam and Eve (Rom.5:12). Why did the descendants of Adam after the Fall immediately enter into an imperfect and sinful world? Why did Cain murder Abel? All after Adam do sin. *At the judgement we will not be judged for what our parents did but for our own sin.*

Stephenson continues into a mine field of logic by stating Paul did not sin and was *‘not a sinner’* when he did *‘not know the law’* and that he lived a life of *‘innocence’*, not under the law until he became aware of the law (P.5,6). All this flatly contradicts Paul’s own testimony and doctrine as well as all the major commentaries. It is no wonder that Stephenson, as a Church of Christ leader, could teach: *‘...where there is no sin there is no need for forgiveness...Innocent children are not in need of baptism because they have no sin to be forgiven. Children are not in need of baptism until they have reached the age of a knowledge of good and evil and when they have chosen evil. They need no baptism until they are sinners...The parents guilt is not passed on’* (P.7). This false teaching does despite to many scriptures which clearly teach that we are born in sin (Ps.51:5; Is.48:8; Rom.5:12-21).

Stephenson finally comes to this conclusion: *‘If we share in sin and guilt we must participate in a personal action order to gain the free gift of grace’* (P.10). This is sheer heresy, a works gospel and a blatant attack on grace alone! There can be no *‘personal act’* in order to *‘gain’* *‘the free gift of grace’*! It is either of works or grace; it cannot be of both! Any *‘personal act’* we do is an act of works. ***‘And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work’*** (Rom.11:6).

### *Creeds*

The *‘Restoration movement’* taught that by abandoning creeds, theological systems and non biblical practises, Christian *‘unity’* could be achieved. This sounds noble but it is seriously flawed. The creeds were formulated to *defend the faith* once delivered (Jude 3) and to establish doctrine as foundation.

Systematic theology is also a well recognised way to establish sound doctrine in various doctrinal areas of the Bible. It is simply the tools of trade for Bible teachers.

### *Arguments from silence*

The Bible also never teaches that we reject whatever is not in the Bible itself. Arguments from silence are evident in the Restoration movement. In discussions with one Queensland leader he said he did not believe in the term 'Trinity' as it was '*a man made name*' and that he simply believed in '*the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*'. However, the Trinity is simply a word that describes a unique doctrine to Christianity. And it is not simply 'the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit', as this could well include any number of heresies. The Trinity was in fact taught from the *first century onwards* and the doctrine thereof was not invented by man but upheld strongly by the early church fathers. (1) Do we not use the word 'Bible' because it is not found in the Scriptures? Do we not use the word 'canon' to describe the body of Scripture set down in the second century, because it is not found in the Bible? Do we not use the word 'effectual calling' to describe the calling and drawing of a sinner by God (Jn.6) because it is not in the Bible? These are all expressions of Biblical truths. Even in the area of religious practises, *whatever the Bible does not forbid we are free to engage in*. '**All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any**' (1Cor.6:12,23).

Similarly, an example of the hypocrisy in the Campbellite Church of Christ position is also to be found in their early views on music in church. Their early stance against music in church caused large scale splits as the movement went on. They adopted the idea that '*where the scriptures are silent we are silent*' yet many believed and practised that what is not explicitly commanded is thus implicitly forbidden. The confusion here should be obvious and that's exactly what these ideas created within the movement - confusion and division.

There is no express command of prohibition from God in the Scriptures which forbids musical instruments in church worship. Today there are still some churches who have adopted the Restoration movement which have no music in their churches, although most have abandoned this old 'law'.

The Restoration movement has the statement '*Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the scriptures are silent, we are silent*'. Yet is this not

(1) See article '*The Trinity and Deity in Early History*' in website: [www.taministries.net](http://www.taministries.net) in 'cults' section: <http://taministries.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Trinity-Deity-in-Early-History-v2.0.pdf>

nullified when the Churches of Christ claim to have ‘no doctrinal statement’? And is it not violated when they reject names of doctrines or creeds of doctrines that are found in the Bible?

If the Churches of Christ can reject names, terms and creeds, then what of the use of such things as buildings, microphones and pulpits as tools in speaking or use in church? None of these things are mentioned in the Bible. Is it any wonder that with the Restoration philosophy and their various statements, that the movement splintered into numerous groups causing more divisions - which *created more of what they claimed to oppose*?

It is also hypocrisy to claim not to be a ‘denomination’ and to oppose ‘denominationalism’, yet the Churches of Christ are a fully fledged denomination and claim all the rights of such. Although this author decries the apostasy within denominations, nevertheless the word ‘denomination’ simply refers to a group of churches which have come together under some common principles. The Churches of Christ have done exactly this. *In decrying denominations, they have simply started a new one!*

## **The Campbellites and the Cults**

### *Campbellism and Mormonism*

The evidence is clear that Mormonism arose out of the Campbellite ‘Restoration’ movement. The leading figures in early Mormonism were originally preachers in Campbellite churches, and many of them had personally worked with Alexander Campbell (eg. Sidney Rigdon, Parley Pratt, Oliver Crowder, Orson Hyde, Lyman Wight, Edward Partridge, John Corril, Isaac Morely, John Murdock, etc). Although Alexander Campbell called Mormonism ‘Satan’s counterfeit’ of the Disciples of Christ, thousands of ‘Disciples of Christ’ still joined the Mormons. The reason for this is not hard to understand when one sees the *similarities between the two groups*. Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, was taught the ‘Restoration’ ideals and its doctrines by Sidney Rigdon. Joseph Smith simply adopted the points of the ‘Restoration movement’ and became the ‘restorer’ of the ‘gospel’ in the same way that Alexander Campbell was seen as doing the same. Both believed that the ‘true gospel’ had been lost in the first or second century. Both believe that all subsequent churches were apostate. Both disliked ‘denominationalism’ and even the various names of churches. (The Mormons first called themselves ‘Church Christ’). Both men believed that one must be baptised ‘unto remission of sins’ (the Mormons by a Mormon priest). Joseph Smith actually once challenged Alexander Campbell to a public debate as to who was the true ‘Restorer’!

### *Campbellism and Christadelphianism*

The founder of Christadelphianism, Dr. John Thomas, was a prominent ‘Disciple of Christ’ and personal friend of Alexander Campbell. He believed that if creeds were to be discarded and only Bible names used, then why should we believe in the Trinity? He went on to deny the deity of Christ, the personhood of the Spirit, the bodily resurrection of Christ, Christ’s physical return to this world and the immortality of the soul. He also taught ‘soul sleep’ and denied the doctrine of Hell.

Several followers of the Restoration movement followed Thomas into the ‘Christadelphians’.

### *Campbellism and Jehovah Witnesses*

Benjamin Wilson was a Campbellite ‘Disciple of Christ’ who followed Dr. Thomas into Christadelphianism. Although he never studied Greek, he published a Greek-English interlinear called the *Emphatic Diaglott*, highly recommended by Jehovah Witnesses. It was Wilson who introduced the founder Charles Taze Russell to those very doctrines which have become the central theology of the Jehovah’s Witnesses ‘Watchtower’.

## **Queensland Churches of Christ**

### *The first Queensland church of Christ - the untold takeover*

The first church in Queensland came approximately 50 years after the movement began in the USA. There had existed a German Baptist church at Zillman Waterholes (now Zillmere). The three leaders were Carl Fischer, Thomas Geraghty and Walsh Lee. Many Germans had moved away to secure richer farming lands and the Zillman Waterholes church was left with about 11 members. In 1881 the church was reformed as an English speaking Baptist church.

Little is known of Thomas Geraghty but there are several accounts of Fischer and Lee. Fischer was intense and devout and had taken part in services at a young age. By age 20 he was preaching and at 21 received a marriage license. Lee is described as a ‘*man of substance...He was commissioned by the Government as manager of a vast Pimpama Plantation...he was also a member of the Divisional board of the Nundah [Baptist] parish...in 1880 he was appointed justice of the peace...*’ (1)

In August 1882 Thomas Geraghty invited his brother in law, F.W. Troy, a Baptist lay preacher, together with a Melbourne Church of Christ evangelist,

(1) *Old Baptist Forum* No, 48 April 2001; P.3 ‘*The German Baptist Church At Zillman Waterholes*’ by Melvin Williams

Stephen Cheek, to conduct an extended mission. Each night Cheek taught openly that *'to be saved men must first believe, then repent, then make confession with the mouth, and then be immersed'* and that this was *'the ancient order of things'*. (1) Then at an unannounced meeting at which few of the Baptists were present, the new converts were accepted into 'membership' in the Baptist church. On the next Sunday Cheek took charge of the morning service despite a protest from one of the Baptist deacons (Lee). It appears that at some stage Fischer and Geraghty had been won over to Cheek's doctrine.

Cheek welcomed the new members into fellowship and effectively *took over the church. The Churches of Christ claimed this as their first church without any mention of how it was formed!*

It is worthwhile for readers to understand the events in full as publicly told by the deacon J.W. Lee and as written in the *Queensland Freeman* on the 7th Aug 1882 (printed Aug 15th): *'SIR, - I consider that what has transpired within the last eight or nine days at the Baptist church here should be publicly stated. A fortnight ago we had a small church working in harmony, composed of nine members, two of whom were deacons, and conducted the services. Now this church has been thrown into complete confusion, the name of the church changed, doctrine taught which the church as such, does not, and never did, believe, and the authority of the church entirely ignored. This has taken place through the influence of a gentleman calling himself an evangelist. I refer to Mr. S. Cheek, who being acquainted with one of the members of our church, the said member (so far as I am aware the church never did) invited this evangelist to conduct a week's services each evening last week. Of course the church raised no objection, thinking that an evangelist would just preach the Gospel of Christ, and leave all other matters to the church already formed, but not so. The preacher puts in an appearance with a plan of salvation drawn on a piece of calico, showing that to be saved men must first believe, then repent, then make confession with the mouth, and then be immersed. By the sketch baptism goes right through into a ring, which means Christ, and it is taught that any person not having been immersed cannot be in Christ, or a child of God; or in other words, saved.*

*Now, this is the Gospel according to Mr. Cheek, but it is different to that of Christ. The services were continued the whole of last week. Every evening*

(1) Cheek taught a sequence for salvation which included: *'first, anxiety over sin; second, conviction of saving grace; third, public profession of faith; and lastly, baptism according to the Lord's command by immersion. Hearers were to be led through these stages dialectically'* (Richard Ely, *'02 Communities of Generation, Communities of Choice: Stephen Cheek at Bream Creek'*).

*I was more fully convinced that the preacher was wrong. At the close of the meetings twelve, eleven young and one aged, had come forward to be baptised, seven of whom came to the front seats on Friday night, and Mr. Cheek baptised them on Saturday. On the evening of that day Mr. Cheek held what he announced as a Bible reading meeting of baptised believers. Four of the members out of the nine were present at that meeting. Instead of the meeting being what he described it to be, it took the form of a church meeting at which it was decided that the whole twelve persons who had been baptised should sit down at the Lord's Supper next morning at ten o'clock. As I have before stated there were only four members present at that meeting, one of whom was never asked his mind on the subject, so that in reality three members out of nine decided that these twelve should become members of the church at a meeting that was never intimated as such, nor given notice of as a church meeting.*

*On Lord's Day morning I went to the meeting at ten o'clock. I saw Mr. Cheek before the meeting took place and remonstrated with him, and told him that he was not only preaching doctrines which the church did not believe, but that he was taking the authority of the church in his own hands, and I, as one of the deacons, protested against his taking any such steps until the church had given him the authority. He said that according to Scripture he needed no such assent from any church. I reminded him again that there was an organised church here, and that the church as such ought to be consulted. But in defiance of all I had to say he went to the Lord's table, and actually gave the right hand of fellowship, in the name of the church, to these twelve, the church never having been called together for the last six or eight weeks, and never having given him the slightest authority. The church is therefore no longer a Baptist church, as it has always been considered. It is now called a Christian church [a church of Christ name at that time], as if it was not such before. My only object in writing the above is to warn other small churches in Queensland against being caught and overthrown in the same manner'. (Yours, &c., J. W. LEE, Deacon)*

The property above was then lost from Baptist control despite efforts to reclaim it legally through the Baptist Association. The building was used by the Church of Christ for ten years until they erected one of their own. (1)

(1) (QF 1882; Haigh, pp. 9f, 107f; Williams, 2001) and cited in 'Baptist Relations with Churches of Christ' by David Parker (as printed in QB Forum Aug 2006 No 63 P.3-8). An article 'Zillamn's waterhole' in the 'Queensland Freeman' Dec/1881, clearly has this as a Baptist church with Thomas Geraghty and a Carl Fischer mentioned. Yet the Queensland Churches of Christ have these men as the founders of the first Church of Christ in Queensland at the same place for the following year. <http://parker.org.au/bapcc.htm>

The evangelists went on to Rosewood and gained entry into a Baptist church with the help of F.W. Troy. Many were converted to the Churches of Christ view and formed a Church of Christ as a consequence. The Toowoomba Baptist church lost about 20 members.

This tension between the Churches of Christ and the Baptists was not uncommon. In 1885 Evangelist Bagley was invited to conduct a wedding amongst German Baptists and he preached '*the ancient order*', and promptly split the Baptist Church. At nearby Vernor, similarly the necessity of baptism for salvation was preached and 16 Baptists were converted, including some of the original members, thus splitting the church there also. (1)

### *The takeover of a Queensland church in 2013*

A contemporary example is also available of an even more ruthless 'takeover' of a local autonomous church. Late in 2012 (Nov.25th) Hervey Bay Church of Christ changed its name to Hervey Bay Bible Church (HBBC) to '*better reflect the beliefs of our church*' in contrast to the views, teachings and direction of the Queensland Churches of Christ (CofCQ). The name change was fully endorsed by the Queensland Churches of Christ (CofCQ). A representative of CofCQ attended a church meeting the following Sunday and asked two elders if they wished to 'disaffiliate'. The two elders answered that they would be interested in discussing what that entailed and also discussing further the doctrinal reasons for the name change as well as the status of the buildings (paid for over many years by the membership to the CofCQ) with respect to the title deeds being held 'in trust'. On 17th January, 2013 two representatives from the Queensland executive board came and spoke to two elders who attempted to discuss doctrinal differences. However, one of the executives said '*I am not interested in doctrine*'. Both elders testified that the meeting was 'tense' and that the CofCQ men were not open to concerns expressed by the elders as to the direction of CofCQ. At the end of the meeting the executive men again put the question of possible 'disaffiliation'. The elders stated unequivocally that they would need to first ascertain the feelings of the entire leadership and the members. However, the Queensland executives stated they would report to 'Conference' and that they would make the decision as to what was to happen to HBBC.

Subsequently, HBBC sought solicitors advice as to the legalities of the property, title deeds and the concept of 'beneficial trust'.

On 26th August 2013 HBBC received a letter from the CEO of CofCQ stating that HBBC was '*following a different path to CofCQ*' and that this

(1) '*Baptist Relations with Churches of Christ*' by David Parker

was *'not in the best interests of CofCQ'*. A 'proposal' was put that HBBC *'pay to CofCQ the sum of \$1,000,000'* to have the title deeds returned; and that HBBC *'resign from membership of CofCQ'*. There was the threat of legal action if an agreement could not be reached to have the land and buildings forfeited to CofCQ. Fourteen days was given to reply. (Amazingly, this letter was sent registered mail on the 10th of September 2013, *15 days later than the date on the letter* making it impossible for HBBC to reply within 14 days).

On the letter 25th October the CEO of CofCQ sent another letter stating *'I note I have not received the courtesy of a response'*. This letter was quite stern in tone and it stated *'HBBC is not entitled to the ownership, use or occupation of the church buildings and land owned by Churches of Christ...'* The letter went on to state *'If I do not receive a satisfactory response from you by 9am on Friday 1st November 2013 then steps will be taken by CofCQ as they may be advised to seek all available legal remedies against HBBC including recovery of possession of the land from HBBC and disaffiliation of HBBC...Please revert to me as to your position by 9am Friday November, 2013'*. (This is despite HBBC never once asking to be 'disaffiliated'). The above letter by CofCQ was addressed *'to the leadership'*, yet was also sent to many members private e-mail addresses.

HBBC replied that it was *'impossible to meet these demands in such a short period (6 days)...we hope to have the issue discussed and finalised further some time in November and then we will contact you immediately with further notice of our intentions.'*

A letter (29/10/2013) was also sent back to CofCQ stating: *'we humbly and prayerfully ask the board of Churches of Christ to please reconsider resolving this issue in a better manner'*.

On November 1st the CofCQ wrote a letter: *'We consider that you have had sufficient time to consider and respond to our proposal...that proposal is now withdrawn...steps will now be taken...regarding its [CofCQ] property and disaffiliation of the Hervey Bay Bible church.'*

HBBC then received a final letter (8th November): *'Within 7 days HBBC will no longer be permitted to enter upon and use the land at Hervey Bay...CofCQ will seek an injunction relief to restrain HBBC continuing to use and occupation of the land...and seek recovery of funds...'*

The situation took a decisive turn the following week when it was discovered that CofCQ had made a private offer to the pastoring elder (1 of 3 elders in HBBC) to continue on as a 'churches of Christ pastor' and that the HBBC must vacate the premises. The two remaining elders met with this

third pastoring elder and strongly spoke against the takeover offer made without consultation or agreement with the leadership or the church members.

On the following Thursday without warning or consent, two executive CofCQ officers and the pastor with his deacon/treasurer, went to the bank and took the two names of the elders off the signing authorisation of bank accounts and the cheque book.

Consequently, the two elders of HBBC instructed the pastoring elder that he would not be preaching that Sunday and that the members would vote on the action by CofCQ and the actions of the pastor. The members voted on the following: *‘Churches of Christ Queensland have decided that from next Friday 15/11/13, Hervey Bay Bible Church will no longer be permitted to enter upon and use the land at Neils St, Hervey Bay. In its place...has informed us that he has made an agreement with Churches of Christ Queensland to pastor a church to be known as Hervey Bay Church of Christ, and...is to be part of that leadership. I agree or I disagree with the actions of Churches of Christ Queensland’.*

The vote was attended by 25 members. 2 agreed, 1 abstained and 22 disagreed with the action by CofCQ (This was 88% against the action of CofCQ. Some members were away and out of town, and arguably approximately 7 could be said to agree to the motion but chose not to attend or vote).

The members of HBBC decided not to fight the coming eviction threat and to vacate the premises and begin services elsewhere. The Sunday of the vote there was a mass walkout of members and many non members. The next Sunday saw 40 people attend a HBBC service in a CWA hall. This was more than 2/3rds of the entire church.

The assessment by this author (one of the three elders) was as follows: *‘CofCQ acted hastily, and not in accordance with the requirements of their own constitution by disaffiliating from HBBC and issuing the threat of eviction. This was also done without the approval of more than 2/3 of the members. The membership of HBBC view this take-over of the land, church buildings, and cash on hand to be a violent confiscation of their property and assets by the Churches of Christ Queensland. The land and building purchase price was repaid to the CofCQ over many years by members and attendees and the deeds merely held in trust for this congregation. No negotiations were held with the leadership before offers were made to the pastor..., the bank accounts altered, and a new eldership installed. HBBC has never seen or had a visit from...(CEO of CofCQ), who wrote many of the strong letters (all documentation of correspondence is available). HBBC sees the actions*

by CofCQ as an unholy grab of property and funds that CofCQ have no legitimate claim to. At the time of these actions HBBC and its members were fully affiliated with the C of C Queensland and occupying the building, having church services, etc. HBBC has never received any confirmation that they are 'disaffiliated'.' (1)

### *Queensland Churches of Christ: Their current 'Identity' statement*

What do the Queensland Churches of Christ (CofCQ) believe when it comes to doctrine and beliefs? In discussions with past and present leaders the answer is usually that officially the CofCQ have no doctrinal statements, no statement of faith, '*no creed but Christ*'. Individual local churches are fully 'autonomous' and can practically teach whatever they want. However, there is somewhat a philosophy, if not a 'creed', to be seen in the QCC 'identity' statement, as written in their '*Annual Report*'. This 'Identity' has two sections: '*Historical Foundations*' and '*Foundational Principles*'. Both sections arguably present the philosophy of ministry and some beliefs. The latter section contains statements concerning 'faith', 'baptism', 'the Lords supper', 'church government' and 'unity'. Although the CofCQ say they have '*no creed but Christ*' yet they do have some rather definitive views and statements on matters of faith. They have arguably stated their own 'creed'.

The problem with '*no creed but Christ*' is that it does not explain what the historical 'creeds' were there for. The 'creeds' were originally developed to address *false teaching* that had entered the church and to mark a distinction between Christians and nominal Christians. They were also to *identify the church from what was false*. Creeds and 'Confessions' were a very important part of the early 'apologies' - the defences of the faith.

The Queensland Churches of Christ '*Historical Foundations*' section states '*Martin Luther protested against practices that had grown up in the Catholic Church, and he released the Bible and a new understanding of being 'justified by faith' to the world*'. This statement is actually not entirely true. The teaching of justification by faith alone along with the 'imputed righteousness' was not '*new*'. It had been held to for many centuries before by remnant groups and can be seen in the writings of the church fathers.

The same section then mentions Wesley and Calvin as bringing divine truths to the church and that '*around these great movements of God, great denominations grew; but divisive walls also grew As time went on, more and more splits occurred as people claimed authority and insight. By the 19th Century there were hundreds of denominations and groups claiming to be*

(1) A '*Fact sheet of events between Queensland Churches of Christ and Hervey Bay Bible Church*' is available which documents the takeover by the Churches of Christ.

*THE true church. In the midst of all this, a movement emerged that centred on Christ and the Bible...'*

(Note the capitals for 'THE' which are in the original by Churches of Christ)

There are several falsehoods with this above statement. The statement 'By the 19th Century there were hundreds of denominations and groups claiming to be THE true church' is simply untrue. The major denominations did not 'claim to be THE true church'. Having lectured in 'church history' at Bible college level I can find no evidence to warrant this statement to be accurate to history. The major denominations certainly had emphasis or bias in certain doctrines and practices but they did not generally 'claim to be THE true church'! (capitals theirs) This notion was actually far from the Reformers and the denominational leaders thinking. It is certainly not found in their Confessions and 'creeds'. I have personally challenged several Queensland leaders concerning this statement and not one has been able to supply any references that might prove this as a general statement to be true.

This exaggerated statement by QCC is important because it becomes a foundation for what the 'Identity' statement says next: *'In the midst of all this, a movement emerged that centred on Christ and the Bible. The spirit of God was moving in the lives of many people unknown to one another, yet who shared a common sense that all this divisiveness was wrong. Christ had founded one church, one body and with one mission. Their collective heart was to call on all Christians to unite together on the basis of restoring New Testament faith and practices. There was a conviction that through this reformation the church would be restored and reborn into what God intended. Churches of Christ is part of this 'restoration movement'...'*

The problem with this statement is that it negates the fact that this 'restoration' movement was founded soon after the 'Great Awakenings' and the *Protestant Reformation* before that. Most of the 'denominations' that came out of that movement were *united* on many major essentials, although they may have differed on modes of Baptism, in degrees of the sovereignty of God and other *non essential* doctrines. The Great Reformation rescued the church from the clutches of an evil and unbiblical Roman Catholic system, one which had perverted and added so much to scripture over 1,500 years. (1)

Put simply, the 'Restoration movement' did not, and has not, 'restored' Biblical Christianity. It has in fact played out the same charges that are laid

(1) See author's book *'To Catholics Whom I Love'* which includes a chart and history section of many traditions added to the early Faith.

at the denominational movement - it has splintered into many different factions and drifted much from its original teachings and doctrine.

The statement '*In the midst of all this, a movement emerged that centred on Christ and the Bible*' appears to be ignorant of the many Protestant groups at the time which were 'biblical' and 'Christ centred'. There were also many churches within denominations which were autonomous and Biblical. Again, the phrase '*hundreds of denominations and groups claiming to be THE true church*' is simply not a true picture of church history at the time and not the reason why there needed to be a 'restoration' of the gospel.

### *Their Ecumenism*

The 'Identity' statement by the Church of Christ also misses the biblical understanding that Christians are *already united* in '*one faith, one baptism...*' as is taught in Scripture (Eph.4:3-6). Unity does not have to be a visible one when it is already a spiritual one. The Bible constantly warns us about the end times being days of false teaching, heresies; and that separation from apostasy is necessary. The ecumenical movement does not teach this separation in holiness and by the Word of God. The *World Council of Churches* (WCC), which the Queensland Churches of Christ supports, is openly inclusive of religions and mixtures of widely different doctrines and faiths.

Most would agree that the western church has largely lost its authority and witness to the world. We are in the midst of one of the most radical periods of apostasy the church has ever seen. Most denominations simply do not teach what they used to teach, even just 10-20 years ago! This is the very meaning of 'apostasy' - to turn away from, or back from, what was once taught. They have adopted the ecumenical cry of unity at all costs, at the expense of truth and doctrine. They say that to be a 'witness' to the world we must join together as one and so have a 'testimony' to the unsaved. But this has been at the expense of truth by watering down the word of God and the Gospel, the very vessels which hold that truth in written form. *There can be no 'unity' unless it is unity in the Word of God (Jn.17:17).*

John 17 is often quoted to support a union of various faiths and doctrines. However, this passage, if read in context, is actually about the preservation of the saints and the unity they have *by sanctification 'through the truth'*, which is found *only* in the Word of God (vs.17). Scripturally, sanctification is literally a separation from the world and sin. The unity spoken of here is '*as you, father, are in me*' (vs.21) and '*as we are one*' (vs.22). This is the unity of *the Trinity* - a unity of one purpose, one doctrine, one faith, one truth! Is that the kind of 'unity' the ecumenical movement has today?

Charles Haddon Spurgeon when preaching on John chapter 17, commented: *'A chorus of voices keeps harping the unity tune. What they are saying is, 'Christians of all doctrinal shades and beliefs must come together in one visible organisation, regardless...unite, unite!' Such teaching is false, reckless, and dangerous. Truth alone must determine our alignments. Truth comes before unity. Unity without truth is hazardous. Our Lord's prayer in John 17 must be read in it's full context. Only those sanctified through the Word can be one in Christ. To teach otherwise is to betray the Gospel'*.

The Bible warns discerning Christians to be separate from teaching that is not Biblical: ***'Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them'*** (Rom.16:17). The phrase ***'contrary to the doctrine which you have learned'*** is referring to the apostles doctrine and that early 'faith'. *As we have seen, that early 'faith' is not what the Restoration movement and the Churches of Christ teach.*

The Churches of Christ actually plays into the hands of the ecumenical one world church of the end times. They press for a 'unity' by a 'union' of many different faiths. Many current leaders will say they are not supporting the ecumenical movement but rather a 'union'. But when pressed to explain what this is, it becomes clear it is really another term being used for what is the ecumenical movement. The fact that they have an association with the *World Council of Churches* (the Queensland Churches of Christ pay monies to this organisation) shows that their 'unity' is one that has few scriptural boundaries, if any.

Interestingly, Alexander Campbell was strongly opposed to the Roman Catholic church which is at the heart of the ecumenical movement today. In his debate with the Catholic archbishop, Purcell, in 1837 he spoke of the *'corruptions of the Roman church'*, and Roman Catholicism as the *'Babylon'* of Revelation and the *'man of sin'*. (1) How is it that the Churches of Christ when adopting the 'restoration movement' do not follow what Campbell taught?

The history of the attitudes towards ecumenism within the Churches of Christ have ebbed and flowed over many years. However, in early years (1875-1910) the churches of Christ were decidedly non ecumenical and opposed to the Roman Catholic church. Several instances could be cited of intense opposition to Popery and Roman doctrines. *Such 'protestant' opposition has now almost vanished.*

(1) *'Campbell-Purcell Debate'*, P.77; Old Paths Book Club.

During the period 1910-1930, A. R. Main encouraged Churches of Christ to accept as Christian members of other communions, and to participate in unions for unity *on the basis of the 'Restoration' of New Testament Christianity*. His thinking was influenced by social and political events which caused contact with other churches in various state councils of churches.

Between 1930-1950 the Churches of Christ in Australia began to forge ties with the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Geneva and later with the Australian Council for the World Council of Churches.

Between 1950-1970 'Disciples' entered into 'conversations' with the Uniting Church. At the 1946 Federal Conference, it was decided to affiliate with the new Australian Council for the World Council of Churches. By 1970 there was a much more liberal view towards the ecumenical movement. At the same time Churches of Christ was seen as a 'denomination' and indeed they were at times claiming denominational status. Yet they still claim not to be a 'denomination'.

There were the voices who spoke out against Churches of Christ being a part of the ecumenical movement. As early as 1950 a Keith Macnaughtan, minister of the Melbourne Swanston Street church, argued that the WCC creed opened the door to all religions and was also a political tool. He was opposed to the Roman church and saw it as 'the mother of harlots'.

Certainly the WCC has anti Bible philosophies and teachings which contrast with scripture in many areas. It also uses scripture to approve of many different views within religions even when the various views flatly oppose each other. Despite some opposition to any association with the WCC, in 1953 the Victorian-Tasmanian state conference voted to affiliate at state level with the WCC. This caused many churches to separate and form a rival affiliation which opposed such associations as well as modernism. The debate ebbed to and fro again for many years. At one time the Western Australian church voted to withdraw at state level from the WCC.

The Restoration Movement tends to play down doctrine when advocating for ecumenical union of churches. Yet this is opposed to New Testament teaching which mentions doctrine no less than 44 times in the New Testament. Indeed, Paul's letters to Timothy were largely based on his urging Timothy to remain sound in 'doctrine' and to oppose those who had false doctrine. This weakness in doctrine in the churches of Christ has its roots in the 'principles' of the founders who *'made Christian character the only real test of membership and fellowship'*. (1) However, 'membership' and 'fellowship' must surely be for, and with, Born Again Christians only. 'Christian

(1) *'DNA of the Churches of Christ'* by Graham Carlslake, P.2

character' is actually not a true test of a Christian or a test for fellowship. There are many people in cults groups who would outwardly show 'Christian character'. 'Christian character' can be morally counterfeited. The apostle Paul warned his listeners to separate from certain people, not because of their lack of 'Christian character' but because of their lack of adherence to *sound doctrine*. ***'Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple'*** (Rom.16:17,18). Salvation is never based on 'Christian character', which may be a fruit of salvation but is often a poor test of a true Christian.

Although the Restoration movement in many areas minimised doctrine, yet the original 'Restoration movement' did have distinctive doctrines, some which were not accepted by the bulk of evangelical churches. One of the movements that has largely affected the modern Churches of Christ is the 'Church growth movement' and now the 'Emergent Church'. Both movements are pragmatic and market driven by what the consumer wants or Postmodern thought demands. Doctrine is again also minimised in these movements. 'Church growth' leaders today teach a philosophy that says we give the unsaved what they want or need, so as to effectively present the gospel to them. But the Bible says that the average unsaved person is naturally going to ask for carnal things and reject spiritual things. He is not going to ask for the Gospel, nor want to listen to it. He will not want Godly music or teaching on the judgement of God. His heart is depraved and the Gospel is an 'offense' to him (Gal.5:11; Rom.9:33; 5:15-20). Unsaved man is totally unable of himself to respond spiritually to the Gospel (Rom.8:6,7; 1Cor.2:14; Rom.3:10-11; Jer.17:9; Is.64:6,7). Unless the Holy Spirit turns and draws the heart, none will be saved (Jn.6:44). What 'method' does God use to change a persons heart in this way, from one that is unwilling to receive the things of God to one that is ready? Ultimately, God by His Spirit uses only the Gospel and His Word to save a person! He does not need or use man's methods, felt needs, market driven programmes, etc. Some of these things may be human 'ice breakers' at best to gain relationships, but ultimately it is only the Gospel of *faith* and *repentance* that will move the hearts of the unsaved, who 'by nature' will not seek God! (Rom.3:10,11). What unsaved people *need* and what they *want* are being horribly confused today.

Any unity based on minimising doctrine is a bastardised unity, a counterfeit. We are not unified by coming together with different beliefs, different gospels or gospels that minimise or do not mention sin, repentance

and that Jesus is the *only* way to eternal life. How can we accept religions that do not teach these basics? How can we accept a religion such as Roman Catholicism which curses us for teaching faith alone and that God's righteousness is imputed to us by faith alone (Rom.4)? Yet that is exactly what happens when we unite in any way with religions such as Roman Catholicism.

Unity must be centred on, and maintained by, the Gospel and contending for its purity. Paul exhorted the Philippians to '*...stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel*', (Phil.1:27). The book of Philippians is filled with passages that show Paul's passion to *contend for* the gospel. He was imprisoned for this!

True unity must include the truths of who Jesus is (deity) and what he has done (atonement) as the *only* '*way, the truth and the life*' (Jn.14:6). True unity means not being ashamed of the Gospel and its 'offence' of the cross to the unsaved. True unity does not try to mix the philosophies of the world with the methods of the church and evangelism. Did Paul promote 'unity' when he rebuked the Galatians for adding to the Gospel? The Churches of Christ leaders tend to deny separation from apostasy and false teaching in favour of 'union'.

## Conclusion

The doctrinal matters discussed in this document should be regarded as a serious matter. The restoration movement and Campbellism is fraught with contradictions and aberrant doctrines. It began as a movement to 'restore' the Gospel and to bring 'unity' to all Christians. Alexander Campbell recognised Christians in various denominations as '*Christians in confusion*'. (1) Yet the very movement he founded became a mass of splintered groups with contradictory doctrines and ideas. It is now a movement that is practically and lawfully a 'denomination' yet still claiming to have no statement of faith. This movement is claimed to be '*the only new Christian movement that began with the intention of uniting all Christians*'. (2) Yet the movement has clearly been a total failure in this and surely the original mandate was not from God, for unity is not based on the peculiar and unscriptural tenets of the 'Restoration movement' such as baptism for salvation; successive 'steps' or plans for achieving salvation; the reduction of the Holy Spirit in the doctrine of Regeneration; and the unity of Christians by baptism and 'character'.

(1) '*DNA of the Churches of Christ*' by Graham Carslake, P.2

(2) Ibid P.65

The Campbells taught doctrines that are clearly not Evangelical or orthodox. Baptismal Regeneration doctrines clearly are an assault on grace alone through faith alone. Water baptism and regeneration are not the *'same names for the same act in salvation'*; sins are not *'washed away in the act of immersion'*; the *'act of immersion'* does not *'wash sins away'*; Baptismal immersion is not *'the gospel in water'*. Yet Alexander Campbell stated such. The real salvation issue here is the doctrine of *Regeneration* in which Alexander Campbell stated that *'immersion be equivalent to regeneration'*.

The rejection by the Restoration leaders of such doctrinal names as the 'Trinity' cannot also be winked at. Indeed it should not be difficult to understand why many early Campbellites joined the cults at the time.

Doctrines of salvation must be kept pure and biblical. Campbell and Scott divided the process of salvation into stages and subtly added works, including that of water Baptism. Salvation became something that included obedience, and thus obedience to keep it. But 'obedience' is the fruit of the Gospel (in Sanctification), and is *no part of the Gospel*. The Gospel is about Jesus the person and what He did in atonement. It is not about us and our 'steps'. It is not about our 'obedience'. The Gospel is about the sacrificial death of Jesus, His burial and His resurrection on our behalf because of our sinful nature in breaking the law of God. The Gospel cannot be made a gospel of grace with 'steps' as in the Restoration movement which include obedience and baptism!

The idea of a *rational* acceptance of the salvation message which detracts from the doctrine of Regeneration and the Born Again conversion experience was far from orthodox and not a part of 'the faith once delivered' (Jude 3). The leaders of the 'Restoration movement' were *semi-Pelagian* or *Arminian* in their doctrines of salvation. Both of these systems were deemed heresy in church history.

The Queensland Churches of Christ *'Identity'* statement has several unscholarly statements of church history and doctrine that beg clarification at the least, or are plain erroneous at the worst. The teaching of justification by faith alone along with the 'imputed righteousness' was not *'new'* as is stated in their Identity statements. The denominations did not claim to be *'THE true church'* as they clearly state.

But what should be further examined is the claim of 'Restoration movement' in the light of what doctrines the 'restorers' actually taught. This is not the history or doctrine in which biblical based churches today should want to revert to! *The Queensland Churches of Christ in their publications claim to follow the principles of the 'Restoration movement'*. But many of

the principles and doctrines of this movement are starkly opposed to the Evangelical movement. Many of the early ‘restoration’ leaders were censured for heretical and extreme teachings.

The ecumenical thrust of the Churches of Christ should also be something carefully examined in the light of the fact that gospels that oppose each other *cannot* have true ‘unity’! The fact that the Queensland Churches of Christ pay monies to the *World Council of Churches* (something I have found to be not commonly known by most Queensland ministers) should also raise alarm when one considers the radical politics and compromised ungodly teachings of this organisation.

*The philosophy and beliefs of the ‘Restoration movement’ have been adopted by the Queensland Churches of Christ with many of the leaders themselves being unaware of exactly what this movement taught. Most churches in Queensland affiliated with the Queensland Churches of Christ also are largely unaware of the distinctive doctrines of this movement. The Restoration movement is simply not a return to true Christianity as proposed. It is actually a movement that was not Evangelical or orthodox and some of which is arguably heretical.*

My plea is that the leaders themselves and the various ministers of local churches would examine the ‘Identity’ tenets of the Queensland Churches of Christ and the history it endorses and either challenge it or distance themselves from such. The movement is not moving towards what is Biblical, evangelical and orthodox in teaching and doctrine. We are to ‘***earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints***’ (Jude 3).

The leaders of the Restoration movement taught that the gospel and true Christianity was lost after the first century and that the church had apostatised. *According to the Queensland Churches of Christ all denominations were wrong and claim to be ‘THE true church’.* Yet the same false statement was made at the same time by the cults!

Many Church of Christ leaders I have found are quick to distance themselves from some of the above teachings. Others are selective in how they portray the history and the roots of the movement. But how can they pick and choose what they wish to adopt from the ‘Restoration movement’ and yet *openly endorse the movement itself in their publications?*

The ‘Restoration movement’ taught that by abandoning creeds, theological systems and non biblical practises could Christian ‘unity’ be achieved. Yet they have denied the very reasons why these creeds were necessary. In doing

so, they have themselves become so lax in doctrine that I have personally had leaders in Queensland say to me *'I am not interested in doctrine'*. Such a statement smacks up against much of what the apostle Paul taught in several epistles. In the New Testament there are three Greek words translated *'doctrine'*: *'Didaskalia'* ('the act of teaching'); *'didache'* ('the substance of teaching'); and *'logos'* (the 'word'). Together these three Greek words are used 51 times in the New Testament (13 times in the epistles of Timothy alone). Here are just some examples: *'They continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine...'* (Acts 2:42); *'Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause division and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them...'* (Rom.16:17,18); *'A good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the works of faith and of good doctrine'* (1Tim.4:6); *'give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine'* (1Tim.4:13); *'All scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction...'* (2Tim.3:16); *'Holding fast the faithful Word as he has been taught that he may be able to by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers'* (Tit.1:9); *'Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine'* (2Tim.4:2,3); *'Be not carried about with diverse and strange doctrines'* (Heb.13:9).

Can the Churches of Christ afford to not be interested in 'doctrine'? Can they afford not to have any clear doctrinal statement of faith?

Many of the Queensland Churches of Christ leadership are marketing consultants rather than pastors or teachers of the word. This is shown in many of their publications which take on a marketing strategy rather than a strategy to build up the saints. *There is little testimony of the Gospel in their publications* (this has been acknowledged to me by at least some of the leaders privately). There is little teaching and little Gospel. When I have enquired about this the answer has always been the same - the magazines and publications are designed more for information about various arms of the churches of Christ rather than an attempt to edify and build the church with doctrine or teaching.

The ecumenical nature of the Churches of Christ have led to a wide range of doctrines and views, a mish mash of foreign ideas. Yet when the leaders of the Queensland Churches of Christ have been asked where they stand on doctrines or the ecumenical movement they say they 'have no stand' - each church is 'autonomous' and can seemingly teach what they like? However, in their magazines at times they openly teach against biblical views on issues

such as women in ministry. (1) There have also been some very liberal teaching on homosexuality and other moral issues.

*However, above all, local Churches of Christ need to be aware of exactly what the 'Restoration movement' taught and that the Queensland churches of Christ openly adopt this movement.*

## **Terry Arnold**

### **About the Author**

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### **Other Books by Terry Arnold**

*'Eternal Questions'*

*'Foundations For Evangelism'*

*'Calvinism & Arminianism - Out of the Maze'*

*'To Catholics Whom I Love'*

*'Tongues and the Baptism With The Spirit'*

*'Finding the Balance'*

(1) The author has refuted several articles by Churches of Christ publications on this issue. These are available free by contacting the author. Some articles on various issues may be seen at [www.taministries.net](http://www.taministries.net)

## **Other Material Available**

‘*Diakrisis (Australia)*’ (Free bi-monthly newsletter)

Website articles ([www.taministries.net](http://www.taministries.net)):

Articles on Ecumenism; Evangelism; Roman Catholicism; various Sermons...

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