

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."

(Jeremiah 6:16)

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THE TWIG AND THE TREE

Lloyd Gale

Some sage observed that the way the twig is bent, so will the tree grow. It is easily observable, that the direction in which the **David Lipscomb University** Bible department has been bent, in recent years, spiritually speaking, is anyway but straight. Sound and faithful brethren have sounded forth warnings of the departure of many of Lipscomb's professors and board members. These warnings which have been accompanied with incontrovertible evidence have fallen on deaf ears.

Further evidence of their apostasy came in a post card invitation from Atlanta, Georgia, dated February 28, 2007. It was sent by the "Evangelistic Society."

The invitation reads: *"The European Evangelistic Society is pleased to invite you and a guest to the 2007 Annual Meeting and Regional dinner. The meeting will be Sunday, 15 April at the Woodmont Hills Church of Christ at 6:00 P.M. Our program will include:*

* Dinner

* Dr. Garry Holloway of Lipscomb University

* Video presentation about EES

* Brief business meeting.

The European Evangelistic Society focuses on unity among Stone-Campbell Christians and academic research and teaching at the University of Tübingen through our institute for the study of Christian Origins. We are partnering with Globalscope for campus ministry at the university and are actively seeking team mem-

bers for a church plant in the Tübingen area. For more information please visit www.eesatlanta.org.

This event is free of charge but we ask that you kindly reply by 30 March to EES at bethany@eesatlanta.org or 404, 460-2443.

Woodmont Hills is located at 3710 Franklin Road, Nashville, Tenn."

For those who do not know **Woodmont Hills**; they have for some time preferred to disassociate themselves from the churches of Christ and to be identified instead as "The Family of God." I found it interesting, that for this subversive purpose, they would revert to "Church of Christ." This is the congregation where **Rubel Shelly** preached for a number of years and led them in their departure from the once delivered faith (Jude 3).

I followed their advice contained in this invitation and visited www.eesatlanta.org where I discovered a hodgepodge of humanely originated religious organizations. The list is dominated by the Christian Church and the Disciples of Christ denominations. It includes the European Evangelistic Society, The United Christian Missionary Society and the Gay, Lesbian and Affirming Disciples Alliance, Inc. See also www.gladalliance.org

The Gay, Lesbian and Affirming Disciples Alliance, Inc. is a presence working for the full dignity and integrity of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and affirming people within the

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). GLAD Alliance welcomes all who make common cause with us and conducts its activities through the congregations, regions and general church and other manifestations of the Disciples of Christ.

This unholy alliance says its vision is: Called by God, GLAD Alliance is a sacred community. Led by the Spirit, we are a prophetic voice and a living resource, present with our gifts to the world."

GLAD ALLIANCE MISSION

"The mission of Glad Alliance is to be a safe and faithful place for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Affirming community.

Relying on the Holy Spirit, we speak truth to power, advocating for inclusivity, diversity, and justice in all manifestations of the Christian church (Disciples of Christ).

Committed to transformation, we offer ourselves through education, witness and strategic action as a visible presence in solidarity with those marginalized within the church.

We stand boldly within the Church to proclaim and embody the gracious call to ministry for the whole people of God."

Brethren, it is far later than any

(Continued on page 83)

The Twig and the Tree...



Editorial...

I WANT TO BE MORE LIKE JESUS IN PREACHING AND TEACHING #1

Thomas F. Eaves, Sr., Deceased

The Gospel preacher of today is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ with power even as the preachers of the first century. We are heralds, we have a message from God.

One of the most noble goals in life was expressed by certain Greeks when they approached Philip of Bethsaida and requested of him, “*Sir we would see Jesus*” (John 12:21).

As we look at the Biblical Jesus we learn that He was a *teacher* (Matt. 21:23; Mark 14:49; Luke 21:37) and a *preacher* (Matt. 4:23; Mark 1:14; Luke 4:43). As a teacher and preacher Jesus our Savior confirmed the Old Testament Scriptures. He established the authority of the Old Testament (John 5:39; Luke 24:44), verified the creation of male and female (Matt. 19:4), substantiated that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, (Matt. 22:32), Solomon (Matt. 6:29), Elijah (Matt. 11:14), and Isaiah (Luke 4:17) were historical persons. He also authenticated the Bible account of Jonah and the whale (Matt. 12:39-41), Noah and the flood (Matt. 24:37-39), and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt. 10:15). Our Lord used every opportunity to tell of the kingdom of God, the living water and the bread of life. He taught one on one (John 4) as well as multitudes (Matt. 5:1). He taught and preached in such a way that even His enemies stated of Him “never man so spake” (John 7:46).

There is no greater example for teachers and/or preachers than the great master teacher himself, Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God.

JESUS LIVED HIS TEACHING

Luke the beloved physician wrote concerning the Lord, “The former treatise have I made, O

Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach” (Acts 1:1). Notice that Jesus was a *doer* as well as a *teacher*.

Jesus taught his disciples to *pray* by giving them an example — “After this manner therefore pray ye” (Matt. 6:9-13). Examining the life of Jesus, it becomes evident that Jesus had a very active prayer life. Jesus prayed before the day dawned (Mark 1:35), at times he would separate himself from others and pray (Luke 5:16), and he prayed before being delivered into the hands of his enemies (Matt. 26:39; Luke 22:41).

The Master teaches his disciples to *love* — “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35). After commanding his disciples to love each other, He became the greatest example of love in the history of the world — he died for sinful man (Eph. 5:2; Rom. 5:8; John 15:13).

The Son of God taught *forgiveness* — “Then came Peter, and said to him, Lord how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him: until seven times? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times; but until seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:21-22). He also taught, “and if he sin against thee seven times in a day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him” (Luke 17:4). As a teacher of forgiveness (Matt. 6:14-15), Jesus practiced forgiveness when He looked with love upon those

who nailed Him to the cross, and said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). In these examples it is quiet evident that Jesus lived the type of life he preached.

In His personal ministry, our Lord stressed the necessity of being *doers of his word* — “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock” (Matt. 7:24-25). The apostle Paul addressed this problem in the lives of the Jews in Romans 2:17-23 and then drew his conclusions in Romans 2:24, “For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, because of you, even as it is written.” Paul’s condemnation came because they taught one standard while living another. James admonishes, “but be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22). One thing which hinders the evangelistic thrust and growth of the church today is the credibility gap between what is taught and what is practiced by members of the body of Christ.

In the church today there are those who are militant against instrumental music in worship and will quickly relate to you the Biblical teaching concerning music in Christian worship. Their teaching, however, is ineffective because they sit in the pew, with sealed lips, during the song service.

In many congregations parents and elders are concerned about the tragic drug problem of our nation, and use every possible means to educate their young people about drugs. Their instruction, encouragement, and anti-drug problems are futile because many in the congregation are addicted to and use tobacco products which kill more Americans than alcohol, illegal drugs, accidents, homicides and suicides combined. Statistics claim that 480,000 Americans will die this year from tobacco products.

Parents, elders, deacons, Bible school teachers, and other interested Christians teach and admonish young people to avoid sexual sins, but their admonition accomplishes

nothing because immodesty, dancing, mixed swimming and other forms of recreation which appeal to the lust of the flesh are allowed and sometimes even encouraged by those who “profess” to be God’s children.

Even our Lord recognized the truth that you cannot be an effective teacher while teaching one thing and doing something else. In Matthew 23:3 he stated, “all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.”

If we are going to be like Jesus in teaching and preaching, we must live what we teach from God’s Word. This course of action will allow our light to shine for the glory of our Heavenly Father (Matt. 5:16).

JESUS WAS UNCOMPROMISING

When Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples a very important question, “Who do men say that the son of man is” (Matt. 16:13)? Their answers were very revealing: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. One thing that all of these great men of God had in common was their dedication to Jehovah, his word, and way of life. They faithfully, fearfully, lived, taught, and defended God’s word. Some were murdered (Matt. 14:9-10), imprisoned (Jer. 32:2; I Kings 22:27), threatened (I Kings 19:2,3), and abused (Heb. 11:32-40). These suffered not because of any wrong doing on their part, but because of their valiant stand for truth. They would turn neither to the right hand nor to the left (II Chron. 34:2); they were uncompromising.

An example of Jesus’ uncompromising attitude toward truth is seen in Mark 10. Once there was a rich (Mark 10:22), young (Matt. 19:20), ruler (Luke 18:18) who came to Jesus and asked him the most important question man can ask, “What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life” (Mark 10:17)? Since the law of Moses was the authority of Jesus’ day (Gal. 4:4), our Lord directed him to the ten commandments (Mark 10:19). The young man responded to Jesus, “Teacher all these things have I observed from my youth” (Mark 10:20). Jesus looking on him, loved him and then told him what he must do. “One thing thou lackest: go, sell

whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come follow me” (Mark 10:21). The young man had asked, and Jesus answered him. What was the young man’s reaction? “But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions” (Mark 10:22). The young man had a problem; he trusted in riches (Mark 10:23,24). What was Jesus reaction? Jesus watched the young man walk away lost. Our Lord did not try to work out a compromise, one third, one fourth, one half, of his goods instead of all of them. Jesus knew that the young man MUST trust in God instead of his material goods to be saved — he did not compromise to please the ruler, his parents, his friends or the religious leaders of his day.

If we are going to be like Jesus in teaching and preaching we must stand for the truth and never compromise. Jesus stated, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16). This truth will stand till judgment and can in no wise be compromised. However, other passages are of equal importance. Paul stated, “Now we command you brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us” (II Thess. 3:6). This truth will stand till judgment and can in no wise be compromised, nor should one passage be taught and obeyed and the other ignored.

JESUS TAUGHT WITH AUTHORITY

Our Savior declared, “All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). Jesus viewed his teaching as authoritative. He declared that his words were from God (John 12:49,50; 17:8) which harmonizes with Hebrews 1:2, “Hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds.” It was the Heavenly Father that said of Jesus, “...This is my Son, my chosen: hear ye him” (Luke 9:35). In many passages Jesus indicated that obedience to his words would bring eternal life (Matt.

7:24-27; John 5:24), but to be ashamed of his words or reject them would result in rejection by the Son (Mark 8:38; John 12:48). Of his teachings Jesus offered no apology, he boldly and simply proclaimed his will to man. His authority was evident in his teaching when those taught remarked, “for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes” (Matt. 7:29; Mark 1:22). The scribes appealed to the authority (interpretations) of the rabbis, but Jesus boldly declared, “I say unto you” (Matt. 5:22, 26, 28, 31, 34, 44).

On one occasion the Pharisees came to Jesus trying him and asked, “is it lawful for a man to put his wife away for every cause” (Matt. 19:9)? Jesus answered their question in Matthew 19:5 and 6. His answer was, NO! Later he gives the grounds for putting away a mate (Matt. 19:9). Jesus did not teach in such a way that his hearers had to guess at what he said.

Many sermons in today’s society are not distinctive, i.e. easily recognizable as being based on God’s Word. These sermons remind me of a bulletin article I read some years back about a timid minister. This timid minister was told by one part of the congregation to preach the old fashioned Gospel, and was told by the other section to be broadminded. He preached, “Unless you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, to a certain extent, and repent, in a measure and are saved, so to speak, you are, I am sorry to say, in danger of hell-fire and damnation, more or less.”

The Gospel preacher of today is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ with power even as the preachers of the first century. We are heralds, we have a message from God. We know that there are some things that a Christian cannot do because God’s word declares it (Gal. 5:19-21; I Cor. 6:9-11), and we know from the same authority that there are some things a Christian must do to be saved (Col. 3:1-10; II Peter 1:5-9).

If preachers today are to be like Jesus, they must lovingly preach the will of God plainly, powerfully, without compromise while faithfully abiding by His teaching.

A FEW SENTENCES ABOUT THE SECTS

Wayne Coats

That the New Testament church of Christ exists in many parts of the world, a body of modernists, liberals and infidels would deny. No effort is made by such negative persons to base their objections on any kind of rational proof. The same kind of characters who would sneer, snarl and belittle the church, will very often vent their spleen against the Bible.

We know Jesus promised to build the church (Matt. 16:18). He spoke of the church and the kingdom in an interchangeable manner. The kingdom or church is to stand forever. The kingdom is indestructible.

There have always been those who opposed the church of our Lord. Every Christian and every religious paper should aspire to make a clear and just defense of the Word of Christ and the church of Christ as taught in God's Holy Word. We desperately need to join hearts and minds as we labor for the restoration of the church in every community on earth.

It is an admitted fact that far too few of our brethren are cultivating and training themselves as effective writers. Good brethren study and train to speak effectively. Heaven help us when men presume to speak without having something of value to say. Just as we need far more brethren who need to become powerful preachers, we need an army of men who will dedicate themselves to write sound, scriptural, articles and obviously we need a brotherhood who will be willing to read.

It is disgusting to learn that some of our brethren are now asserting that the church of Christ, as it exists today, had its beginning back in the 1800s with the efforts of Thomas and Alexander Campbell. Such cunningly devised fables are a figment of the imagination of false teachers.

When the Campbells came to America from Scotland, the Calvinistic system was running rampant. The population was creed-bound and the Campbells began a steady opposition to the creeds of men. They made a plea to, "Speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent." This was a strange message in the ears of the multitudes. This call of the

Restoration Movement needs to be sounded forth today. It is Biblical.

It is foolish to assert that the Campbells started the church of Christ. Those men and others tried to get people to go to the Bible and obey it. As a young boy back in the rural hills of northeast Mississippi, I heard men preach the Word of God. I had never heard of Alexander Campbell when I obeyed the Gospel. The preachers who came to conduct Gospel meetings brought tattered and worn Bibles with them. They told us what was in the Bible. Not one preacher related a word of authority which Alexander Campbell had said or written. Our faith rested in the Word of God. Those faithful preachers quoted Bible verses and showed us the plan of salvation. Was that wrong? Can such be done today? Should we do as much when we preach? Does the Bible teach alien sinners to *hear, believe, repent, and be baptized* in order to be saved? Did such teaching originate with the Campbells?

Do we rely upon men to tell us when, how, and who we worship? Which acts of worship do we subscribe to which originated with the Campbells?

As I read the materials presented by Alexander Campbell, I find some things with which I cannot agree. Any honest person should admit that instead of endeavoring to effect a new sect, far more truthfully could it be said that the leading purpose of the Restoration Movement, then and now, is the complete extinction of all sects. Is this wrong? Instead of attempting to impose a new sect on the people, this monstrous evil needs to be eradicated from the earth.

The battles between Calvinism and Arminianism were fiercely fought, and growing out of those battles, sects and parties arose. Each reared high its standard in support of its claims. There was always a "lo here" and a "lo there" with each new sect resolving themselves into little groups with little light, little life, and none of that state of things for which Christ prayed when he requested his followers to be one (John 17:20,21).

It is sad when people are encouraged to depend upon the clergy for

information as they leave the Bible closed. It is alright to depend upon the physician when troubled with gout, but we cannot afford to trust the clergy with our soul.

The aim and purpose of the Restoration Movement is worthy of the support of every person who desires to go to heaven. We should all work, hope and pray for a complete return to primitive Christianity in *doctrine, in practice, and in spirit*. Who would object to believing precisely what the Scriptures teach, to practice only what they enjoin, and to reject every thing else?

We could wish that each of our brothers would be concerned with keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). Our liberal brethren must desire to be remembered for their great charity and love for the sects. They love everybody but their sound brethren, and have an intense affinity for sects, but none for the church of Christ.

There are some who seem to delight in referring to the church of Christ as just another sect. There isn't anything as cheap as baseless babble.

When we think of the word *sect*, we think of the Latin word *seco*, which denotes the idea of *to cut*. The idea suggests separating a thing into parts by cutting it. The sect is a part which results from the cutting. A sect may be a cutting of a sect or a cutting of a cutting. We think of a sect therefore as a part of that which has been separated by cutting.

In the New Testament, we read of *scism* (heresy and division) which is condemned. The idea which inheres in the word *scism* is *to split, rend, or tear apart*. The concept of division means a standing apart or separation, a faction. Heresy denotes, to take with the mind, it is an act of choosing one thing in preference to another.

When the preceding terms are applied to religious bodies, we get a picture of diverse and competing viewpoints. Where there is *scism*, there is a rend or split in the body. Where there is *division*, there are the factions. Where there is *heresy*, there will be the diverse parties. A person may foster a distinct viewpoint and push it to the formation

of a particular party. The party thus formed becomes a heresy. The heresy becomes a new sect. The scism, heresy, and sect is a pulling away from the original complete body or a moving away from a previous sect.

Someone has written: “There are sects and more sects to fight ’em. And sects and more sects, ad infinitum.”

The religious world is reeking with a multiplicity of sects. Sectarianism is a curse to the cause of Jesus Christ.

We may ask, “What is that out of which the sects and factions are formed?” Of course, that which is cut, rent, and divided! To explain how this is accomplished, we refer the reader to Paul’s letter to the church in Corinth. The apostle wrote, “Now I beseech you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no *divisions* among you.” The apostle is saying, “There should be no schisms among you.” The rents, seams, and splits were wrong. Such evil had to be caused by some of the party members. Divisions, schisms, and factions, were the results of the devil.

The small groups resulted from thinking of men above that which is written (I Cor. 4:6). Paul used himself and Apollos as examples and declared that the brethren should not think too much of men (I Cor. 4:6).

A faction is a departure from the truth. A sect implies a corruption of the truth and a departure therefrom. Factions embrace those little cliques or groups which develop in congregations as the result of ignorance, prejudice, passions, and such like.

A sect will form when some doctrine is brought into the church which is untaught in the Bible. The maker of a sect is a bonafide heretic who pushes a certain tenet and gathers a group about him. In the community where I live, a great number of sects have been springing up with every conceivable title which Satan can concoct. Jesus did not die for entertainment.

In the New Testament, foreign doctrines or commandments of men are considered to be a heresy. The apostle Peter wrote, “There shall be false teachers among you who privily shall bring in damnable heresies even denying the Lord that bought them” (II Peter 2:1). These heresies would be brought into the church where they would be supported. False teachers would be “among you”, i.e., in the

church where their dirty work would develop. Denying the Lord was a damnable heresy and would be punished.

Let us never feel smug and think that false teachers work only outside of the church. Some brethren seem to think and act as if damnable heresies can never stop until he corrupts the doctrine of Christ and destroys the unity of God’s people. When men corrupt the teaching of the Word of God, they need to be opposed and exposed as false teachers. When a party forms about a false system, such is a sect in the truest sense of the word. The sect is condemned because it supports damnable heresies.

It is not necessary for a party or sect to be wholly corrupt in its teaching. The heretical group in Corinth was not 100% wrong. A single false doctrine can be the foundation, the standard by which a party exists. A sect does not usually become corrupt in a moment, or altogether at once, if they ever do. The fewer the false heresies, the better for the devil. The false teacher will congratulate himself on holding to ten Bible truths rather than ten false doctrines. The fatal error of sectarianism is that it can hold to a few cardinal doctrines. The gullible patrons will rest in the true doctrine and overlook the many false doctrines. How much error will God tolerate? I learn that God hates every false way (Psalm 119:104).

Very early, a number of sects arose which caused trouble in the church. One of the most notable was the Gnostic heresy which would corrupt the pure Word of God. Also, a number of Jewish sects arose.

One of the Bible doctrines center around immersion for the remission of sins. Someone will object to the doctrine and a modern heresy emerges. A system of relating experiences and getting religion at a mourner’s bench or elsewhere becomes the norm. A sect is born and flourishes.

Consider another doctrine which has to do with the unity of the church. Regarding this matter, the scriptures are said to mean something altogether different from what they simply state. When this happens, we have a doctrine which condones division, religious parties, sects, denominations, and a plurality of man-made churches.

The word *sect* does not occur in the Old Testament nor in the first four books of the New Testament. The word

occurs in the book of Acts six times. In four cases, the word refers to the parties or sections in the Jewish family. The lawyer Tertullus, who prosecuted Paul before Felix, was somewhat familiar with the sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5). In his own defense, Paul refers to the sect of the Pharisees (Acts 26:5).

In his letter to the Corinthians Paul wrote, “For there must be also heresies (sects) among you that they who are approved may be manifest.” These sects would appear, “among you.” You, the faithful, would not be the sect, but rather the sect would be among the faithful. The heresies were condemned as a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). Sects are listed along with strifes, seditions, and heresies.

It is interesting that the heretic or maker of the sect is to receive admonition and if he rejects it, he is to be rejected (Titus 3:10). This sect-maker is in the church where he receives admonition.

A mite of sober thinking should help us to realize that, “they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:20,21). The making of sects is wrong. If the making of a sect is wrong and the maker is to be rejected, so is the sect to be rejected. Every time some heretic creates a sect, there will be any number of people who will jump on the false cart.

Often times a small sect will remove itself from the main body of church members or it may be forced out or withdrawn from. It would be possible for a small number to be faithful and remove itself from the corrupt larger group. When a congregation apostatizes from the truth, faithful Christians are to, “Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (II Cor. 6:17).

It is true of the sects, every enemy is to be feared, who, while pretending to be a dear friend, thrusts a dagger into your heart. Such persons by their actions declare:

- 1) That the Bible is an insufficient rule of government for the church. When the Bible is considered sufficient, the sect-makers cannot exist.
- 2) The Bible is an unsafe guardian of the truth.
- 3) The doctrine and commandments of men are more valuable than the Bible.
- 4) Human wisdom is better than divine.

We continue to hear the plea that, “We cannot all see the Bible alike.” This amounts to the fact that sectarianism is unavoidable. There is a world of difference in CAN NOT and WILL NOT. I agree that the sectarians *will not* see the Bible for what it teaches and they *will not* see the Bible alike.

The Holy Spirit would never have demanded that the brethren be, “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment,” if it is impossible for Christians to see the Bible alike. The Bible would not teach the Children of God to “speak the same thing.” Seeing the Bible alike is the basis of speaking alike. Jesus would not have wasted his time praying for all his disciples to be one, as He and the Father are one, if the disciples cannot see the Bible alike.

Have you considered what is essential in order for men to see alike? If we would see alike:

- 1) We must see the same thing. This cannot happen when one man sees the stars and another sees a stump. We must

want to see alike.

- 2) We must see through the same amount of light. What one sees in daylight is different from what one sees in the dark. Two prisoners looked out from behind prison bars, one saw the mud, the other saw the stars.
- 3) We must look from the same standpoint. What men will not do, of course, will never be done.

There are those who delight in referring to the church of Christ as “just another religious sect.” Did our brethren of the early Restoration Movement intend to set up and function as a sect? They most assuredly did not. The ignorant and unlearned may feel good to babble that which they do not know. There is no book, tract, pamphlet, periodical written or unwritten, speech ever made by the Campbells, Stone, or Scott where they were attempting to develop a sect. From the first, the pioneers set their faces against the formation of sectarianism.

Any honest student of Restoration History knows this to be true. Why were the Restoration leaders opposed so vehemently?

The plea was and is, “Back to the Bible.” The efforts of those brethren was never to reform the existing sects, but to restore the ancient order of things. They read the New Testament in an effort to learn what were matters of faith and duty. Having learned as much, they were determined to subscribe only to that which the Lord taught.

For long years our opponents, which have been many, have not been able to show that we have subscribed to one iota of error as pertaining to sectdom. I’m sure the imps of Satan would rejoice if they could successfully prove that the church of Christ is a sect like all the sects. We accept as a matter of our faith, only what the Bible teaches. This course makes us a peculiar people, which, that alone can be pleasing to our Lord.

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WE ARE LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS

Douglas Hoff

Mention “the last days” or “the end time” and some people get very excited. Fear fills the hearts of some while a sense of expectation comes to others. Misunderstanding about this important Bible topic causes these different reactions. To some, the “the last days” suggests the imminent return of Jesus Christ and judgment upon mankind.

Those who believe and obey God’s word have nothing to fear about these events. On the contrary, the Bible calls the glorious appearing of Jesus the Christian’s “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13). Indeed, it is something to be desired. It will be the time when God’s servants shall receive their eternal reward. Some, however, dread the appearing of Jesus Christ since they know they are unprepared for the judgment day. These people probably have heard tales of the great tribulation and the battle of Armageddon. Not knowing exactly what to expect they fear such events.

What does the Bible mean by “the

last days?” What will occur during “the last time” and what should it mean to the child of God? The best way to answer these questions is to let the Bible speak for itself.

The book of Hebrews begins by telling us “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...” (Heb. 1:1,2). When did God speak to “us” by Jesus? According to the writer of Hebrews it was in these last days. Jesus taught the Father’s will during his earthly ministry (John 7:16,17). Yet, the writer of Hebrews informs his readers that God communicated His will to mankind during these last days. All scripture was given by inspiration of God (II Tim. 3:16). The writer of Hebrews was an inspired penman giving us divine revelation. From his perspective, God was still speaking through his Son in those last days (cf. John 14:26; 16:12-15). This is a reference to the time Hebrews was being written. The book of Hebrews

was written years after the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus back to heaven. The inescapable conclusion is that the “last days” began in the first century!

The second chapter of the book of Acts provides another proof of this fact. On the day of Pentecost after Jesus ascended, Peter and the other apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). Peter began explaining to the people what was happening. He told them that their speaking in tongues was a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Peter said, “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:16,17). Peter said the events of that day were in “the last days.” This explanation needs to be accepted for the simple truth it presents. Not only did the writer of Hebrews live in the

last days but so did Peter. On that important day, nearly two thousand years ago, the church came into existence (Acts 2:47). From that time forward Christians have been living in the last days.

The apostle John gave his readers an interesting warning in his first letter. He told them, “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time” (I John 2:18). John wanted Christians to be on guard against the errors of false teachers who taught things contrary to the doctrine of Christ. He said that some were even denying Jesus came in the flesh. Such teachers were set against the will of Christ. This is why these people were called antichrists. John said their existence proved it was the last time.

John was in total harmony with the statement of Paul found in II Timothy 3:1-5. Paul wrote, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” Both John and Paul were talking about conditions that existed in their day. Saying these warnings only apply to the time shortly before the world ends is a gross perversion of God’s word. To be fair though, the last time does include the time when Jesus comes again. Peter said the Christian’s eternal inheritance (i.e., salvation) will be revealed in the last time (I Peter 1:5).

Jude acknowledged that mockers would be plentiful in the last time. He wrote, “But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts” (Jude 17,18). One apostle in particular who spoke about such mockers was Peter. He said, “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of

his coming” (II Peter 3:3,4a)? Peter wrote those words urging his readers to be on guard and to remember the warnings previously uttered by the apostles and prophets.

Many people have been deceived into thinking that the Bible’s “last days” or “last time” is a special period of abounding wickedness and great tribulation immediately preceding the return of Jesus Christ. Paul did say that perilous times shall come but he was referring to the church age just as all the New Testament writers did.

The last days began almost 2,000 years ago and will last until the end of time. They are called the last days for a good reason. God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the

world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained...” (Acts 17:31). That means time is running out for this world. When Jesus comes back, this sin-filled world and every sinner will be destroyed with fire. Each day that goes by takes us one day closer to the end of this age.

The only time man can be saved is NOW (II Cor. 6:2). There will be no chance for salvation after death or the Lord’s return (Luke 16:19-31). The Bible tells us, “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). Do you need to obey the Gospel? If so, do it now while you still have the opportunity (II Thess. 1:7-9).

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The Twig and The Tree...

(Continued from page 77)

of us realize. There is no calling these people back to repentance, they have reached the point of no return. When they claim to be “guided by the Holy Spirit” in opposition to the truth that has been revealed by the Holy Spirit, by what means can they be reached? It is obvious that this entire association of apostates has little regard for God’s word. They are indeed the blind leaders of the blind. Jesus said, “Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matt. 15:14).

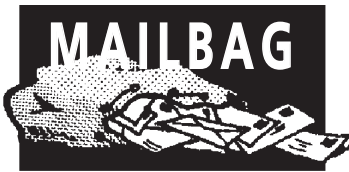
The unforgivable sin is the rejection of the revelation of the Holy Spirit. “Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men” (Matt. 12:31). The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation but when that power is rejected, there remains no other power to save (Rom. 1:16).

Many congregations today are the frog in the water and the temperature is gradually rising and they are almost cooked. If this doesn’t open their eyes to the hot water they are in, nothing will. What concerned parent would pay to have their child to sit at the feet of such men? “Those who play with fire are sure to get burned!

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

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the efforts you all have given to spread the Gospel of God through *Seek The Old Paths*. Continue the good work. May the grace of God be with us always. God bless America. God bless us all. In Christ's name" ...**Corazon G. Santiago, Los Angeles, CA.** "I really appreciate the user friendly nature of your website" ...**Dan Boren, Roscoe, TX.** "Please remove me from the mailing list of STOP. Thank you" ...**Dennis Sargent, Long Bottom, OH.** "Gentlemen, I am listening to your radio broadcast here in Grand Prairie, Texas with Live365 and Winamp. I am a member of the church of Christ and enjoy sound Gospel preaching and the Gospel songs. I listen quite often. I especially enjoy the singing" ...**James Flud.** [NOTE: you can hear our (East End Church of Christ, McMinnville, TN) radio broadcast 24/7 at www.pioneerpreachers.com] "I recently read the magazine while vacationing in Texas and would like to subscribe or be put on your mailing list" ...**Tom Reed, Springfield, TN.** "I received STOP for a long time. I moved and lost it and would like to receive it again" ...**Gary Price, Murray, KY.** "I saw a copy of your 'Response to Arguments in Defense Of Instrumental Music' in July 07. It was one of the best articles I've seen on this subject. Please send your publication" ...**Teddy Reed, Venus, TX.** "I was wondering if I could subscribe to *Seek The Old Paths*. I was attending a church that received them but I moved to Georgia and the church I attend does not get them. My mother brought me one on her visit and I noticed that you could subscribe to it. If you would please send it to me that would be great" ...**John and Alaina Bennett, Savannah, GA.** I am a current subscriber of your excellent publication STOP and enjoy it immensely. I have talked to several of my brothers and sisters about your publication and some have requested that I submit their names for future issues. Again thank you for your sound work for the Lord" ...**Art Ostrander.** "Thank you for my subscription" ...**Scott & Charlotte Childs, Highland, MI.**

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