

SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" — John 5:39.



"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" — Acts 17:11.

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

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THREE PHASES OF DIGRESSION

More than twenty five years ago I wrote something on this subject because the sponsoring church arrangement, the church supported benevolent institutions, church supported colleges, church funded play-grounds and "fellowship" banquet halls, and church supported social gospel centers had made an invasion into churches of Christ all over the country. This tide of digression had taken a heavy toll just as the instrument of music and the missionary society issues had done nearly one hundred years before. I did not believe digression was weakening then, and I do not believe it is dying now. Satan is not relinquishing his hold on religious thinking, and his ministers will continue every effort to pervert the truth in this generation. The power and tactics of digression must not be underestimated now; the methods of approach must be understood. It seems pertinent to present these thoughts again.

By digression is meant to turn aside from, a departure from the faith or to deviate from the truth. Paul put it this way: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4: 3, 4).

Digression has taken many forms since the church was established by the Lord. Sometimes it involves adding to the word, sometimes taking from the word, and sometimes perverting the word to promote unscriptural

practices. History will bear out the fact that digression from the truth has taken three well defined steps: Aggression, Ridicule, and Compromise.

1. **Aggression.** Digression begins by teaching something contrary to the truth. Its roots are in the hearts of men who are seeking something new and different from the faith once delivered. Such new doctrines soon take the characteristic of aggression. These false teachers boldly advocate their strange doctrine which is not taught in the word of God. They are content only when they have pressed their new teaching to the fracturing of peace and unity among brethren. "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15: 9). This is usually taught with great ardor and determination. These are they "... whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (Titus 1: 11). They aggressively teach those things "which they ought not." Sometimes elders are the source of much of this sort of discord. "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20: 30). Those who followed Paul were aggressive in teaching false doctrines to corrupt the minds of the disciples. "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2: 4, 5). At the introduction of any false doctrine we can expect it to be aggressively taught. It will be urged upon the church as an important belief in being **loyal** to Christ.

2. **Ridicule.** There are always those who will not be turned from the faith, and who will fight against all forms of digression. The second phase in digression is to ridicule those who oppose the false doctrine. All sorts of names will be used to prejudice people, all forms of evasive quibbles will be used to divert attention from the issue, and all forms of mockery will be employed to try to stop the opposition. Much of this has been seen in recent years concerning the present issues. Sanballat and Tobiah mocked Nehemiah and those Jews who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, and they ridiculed their efforts by pointing out how weak they were (Neh. 4: 1-3).

Ridicule attempts to answer arguments, but it never does to those who sincerely seek truth. Ridicule has an effect upon some because they cannot stand it.

3. **Compromise.** The time always comes when ridicule does not convince; in fact, in time it usually turns the people from their unworthy cause to seek the truth. It is at this point that those in digression will cry that they are the peace-loving and fellow-seeking children of God. They take the role of persecuted people who are misunderstood and misrepresented. Again and again I have taken the very words of a promoter of some digressive doctrine and had him cry, "You have misunderstood and misrepresented me." No false teacher can stand up under the fire of truth, and when his digressive teaching has been answered and his ridicule exposed, he will try for a compromise somewhere between truth and his stand. If this is rejected, as it must be, he will play the persecuted martyr who stands for truth and unity and is rejected.

There can be no compromise with truth on any issue. Ridicule does not make or answer arguments; it simply tends to cloud the real issue and disturb the seekers for truth.

Digression may be at work in reference to the organization of the local church, in the work of the church, in the public and private worship to God, and in the life of one trying to walk in righteousness before God. It must be opposed with all our might. When digression is unsuccessful in its efforts in a locality, it then turns to compromise and talks of "peace" and "unity." Only the sword of the Spirit will bring real peace and unity.

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Editorial

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JESUS, THE PREACHER

"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 4: 17). "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. . ." (Mt. 4: 23). Preaching occupied a central place in the ministry of Jesus. He was ever the preacher: in the synagogues, on the mountains, by the seaside, from village to village, at the temple, in the homes of publicans, at a well in Samaria. He drew after him unbelievably large crowds until some of his preaching offended some of his hearers. Perhaps it will help those of us who preach, and those who listen to preachers to consider some of the characteristics of the preaching of Jesus.

His preaching was **authoritative**. At the end of the sermon on the mount, the people were "astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes" (Mt. 7: 28-29). All the power of heaven was behind what he said. There was certainty about his preaching. Paul told Titus that he should "speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority" (Titus 2: 15). When a man preaches truth, he had the backing of heaven and he can speak with all boldness and assurance.

His preaching was **urgent**. He was sent and ordained of heaven "to preach good tidings to the poor.. to proclaim release to the captives.. to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk. 4: 16-21). He had an urgent proclamation to make. His preaching was a **cry**. "Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught..." (Jno. 7: 28). "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (Jno. 7: 37). He lifted up his voice to be heard. There was urgency in his message and his tone. It was arresting, compelling.

His preaching was **instructive**. "He opened his mouth and taught them" (Mt. 5: 2). To teach is to give instruction, to impart information. He taught in parables so the spiritually inclined would "know the mysteries of the kingdom" (Lk. 8: 10). At other times, he taught them "plainly" and without proverb. "His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou earnest forth from God" (Jno. 16: 29-30). Jesus did not preach simply to fill up time.

The people were so ignorant of the will of God. He came to teach them. He did not come with warmed-over

platitudes and offer meaningless pep talks. The message of heaven was in his heart and on his tongue and those who heard him learned something.

His preaching was **compassionate**. While he came to "seek and save" the lost, he took no delight in the misery suffered by those entangled in sin. "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest" (Mt. 9: 36-38). The spiritual plight of the people constantly kept before the Son of God the reason for his coming. Without condoning the sin of adultery ("Go and sin no more"), Jesus was gentle with the woman taken in adultery. While reminding the woman at the well that she had lived an immoral life, and the man she was living with then was not her husband, Jesus explained to her about the water of life and answered her question about worship. He had time for Zacchaeus, interrupted his trip to Jerusalem and went home with him. He took time for Nicodemus who came at night. He was not too busy for the children. He was grieved when the rich young ruler, who was so close to the kingdom, turned and walked away. Even in the agony of the cross he looked down upon his tormentors and said "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do. "

It is very easy for those of us who preach to become callous and insensitive to the longings of human hearts and to the abject spiritual misery of those ensnared by Satan. Paul was as "gentle" with the Thessalonians as a nurse with her own children (1 Thes. 2: 7). It is one thing to tell people they are lost and on the way to hell, and something else to leave the impression that we are glad.

The preaching of Jesus was vehement at times. He reserved his strongest denunciations for the pious frauds of his day. He was unsparing with the hypocritical sectarians of that age who were so presumptuous that they made their own traditions equal to the commandment of God. To them he said "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mt. 15: 7-9). Later in that context, the disciples informed him that he had offended the Pharisees (v. 12). Jesus said "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (vv. 13-14). The most severe language of all is found in Matthew 23 as he pronounced heaven's woe upon the religious leaders of the Jews who repudiated the Messiah of their own expectation, based on the prophetic scriptures which they knew, but scorned. Repeatedly he called them "hypocrites." He referred to them as "fools and blind," said they devoured widows houses, prayed in pretense to be seen of men, were inwardly filled with corruption, were "serpents" and destined for the "damnation of hell." Yet, the most severe preaching of all ended with

Jesus weeping over Jerusalem and the fate which awaited it when its house would be left desolate (Mt. 23: 37-38). He had tried to save them, but they would not come to him.

The preaching of Jesus was **demanding**. From the first, he demanded repentance. Later he would charge his disciples to preach "repentance and remission of sins, beginning at Jerusalem" (Lk. 24: 47). He demanded self-denial as a prerequisite to discipleship (Mt. 16: 24). **You** cannot be "number one" and be the Lord's disciple. **You** will give him **first** place or he will have **no** place. You cannot place father or mother, son or daughter, brother or sister, before him (Mt. 10: 37). You must present your body as a living sacrifice, totally devoted to him, and even be willing, if necessary, to put your life on the line rather than give up the faith (Rom. 12: 1; Rev. 2: 10).

Preaching which asks nothing will get nothing. Rather than deciding that the choices are too hard for people to make, let us faithfully preach the truth, challenge the hearers to meet the demands of truth, whatever they may be. All the while, let us warn of the horrors of hell and the bliss of heaven.

The preaching of Jesus had a **common touch**. "And the common people heard him gladly" (Mk. 12: 37). He touched the sensitive areas of human existence. He was not an inaccessible image upon a marble slab. He was equally at home with fishermen, farmers, carpenters, merchants, tax collectors and with children. He spoke their language. No, he did not bring the message to the level of the coarse and profane, but in words they all understood, he elevated the thinking of the common people to the realm of the sublime.

Our preaching must not be so stilted that in our effort to impress the sophisticates of this world we shoot over the heads of the common people and fail to touch their hearts with heaven's message. Neither should we cheapen the message by phrasing it in the bizarre language of some sub-culture where words have double or perverted meanings. There is a dignity and a stateliness about the gospel. But there is also a simple charm about it, too.

Would you take twenty minutes and read the sermon on the mount? That is real preaching, folks. You will understand it. Yet you can spend the rest of your life probing into the profundity of it. And it will take the rest of your days to put it into practice in the situations of your life.

Jesus was a preacher. And what a preacher! No wonder the temple guards came back that time and said "Never man spake as this man." We would all be better preachers, and better hearers of preachers if we would give more attention to **what** Jesus preached and **how** he went about it.

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LEARNING FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Truth often lies between extremes. So it is with assessing the Old Testament. On the one hand are those who continue to bind it. Many think people today are still under the ten commandments. Instrumental music in worship, a separate priesthood, tithing, and numerous other practices are retained from that bygone era. Paul warns that going back to the law for justification puts us under obligation to keep the whole law, severs us from Christ, and makes us fall from grace (Gal. 5: 2-4). The opposite extreme is to recognize that the Law has been taken away, but erroneously conclude there is no real value in studying the Old Testament any longer.

"For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15: 3). Everything God has revealed has a purpose; there is something to be learned. I am thankful for the opportunity to write under this heading, to call attention to people and events of old with modern applications. Let us begin with a look at different ways New Testament writers used the Old Testament.

1. Character studies. Hebrew 11 briefly reviews ten O. T. characters to show us what faith is and how it acts. The author then adds that many others could have been included. James commended the patience of the prophets and Job (5: 10, 11). Jesus contrasted both the men of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba with His generation (Mt. 12: 41, 42). Even wicked characters can teach valuable lessons. Jude recalled the sins of Cain, Balaam, and Korah (v. 11). Esau's life is summarized in Heb. 12. He is set forth as what we must not be.

2. Events as examples. Some of the brethren at Corinth saw no danger in eating meat sacrificed to idols. Paul skillfully used Israel's conduct at Mt. Sinai to document how such eating could lead to other offenses. Beyond that, their overall wilderness experience demonstrates how great spiritual privileges are offset by disobedience (1 Cor. 10: 1-13). This was written to warn us. Conversely, Peter employed the deliverances of Noah and Lot as testimony to God's desire and ability to rescue the godly from temptation (2 Pet. 2: 4-9). This comforts us.

3. Fulfilled prophecy. There is no greater faith-building exercise than reading the prophets and tracking the fulfillment of their predictions in Jesus and His kingdom. All four gospel writers quote prophecy. Paul reasoned from the Scriptures, both in his preaching and

in his letters. Peter affirmed the prophets "were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you" (1 Pet. 2: 12). "All the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days" (Acts 3: 24).

4. Types and shadows. Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (Mt. 5: 17). Both made predictions: the Prophets in word, the Law in symbols. Much of the old Jewish religious system — the tabernacle service, the sacrifices, the priestly functions — pointed to what Jesus would accomplish for all mankind. They were shadows of things to come (Col. 2: 17). Like the prophecies, they had to be fulfilled before the Law could be taken away.

Many O. T. characters are likened to Christ in one way or another: Adam, Melchizedek, Moses, Aaron, and David are a few. Some were like Him in their position; others, in things they did.

A word of caution here. Something more than a resemblance is needed before we designate a thing a type. Some have let their imaginations run wild, seeing almost every O. T. person or event as typifying something. It is fine to draw parallels, but let us keep "typology" to those things which were designed by God to foreshadow, to prepare for that which was to come. A good rule is to limit types to those things so designated by inspired writers.

5. Language. N. T. writers and speakers sometimes borrowed O. T. language to express their thoughts. Peter used God's designations of Israel in Ex. 19 and the symbolic names of Hosea's children to tell us who we are (1 Pet. 2: 9, 10). Paul wrote that God will render to every man according to his deeds, utilizing David's expression (Ps. 62: 12). Many of our hymns employ the rich phrases of the Psalms and the Prophets. These become more meaningful as we learn their original setting.

6. Practical wisdom. Jesus praised the Queen of Sheba for traveling to hear Solomon's wisdom. It is a worthwhile journey. His proverbs are "words of the wise on the ways of the world." Ecclesiastes depicts the struggle to find happiness and meaning in life. These 3,000-year-old books are quite up-to-date!

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ANTIOCH — THE POWER OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Acts chapter seven details the death of Stephen and presents the turning point in the history of God's church. Until now the Gospel has been limited to the Jerusalem Jews, but following Stephen's martyrdom that all changed. It was the turning point in the accomplishment of God's global mission for the kingdom. "And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria... Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word" (Acts 8: 1, 4). **"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation..."** was on the road to fulfillment. As a result, the story of salvation spread, thousands obeyed and new congregations of dedicated disciples were born through-out the Roman world.

Antioch. "So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch..." (Acts 11: 19). What follows in the text of Acts 11 is one of the greatest testimonies to what God can do with committed people. We've seen their zeal, their commitment to teaching, and their power in the face of opposition. Now look with me at what is perhaps the most remembered feature of this New Testament church: **"... the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."** (Acts 11: 26b).

They Wore A Proud Name

There are four points about this name we should note: **1. It was a new name.** "The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." Please observe that it was the disciples who were called "Christians" and not the church as a body. There is no place in New Testament scripture where the church is ever referred to as the "Christian Church." It was a term applied to disciples and described their **individual** allegiance to Jesus. It is never used to describe the church as a body.

And where did this new name originate? Not a few scholars point to the use of "Christian" as first given by the enemies of the Cross as a label of scorn for the followers of Christ. True, the term was later used as a title of contempt and ridicule by non-believers, but the origin of that name came from a higher source.

"And you will be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will designate" (Isaiah

62: 2b). Following Isaiah 61 and the prophetic utterance of the Messiah's coming (Isa. 61: 1-3) we now see that in that day God's people will have a new name "which the mouth of the Lord will designate" (62: 2). This new name would be bestowed upon the followers of the Messiah by God Himself.

2. **It was a prophesied name.** Isaiah lists four aspects of this new designation.

a. "You will be called by a new name." The name "Christian" was the ONLY name by which followers of Christ were called that was new. The terms "brethren," "believers," "disciples," "children of God," and "saints" were not new. They were used to describe God's own prior to Christ's coming. But the name "Christian" was new and was inclusive of all other names. A Christian is a "believer," "disciple," "brother," "child of God," and a "saint." It is the one **all inclusive term** describing not only a relationship with God but how that relationship is made possible.

b. When the "nations see your righteousness and glory." This new name would be given at a time when salvation would burn like a torch from Zion, (Isa. 62: 1). In Acts 10 the gospel message shed it's light upon the Gentiles prompting Peter to announce, "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears him and does what is right is welcome to Him" (Acts 10: 34-35). Then in the next chapter, and for the first time, the gospel goes to the Gentiles in mass resulting in large scale conversions to Christ. "And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch..."

c. "Which the mouth of the Lord will designate." It was a name given by God to the followers of the Messiah.

d. It will be an "everlasting name which will not be cut off" (Isa. 56: 5). In Ephesians 3: 14-15, Paul writes, "For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name..." I believe that "every family" has reference to all the redeemed, the family of God. All those who are redeemed by Jesus Christ are called by a God-given name! That name is the name of "Christ." Thus, the name "Christian" represents the fullness of God's eternal plan to redeem man and that name is just as everlasting as the salvation it signifies.

3. It was a persecuted name. The fact that they were called Christians first in Antioch necessarily implies that they were called by that name in other places afterwards (Yes, there are such things as necessary inferences!) And, there is no doubt that as that name began to be more commonly used it was adopted by unbelievers as a title of scorn. ("Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?" James 2: 7).

It is impossible for you and me to comprehend what our first century brethren endured for a name that we tend to take for granted. For example, in 1 Cor. 7: 7-8 Paul discourages marriage among believers. Why? It wasn't that he had a low view of marriage at all. But, rather, it was due to the pressures being exerted upon

followers of Christ. It was tough enough facing the fire of persecution alone: "Renounce your faith or die!" How unbearable it would be to have the sword laid upon the neck of a beloved wife or child and hear those awful words of ultimatum. Paul said, I'm trying to spare you the anguish!" We don't realize what they endured.

Sure, it gets to me sometimes... When I see people making a claim to that name acting as if it is the greatest of impositions to worship consistently with the saints or to make financial sacrifices or to give their Bible classes their very best — yes, it gets to me. Listen, our brothers and sisters in Antioch DIED for the cause we take for granted! Why, do you feel the passion flowing from the pen of Paul when he says, "Greet one another with a holy kiss?" Because first century saints didn't know if they would ever see each other again! Brethren, when we thank God that we can meet without fear of harm, don't throw that out as a meaningless cliché! Say "A-MEN!" to that. Our Antioch brethren could not pray that prayer!

4. **It was a definitive name.** The name "Christian" is only used three times in the New Testament text and, yet, on each occasion we learn something different about those qualified to wear it.

a. A Christian is a disciple (Acts 11: 26). The Antioch brethren were willing to submit to the Lordship of the Master. Only those willing to walk according to His discipline can be His disciples and only His disciples can be Christians.

b. A Christian is a persuaded person (Acts 26: 28). Usually we don't think much is happening when a person makes the good confession (1 Tim. 6: 12). But EVERY- THING IS HAPPENING! That confession recognizes the authority and rule of Jesus Christ. You can't be a Christian without it. And it changes everything.

c. A Christian glorifies God above all else (1 Pet. 4: 16). The Antioch faithful were not ashamed of that name. They used it for heaven's glorification. God help us to have the same feeling for that name as they did. Help us to understand that it was divinely given and that those who wore it first, wore it proudly. The words of Mrs. Frank A. Breck ring with a potent passion:

"Shall I crucify my Savior,
When for me He bore such loss?
Shall I put to shame my Savior?
Can I nail Him to the cross?"

You crucify Jesus every time you reject the invitation to wear His name or, as one already wearing it, you gain a sense of embarrassment when others find out your allegiance. The point of our study comes down to this: If you're going to wear that name then WEAR IT! LIFT UP YOUR HEAD, TAKE HOLD OF HIS HAND, GET A FIRM GRIP AND WALK WITH THE MASTER AND NEVER, NEVER, NEVER LOOK BACK! It's the legacy of Antioch. Our study continues...

**READ YOUR
BIBLE TODAY**

THE DOMITIAN PERSECUTION

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Elsewhere in this issue of STS you will find an article by Ferrell Jenkins in response to this article. I ask that you read and carefully consider the material he has submitted.

I am sure this study of THE DOMITIAN PERSECUTION comes as a surprise especially since Domitian has been billed as a great persecutor of Christians, both in print and in the pulpit, by students of the book of Revelation. This has been proclaimed as a proven fact and for someone now to question whether it ever occurred must be surprising.

Two facts shall evolve from this study to seize your interest. First, you will learn there is no evidence, from sources contemporary with Domitian, documenting a persecution directed by him in any way against Christians much less that he slew many thousands, bathing the empire in their blood, as taught by many zealous students of the book of Revelation today. Second, you will learn that the strongest case that can be made for a Domitian persecution is that there MAY have been one.

My Position

My position in this exchange should not be misunderstood. It is not my place to prove that Domitian did not persecute Christians. The obligation of proof is upon those who advocate the Great Domitian Persecution. I readily admit that he MAY have persecuted some Christians, however, neither you nor I have the right to charge him with slaying many thousands and bathing the empire in their blood upon the premise of what he MAY have done. It is admitted that the silence of history does not prove Domitian did not persecute Christians but, at the same time, it must be recognized that the silence of history does not prove he persecuted them either. **We have no right to build a case against him without evidence.**

When discussing what MAY have been, we must be careful not to presumptuously assert as fact what MAY have occurred. One can readily relate to this problem by considering the headline of a recent newspaper article. The headline stated, "BLACK HOLES MAY FORM CORE OF 2 NEIGHBORING GALAZIES." This statement necessarily implies three things: (1) That scientists do not know whether black holes form the core for the neighboring galaxies: (2) that scientists only deem their conclusions theoretically possible while at the same time admitting (3) the possibility there is another plausible explanation. However, if the word MAY is dropped from the headline, that which was stated as a possibility has been made a fact. This is precisely what

has been done in reference to Domitian. Men have looked at Domitians' nature, his self-deification and the recorded cruelty directed toward those who opposed him and have concluded that, since Christians would surely have been in conflict with all of this, he must have persecuted them. Without question, the time would have been ripe for a persecution during the last two years of his reign, but this does not mean a persecution took place. The strongest case that can be made for a persecution without presumption is to say there MAY have been one. Recognizing this problem many historians simply say, "Domitian MAY have persecuted Christians."¹

The Evidence

I have observed the statement more than once in publications and in the pulpit that persecution against Christians reached its zenith during Domitian's reign. Until three years ago, I never questioned this. As far as I was concerned it was true but I tell you now, without fear of contradiction, this statement is false. Even IF Domitian was guilty of persecuting Christians the statement is false. The persecution against Christians reached its height under Diocletian (284-305 AD) two hundred years later.

Note carefully the following statements often quoted which are also false. "Domitian instituted a persecution against Christians on the charge of atheism, that is perhaps, refusal to participate in emperor worship. It was short, but extremely violent. Many thousands were slain in Rome and Italy, among them Flavius Clemens, a cousin of the Emperor, and his wife, Flavia Domitilla banished."² While Suetonius, the Roman historian, has recorded the death of Clemens and the banishment of Domitilla by Domitian, he does not record that they suffered because they were Christians, nor does he record the death of any others because of their being Christians. The quoted statement is without historical substance.

"Domitian (c. 81-96) is the emperor who has gone down in history as the one who bathed the empire in the blood of the Christians."³ While it is true historians centuries after the fact have billed Domitian as a bloody persecutor of Christians, there is no evidence from the historians contemporary with his reign that would convict him of directing a persecution against them.

There was no persecution before, or after him to compare to that of his reign... Nero's persecution was confined mainly to Rome, while Domitian's persecution was expanded to the whole of Asia Minor."⁴ There is no historical evidence of any truth in these statements.

In fact there is no literary record to substantiate a persecution of any kind by Domitian against Christians.⁵ Neither Tacitus, Suetonius nor Pliny, all of whom resided in Rome (Tacitus and Pliny were members of the Roman Senate during Domitian's reign),⁶ leave any record of any kind of campaign against Christians. This would appear strange since Tacitus and Suetonius both left a record of Nero's persecution against Christians. Would not a persecution directed against Christians of the magnitude described above demand a place in the historical records of these and other writers? And why

was Pliny, who was a member of the Senate during the reign of Domitian, ignorant of the precise crimes Christians were guilty of and how they were to be convicted and punished since such trials of Christians would have taken place in the Senate? He wrote Trajan, his emperor, "I have never taken part in trials (cognitiones) of Christians; consequently I do not know the precedents regarding the question of punishment or the nature of the inquisition."⁸ How could a man of his political background have been so ignorant of what to do to Christians if there had been a sustained persecution directed against them during the reign of Domitian?

The Earliest Historical Record

The earliest historical record of a persecution under Domitian by either secular or church historian is 75 years after the fact.⁹ In order to date the record that soon after Domitian's reign, we must give credibility to Melito and Hegesippus, the two sources cited by Eusebius in his "Ecclesiastical History." Using these two men as sources, Eusebius (264-350 AD) said of Domitian, "He was the second that raised a persecution against us."¹⁰ He said this at least 200 years after the reign of Domitian. While Eusebius speaks of "martyrdoms" during the reign of Domitian,¹¹ he does not cite a single case of a Christian dying as a result of such a persecution. This is remarkable since Origen (185-254 AD) relates that only a few, "whose number could be easily enumerated,"¹² had died for the sake of Christianity up to his time. He recorded this a good 50 years before Eusebius penned his history. Surely, if their number could be easily enumerated, Eusebius could have named one Christian who died for the cause of Christ under Domitian. His failure to name Christian martyrs tends to argue against a persecution under Domitian.

The Roman History of Cassius Dio, composed between the years 210 and 229 AD,¹³ is often relied upon as a source for documenting a persecution by Domitian against Christians. He wrote, "And the same year Domitian slew among many others Flavius Clemens the consul, though he was a cousin and had to wife Flavia Domitilla, who was also a relative of the emperor. The complaint brought against them both was that of atheism, under which many others who drifted into Jewish ways were condemned. Some of these were killed and the remainder were at least deprived of their property. Domitilla was merely banished to Pandateria..."¹⁴

Before we get too excited about the content of this statement we would be wise to consider that the part of Dio's history which described Domitian's reign is preserved for us only in what at best can be described as "a fairly reliable" abridgement made by Xiphilinus, a monk of the eleventh century.¹⁵ There are no early reproductions of this part of Dio's history to draw on. It should also be observed that even if we give this portion of the record credibility, Dio does not mention any persecution of Christians. While it is true Christians could have been charged as atheist, it is also true that the Jews and others who refused Domitian's self-

proclaimed deity would have likewise been so charged.¹⁶ In this specific case, those charged with atheism are said to be following Jewish ways. While Christians MAY be associated with the Jews to some degree, it is not necessary to conclude that Christians are the subjects of the persecution described in Dio's history. They MAY be but, at the same time, they MAY NOT be the subjects of the persecution described. Again, we **cannot** charge Domitian **upon** the basis of what **MAY** have been.

Tertullian, 160-220 AD, is drawn upon by Eusebius to prove a persecution by Domitian against Christians,¹⁷ yet in none of his statement does Tertullian accuse Domitian of killing Christians. The source for Tertullian's statement is unknown though many scholars believe he drew from Melito as did Eusebius.¹⁸ If this is true, Melito again is the earliest source we have for a Domitian Persecution. He lived approximately 75 years after the reign of Domitian.

In an attempt to find evidence of a persecution by Domitian from contemporary sources, some have gone so far as to argue that Clement of Rome in his first epistle, addressed to the Corinthians, makes reference to a persecution under Domitian when he spoke of "sudden and repeated calamities and adversities" which had come upon the Roman church.¹⁹ This conclusion is totally unreasonable because (1) no one knows who Clement of Rome was or when he lived, and (2) no one knows the identity of the "sudden and repeated calamities and adversities." Reasoning on the matter usually runs this way. "The sudden and repeated calamities and adversities evidently refer to persecution under Domitian, therefore, since the epistle makes reference to the persecutions of Domitian, it must have been written following the last two years of Domitian's reign. Since the book was written following Domitian's reign. Clement of Rome must have been contemporary with Domitian." Such reasoning staggers the imagination. There is no evidence that Clement of Rome was contemporary with Domitian or that he made reference to a persecution during his reign.²⁰

In speaking of the evidence for a Domitian persecution, T. D. Barnes said, "No writer of the fifth or any subsequent century can be shown to have drawn on reliable evidence of the period before 250..."²¹ Elmer T. Merrill said, "It should be further observed that neither in Suetonius, nor in Dio, nor in any other of the pagan writers who touch upon the subject, is there the slightest intimation that Domitian's bloody jealousy was directed against any but the leading aristocrats whom he supposed he had reason to fear, or that it ravaged at all outside the narrow circle of the Court and the Parliament. There is no indication of its extension into the provinces, or among the commonalty even in Rome. And if there had been such extension, it is altogether probable that some echo of it would be heard. There is absolute silence."²²

Conclusion

In view of this total lack of concrete evidence to support the so-called Domitian Persecution, we must ask, "how could scholarly men conscientiously teach a Domitian Persecution?" The answer probably lies in the fact that sincere men honestly believed the Bible identified Domitian as a persecutor, therefore, they felt justified in

proclaiming him as such.²³ If they were wrong in their biblical interpretation, however, they would likewise be wrong in their historical conclusions. The fact that history does not substantiate their biblical claims shows that their interpretation of scripture is in error. Neither Daniel (chapter 7) nor Revelation (chapters 13 & 17), the texts usually used to support the Domitian theory,²⁴ specifically identify with Domitian though many modern day biblical students teach that they do. This flaw in biblical interpretation apparently has led to a flaw in historical interpretation as well.

Whether Domitian persecuted Christians or not does not matter to this biblical student nor does it affect his understanding of the books of Daniel and Revelation. If Domitian persecuted Christians, so be it, but let it be stated for what it really was. Let us prove by concrete evidence what took place and let us not assume anything. Many have been greatly overstating the case against Domitian and this needs to be rectified.

Footnotes

¹ Albino Gargetti, **A History of the Roman Empire**, p. 285

Jerome Carcopino, **Daily Life In Ancient Rome**, p. 137

² Henry H. Halley, **Bible Handbook**, p. 860

³ Ray Summers, **Worthy Is The Lamb**, p. 83

⁴ Ken Butterworth & John Shaver, **The Bible Way** (March-April 1983), p. 4

⁵ James Moffett, **The Expositor's Greek Testament**, Vol. 5, p. 311

Merril C. Tenney, **New Testament Survey**, revision by Walter M. Dunnnett, pp. 10-11

Stewart Perowne, **Caesars and Saints**, pp. 83-84

⁶ Elmer T. Merrill, **Essays In Early Christian History**, p. 150

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 172

⁸ F. F. Bruce, **New Testament History**, p. 423

⁹ Merrill, p. 161

¹⁰ Eusebius, **Church History, III**, Chapter 176

¹¹ *Ibid*, III, Chapter 18

¹² Origen, **Contra Celsum**, 111: 8

¹³ Leon Hardy Canfield, **The Early Persecutions of The Christians**, p. 166

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 167

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 166; Merrill, p. 152

¹⁶ Merrill, pp. 155-157

¹⁷ Eusebius, **III**, Chapter 22

¹⁸ T. D. Barnes, **Early Christianity and The Roman Empire**, p. 32

Merrill, p. 163

¹⁹ Clement of Rome, **First Letter To The Corinthians**, 1:1

Cf. **Apocalypse of John** by Beckweth, p. 204

²⁰ Merrill, pp. 160-161, 207-241

²¹ Barnes, p. 32

²² Merrill, p. 157

²³ *Ibid*, pp. 158-159; Canfield, p. 162

²⁴ Jim McGuiggan, **Book of Daniel**, pp. 108-109; **The Book of Revelation**, pp. 184-185

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THE DOMITIANIC PERSECUTION (A RESPONSE)

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"The persecution of Domitian burned itself ineradicably into the memory of history; it may be doubted by the critic, but not by the historian... So strong and early a tradition as that which constitutes Domitian the second great persecutor cannot be discredited without wrecking the foundations of ancient history. Those who discredit it must, to be consistent, resolve to dismiss nine-tenths of what appears in books as ancient history, including most that is interesting and valuable."¹

Ogden Demands Too Much

In the article by my long-time friend and brother, Art Ogden, demand is constantly made for evidence "contemporary" with Domitian which states that the emperor persecuted Christians. To ask for this is to request too much. Unbelievers make much of the fact that we have very few references to Jesus and the church from sources outside the New Testament. From the first century we have only a few references in Josephus (written more than 60 years after the event, Tacitus (more than 50 years after the event mentioned), and possibly Suetonius (about 70 years after the event he describes)²

The earliest evidence for a Neronian persecution of Christians in A. D. 64 comes from the writings of Tacitus (A. D. 115), **more than 50 years after the event!** Art accepts this testimony, but rejects similar evidence regarding Domitian. And in the case of Nero he had **no evidence of any persecution of Christians in Asia Minor.** If Art were in the affirmative in this exchange he would have to affirm a Neronian persecution in the same way I seek to establish a persecution under Domitian.

Art rejects the testimony of pagan historians and the so-called "Church Fathers" who wrote 75 or more years after the reign of Domitian. When one rejects the testimony of these writers regarding the Domitianic persecution he will soon find himself way out on a limb which is about to be sawed off.

When browsing through the writings of the Christians of the second century and afterwards I feel uncomfortable. I don't like what I read, and would not want to be identified with one of those churches. One can see that many departures from the apostolic practices were already under way. Having said this, we must express our debt to these men. It is they who provide our earliest references to the New Testament books. The **patristic** evidence is frequently earlier than the **manuscript** evidence. Unless their testimony contradicts the internal evidence we have no valid reason for rejecting it.³

The Book of Revelation

Let us use the book of Revelation as an example. The post-apostolic writers provide information not contained in Revelation. In addition to details about the Domitianic persecution they tell the **date of composition and the specific identification of the author.**

Let no one say "But **I** have the book of Revelation itself." The earliest historical allusion to the book is in the writings of Justin Martyr who died in A. D. 165.⁴ According to Art, that would be 100 years after Revelation was written! The earliest fragments of papyrus manuscripts of the book date from the third century (p. 16, p 47, p 65). The first complete manuscript is Codex Sinaiticus of the fourth century. The earliest reference to Revelation as "Scripture" is quoted from the Letter of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne in Gaul to the churches of Asia Minor and Phrygia. But for this we must depend on Eusebius.⁵ Earlier writers such as Papias, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen show an acquaintance with the Apocalypse.⁶

Overstatement of the Persecution

The persecution by Domitian has been exaggerated in numerous sources, and it is appropriate for Art to warn us about this. In material which was originally written in graduate school nearly a quarter of a century ago, I cited Summer's statement that Domitian was the emperor "who bathed the empire in the blood of the Christians."⁷ I would not use this statement today. We need not, however, swing from the extreme of overstatement to the opposite extreme of denial of persecution.

The Case for the Domitianic Persecution

1. The Book of Revelation. John was on the island of Patmos "because of (Greek: **dia**) the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 1: 9). He was a fellow-partaker in the tribulation" with those in the seven churches of Asia. Antipas had been killed at Pergamum (Rev. 2: 13). He was called the Lord's faithful witness (Greek, **martus**, from which the English word "martyr" comes).

Aside from the internal evidence which I believe sustains the conclusion that Revelation was written during or shortly after the reign of Domitian, we have the testimony of the Fathers.⁸ Irenaeus (flourished c. 175-190), as a boy in Smyrna, listened to Polycarp who had been a disciple of John. He states that the "apocalyptic vision... was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign."⁹ Adela Collins says that "the fact that he dated the book as he did, in spite of the difficulty about the apostle's age, implies that he had independent and strong evidence for the date."¹⁰ His independent evidence may well have been from the Christians of Asia Minor who knew about these things. Why would he misrepresent the matter?

Be assured that if Art had evidence like this for the Neronian date of Revelation he would be quoting it. In fact, the first source I have located which dated the Apocalypse to the time of Nero was heading in the Syriac Version of A. D. 508. That's about 440 years after the book was written!¹¹

2. Pliny. When Pliny wrote to the Emperor Trajan, about A. D. 111, for advice on how to conduct the trials for Christians in Bithynia, he stated that some Christians had quit their practice three years earlier; others many years earlier; "and a few as much as twenty-five years ago."¹² Pliny's statement suggests that their defection came about A. D. 86 during the reign of Domitian.

Albert Bell, who seeks to defend a date for Revelation in A. D. 68, points out that Pliny's statement that he had never been present for the trials of any Christians implies, "of course, that there had been such trials. And the only time in Pliny's life that they are likely to have occurred is under Domitian."¹³

3. Melito. Melito, bishop of the church in Sardis, wrote an apology to the emperor Marcus Aurelius about A. D. 175. Eusebius quotes from his work as follows: "Nero, and Domitian, alone, stimulated by certain malicious persons, showed a disposition to slander our faith..."¹⁴

4. Tertullian. Tertullian was trained as an attorney in Carthage, North Africa. In his **Apology** to Septimus Severus, written about A. D. 197, he said "**Consult your histories.** There you will find that Nero was the first to **rage with the imperial sword** against this school in the very hour of its rise in Rome." He continued, "Domitian too, who was a good deal of a Nero in **cruelty, attempted** it... soon **stopped**... restored those he had **banished**. Such are ever our **persecutors...**" [Emphasis mine, FJ]. The emperor was expected to find this information in **his histories**. Eusebius quotes Tertullian to the effect that the apostle John returned from exile on Patmos and abode at Ephesus till the reign of Trajan.¹⁵

5. Eusebius. Our most systematic church historian of the early centuries was Eusebius of Caesarea. Best known of his works is **Ecclesiastical History** (Church History) which was published about A. D. 325. Eusebius stated that Domitian was "the second that raised a persecution against us"¹⁶ He says, "In this persecution, it is handed down by tradition, that the apostle and evangelist John, who was yet living, in consequence of his testimony to the divine word, was condemned to dwell on the island of Patmos." He quotes Irenaeus, but says that "even historians that are very far from befriending our religion, have not hesitated to record this persecution and its martyrdoms in their histories." He says that Domitian persecuted some "for professing Christ," and names Flavia Domitilla.¹⁷ Whether Eusebius got this information from Dio Cassius, Brutus or some other historian he does not say here.

Space does not permit a discussion of the identity of Flavia Domitilla or Flavius Clemens, the issue of **atheotes**, and the confusion of Jews and Christians by the Roman leaders. My question is this: If these people were not Christians, why would the Christians, such as Eusebius, want to claim them?

6. Hegesippus. Hegesippus may rightly be called the Father of Church History. He lived near the time of the apostles (between c. A. D. 117-A. D. 189). His words are now preserved for us in Eusebius who states that Hegesippus compiled in five books "the plain tradition of the

apostolic doctrine."¹⁸

Hegesippus tells of some relatives of our Lord who were brought to Domitian. He asked if they were of "David's race, and they confessed that they were." When he learned that they had little money and property, he then asked "respecting Christ and his kingdom." They told the emperor that it was not a temporal or earthly kingdom. "Upon which, Domitian despising them, made no reply; but treating them with contempt, as simpletons, commanded them to be dismissed, and by a decree ordered the persecution to cease."¹⁹

Conclusion

This evidence of a persecution by Domitian seems, to me, too strong to reject. I wish to close this reply with the comment of the Italian scholar Marta Sordi. "The reality of a persecution was well known to all the Christian commentators, from the Shepherd of Hermas to Melito, from Hegesippus to Tertullian, and is confirmed not only by contemporary Christian sources, from Clement's First Epistle to the Revelation of St. John, but also, as we have seen, by the pagan writers Pliny and Bruttius. In order to prove that the persecution never actually happened (and I do not personally believe this is possible), each reference would have to be explained away separately... But even if it were feasible to find a convincing explanation for each reference, I still maintain that the mere fact of there being so many individual reports of the persecutions having taken place, makes it unreasonable to harbour any serious doubts on the subject."²⁰

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² Ferrell Jenkins, **Introduction to Christian Evidences** (Fairmount: Guardian of Truth Foundation, 1981) 119-121; F. F. Bruce, **Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

³ Jenkins, **Introduction 74-84.**

⁴ **Dialogue With Trypho**, 81.

⁵ **Ecclesiastical History**, V. 1.

⁶ Everett F. Harrison, **Introduction to the New Testament** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 427-431.

⁷ Ray Summers, **Worthy is the Lamb** (Nashville: Broadman, 1951) 83; Ferrell Jenkins, **Studies in the Book of Revelation** (Temple Terrace: Florida College Bookstore, 1983) 23. The general approach presented in these works is still held to be valid.

⁸ For a more detailed evaluation of the internal evidence see Jenkins, **Emperor Worship in the Book of Revelation** (Tampa: privately published, 1988).

⁹ **Against Heresies**, V. xxx. 3.

¹⁰ Adela Yarbro Collins, "Dating the Apocalypse of John" **Biblical Research** 26 (1981) 33-45.

¹¹ Bruce M. Metzger, "Versions, Ancient," **Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible**, 4 vols. (New York: Abingdon, 1962) IV: 754. Arthur M. Ogden incorrectly dates this to the second century. See **The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets** (Louisville: Ogden Publi-

cations, 1985) 15-16.

¹² **Pliny Letters**, X. xcvi.

¹³ Albert A. Bell, "The Date of John's Apocalypse: The Evidence of Some Roman Historians Reconsidered," **New Testament Studies** 25 (1979) 96. A. N. Sherwin-White, **The Letters of Pliny. A Historical and Social Commentary** (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966) 702, points out that Merrill (**Essays**, ch. 6) "failed to notice the implication." So did Ogden, who cited Merrill.

¹⁴ **Ecclesiastical History**, IV. xxvi.

¹⁵ **Ecclesiastical History**, III. xx; Ill. xxiii.

¹⁶ **Ecclesiastical History**, Ill. xvii.

¹⁷ **Ecclesiastical History**, Ill. xviii.

¹⁸ **Ecclesiastical History**, IV. viii.

¹⁹ **Ecclesiastical History**, Ill. xix.

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LOVE NOT THE WORLD (1 John 2: 15-17) IMMODESTY

The apostle John wrote, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2: 15-17). The book of 1 John sets forth the principle that in order to have fellowship with God and his people and go to heaven, we must walk in the light and not darkness. The things mentioned in the text above are a part of darkness and not light. In fact, every sin involves loving the world and thus puts us in darkness.

We, the people of God, must be reminded that we can't love the world and expect to go to heaven when we die. With this purpose in mind, we begin a series under heading "Love Not The World" which will include articles on dancing, fornication, social drinking, stealing, misuse of the tongue and smoking.

One of the more common sins that is practiced today is immodesty. I suppose that we have come to expect it of people of the world. In fact, if we didn't see a lot of people immodestly dressed in the summer time, we would wonder what was wrong. However, it is disappointing to see that is not so uncommon among Christians. I say we are disappointed, but not shocked.

We must begin with an understanding that the Bible governs what we wear.

Principles That Govern What We Wear

1. **Modesty** (1 Tim. 2: 9). Modest means "well arranged, seemly" (Thayer), "decent" (Vines) or "respectable" (Kubo).

2. **Shame** (1 Tim. 2: 9). Paul used the word "shamefacedness" which is "a sense of shame, modest... reverence, would always restrain a good man from an unworthy act" (Thayer). This refers to the ability to blush. An ability some had lost in Jeremiah's day (Jer. 6: 15; 8: 12).

3. **Good judgment** (1 Tim. 2: 9). The text says one must have sobriety. That means "soundness of mind, self-control... good judgment, moderation... especially as a feminine virtue, decency" (Bauer). Thus, good judgment and common sense must be used to determine what we wear.

4. Godliness (1 Tim. 2: 10). Our dress ought to demonstrate that we are professing to be godly, devout and devoted. What we wear will indicate whether or not we are serious about serving the Lord.

5. What we wear has an effect on others. Whether it be intentional or not, a lack of decent clothing can arouse impure thoughts in the minds of others. Mary Quant, designer of the mini-skirt, said, "Mini-clothes are symbolic of those women who want to seduce a man." When asked where all of this was headed, she replied with one word: "sex." In 1960 when the Santa Maria was overtaken by the Portuguese rebels, all of the American women made sure that they didn't wear any enticing clothes. They stopped swimming and wearing shorts. No one needs to explain why. The Atlanta Constitution reported, "This question was put to a group of Atlanta teenagers: Do you seek the exercise or the sun when you don a swim-suit? 'Neither' was the reply, We seek the boys!" (1971). A Gallup poll a number of years ago revealed that 50% of the women dress for men. Thus, many of the women who wear shorts and bathing suits, etc., do so for the men.

It is no secret that a scantily clad female body is prone to arouse greater lust than a completely nude body. "A great number of men are of the opinion that women are more attractive partly dressed than nude. They prefer to see women partially disrobed to the sight of complete nakedness. In many cases the development of sexual excitement is retarded or weakened by the nude body, while the sight of a partly unclothed female body affects these men as exciting" (**Theodor Reik, Of Love and Lust** p. 465).

The story of David and Bathsheba illustrates this point well (2 Sam. 11-12). The apostle Paul warns of "lasciviousness" (that which leads to lust and wanton thoughts) in Gal. 5: 19-21). Just the mere reading of Matt. 5: 28 would explain a lot about how easily lust can be stirred.

6. Nakedness. When we use this term, we generally think of complete nudity. However in the Bible, it applies to one who is only partially disrobed. Though Adam and Eve had made themselves aprons of fig leaves (v. 7), which I am sure would have covered at least the mid-section of the body, the Lord says they were still **naked** (v. 10). When Peter had cast his coat (outer garment) off and was left only in his under garments (most likely covering more than our under garments today), John the writer says he was **naked** (John 21: 7)

Nakedness is equated with shame in both the Old and New Testament (Isa. 47: 3; Rev. 3: 18).

Application Of These Principles

Most would agree thus far with what has been said. The problem is that some who may agree with the above principles are not willing to make the obvious applications.

1. To whom do they apply? These guidelines apply to both men and women. I am just not ready to accept the fact that God laid down a strict code for women and let the men do as they please. If he did, then a man could not be immodest no matter how he dressed

or undressed. Some have argued that 1 Tim. 2: 9-10 is addressed to women and thus the regulations about modest dress do not apply to men. Let's grant (for the argument's sake) that 1 Tim. 2: 9-10 does not apply at all to men. There are still other passages and principles that do apply to the men. Consider that God saw fit to cover the naked man as well as the woman (Gen. 3: 21).

If none of the principles of 1 Tim. 2 do not apply to a man, then a man is not required to be modest, display a sense of shame, use good judgment, etc.

2. Where do these principles apply? The answer is simple: **Everywhere!** Modesty is required when one sits as well as stands. How many times have you seen some sister, who looked fairly modest while standing, pull and tug on her skirt when she sat down? These principles apply when you are doing yard work, where your neighbors and others see you. Why do we reason that we must be modest when we go to the store, but as long as I am mowing the grass I can pull my shirt off and put on my shorts. Just because it is in my own yard does not mean that it is not public. Modesty and a sense of shame, etc. are required while on vacation on the beaches of Florida or Southern California.

They apply when engaged in sporting events: when playing tennis, swimming, jogging or playing softball and basketball. If not, why not? What rule of logic would suggest that we must be modest at all other times, but if it is a sporting event, the principles do not apply? Why could we not justify complete nudity on the same basis. I understand that the Greeks trained in their gyms in the nude. In fact, our word "naked" and "gymnasium" have the same origin because of that practice. Were the Greeks justified because it was the way most dressed (or "undressed") for a sporting event?

God's regulations on apparel apply at weddings. I have been to a number of weddings (where those marrying and those in the party were Christians) and was shocked to see the dresses worn. Some of the same people would not dare wear the same or similar outfits anywhere else. But, call it a wedding, put it in a chapel and it is all right (they think) to wear those low cut, backless and off-the-shoulder dresses. I stand amazed at the reasoning some Christians use!

If these principles do not apply everywhere, they do not apply anywhere!

3. Which outfits do these principles forbid? It's really not all that hard to use a little common sense and apply the principles that are set out in the first of the article. Since there are only two categories: modest and immodest, it shouldn't be hard to decide in which class you will place a certain outfit. Using the two categories in the chart below, you answer for yourself the question of where you would put some of the outfits that are worn today.

MODEST Shame Good judgment Godliness	NOT MODEST "Naked" Lascivious
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Where would you put these: Swim-suits (one and two

piece), shorts (for men and women that show a great portion of the thigh), halters, tubes, majorette uniforms, cheerleading outfits, short dresses, dresses and skirts with splits (displaying a large part of the leg), swimming trunks, men without shirts, jogging shorts, strapless dresses, spaghetti strap and sun dresses, backless dresses, blouses and dresses with low necklines, tight and form-fitting outfits, and see through styles? The answer, I think, is obvious.


I agree with the older preacher who said that he would like to know what kind of fruit it was that made Eve realize she was naked. He said he would like to get some and pass it around today. I would too.

(Some of the quotes in this article came from David Tant's excellent tract *Modest Apparel*.)

**SIMPLICITY
IN
CHRIST**

P. J. Casebolt

Rt. 1 Box 210
Middlebourne, WV 26149



MINISTERS OR MC'S?

In my early days of preaching, I returned to conduct a meeting with a congregation where I had made a short talk a year or so before. One saucy old sister told me, "I remember you. You are the preacher that told the story about the stink bug."

I had used an illustration about spewing out a month full of raspberries which had been contaminated by a stink bug. I had intended to illustrate what the Lord thought of the church at Laodicea. But the only thing the sister remembered was the stink bug. I had illustrated the lesson so well that the illustration was remembered, but the lesson forgotten.

There is mounting evidence in the brotherhood that some preachers are being remembered for their ability to emulate some stand-up comedian, a talk show host, or a master of ceremonies, a person capable of "introducing numbers, interviewing speakers, and usually providing the continuity" (Webster).

Some sermons are interspersed as much with characters from some popular TV series as they are with Bible characters. The language and mannerisms are more suited to a speech before the local Lion's Club or the Chamber of Commerce than they are to an audience which has been invited to hear words whereby they might be saved or edified.

A few years ago, I heard a sectarian preacher describing a "workshop" sponsored by the Crossroads movement in Gainesville, Florida. Chuck Lucas had just recently been featured in the local paper, presenting his "new look" — hair style, mustache, and the color and style of his clothes. During the worship, it was evident that some of the visiting preachers were attempting to

be Chuck Lucas "look-alikes," which prompted an observer to comment that one Chuck Lucas in town was enough.

Any preacher with an average education, average command of the English language, and average personality, could be an MC or an entertainer if he chose to do so. Some of us have even entertained on the stage, radio, and TV, and it may take a conscious effort on our part to hide behind the cross of Christ and the gospel message surrounding it.

Some of the most effective preachers in the brotherhood are men who could hold their own in the secular or academic world, or even on the stage as an entertainer or after-dinner speaker. But they have chosen to relegate such qualifications to the background in order to "preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord" (2 Cor. 4: 5).

We are not talking about the judicious use of humor or a "merry heart that doeth good like a medicine." Some humorous citations have transpired during sermons and public assemblies, and all you can do is make the best of the situation. Any preacher who has been around for a few years has accumulated enough illustrations to punctuate his lessons without going to joke books, or slang expressions more suited to video games and TV comedy formats than they are to the pulpit. When a preacher tells his audience that God "zapped" the Egyptians, or that he will "zap" you if you are bad, once is enough. Ten times in the same sermon is more than we need.

In the books of 1 & 2 Timothy, Paul tells the younger preacher what will make him "a good minister" (1 Tim. 4: 6), and what constitutes "the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4: 1-5). The power still lies in the gospel (Rom. 1: 16), and in "the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11: 3).

I emphatically deny that the Bible message is so dry and uninteresting that we have to doctor it up with cheap gimmicks and expressions. Children may need to be taught on their level, but adults should also be taught on their level.

The preacher who cannot take his text, whether topical or expository, and edify an audience is in the wrong business. The more a preacher is deficient in the art of public speaking, the more he needs to lean on the power that is inherent in the word of God; and the more fluent and adept the preacher is in his ability to hold the interest of an audience, the more he needs to restrain himself from emphasizing the worldly over the spiritual.

The apostle Paul was careful not to rely on worldly wisdom, "lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (1 Cor. 1: 17ff). He warned against exalting men, philosophy, and the man who is "vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Col. 2: 8, 18). We have preached this to the world, and it is time to practice it ourselves.

If a congregation desires to be entertained, the preacher needs to be strong enough to resist the temptation. If a preacher is going to mimic some entertainer or present a skit fashioned like a TV sit-com, the congregation may as well stay home and watch the real thing on TV.

THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

"... They rehearsed all that God had done with them ..." — Acts 14: 27

Send all News Items to: Connie W. Adams, P. O. Box 69, Brooks, KY 40109

DICK BLACKFORD, P. O. Box 83, Tuckerman, AH 72473 — After ten and a half years with the Westside church in Owensboro, Kentucky, I began work with the church in Tuckerman, Arkansas the first Sunday in May. We encourage all visitors in that area to come and worship with us.

TENTH ANNUAL SOUTHSIDE LECTURES

The Southside church in Pasadena, Texas will conduct its tenth annual lecture program June 12-15. The theme will be "Walking With the Master: Studies in the Gospels." Speakers will be Ed Harrell, Tack Chumbley, Don Bassett and Dee Bowman. R. J. Stevens will lead congregational singing. The church meets at 808 Fresa Rd., Pasadena, TX 77502. Phone (713) 946-8562. Contact the office for housing during the lectures.

HAL SNYDER, P. O. Box 285, Newport, NC 28570 — We have just completed a weekend meeting with Leslie Sloan, of Gallatin, TN. The topic for the series was "The Neo-Crossroads Movement." Brother Sloan was well prepared and we were informed and edified. Although the Boston/Crossroads philosophy does not pose a problem in our immediate area, our proximity to several major military installations where they are many in the age bracket most usually susceptible to this error (18-25 year-olds), prompted us to be prepared. For certain, we are better grounded in the faith and more alert to innovations.

OLEN HOLDERBY, 2010 N. Sierra Vista, Fresno, CA 93703 — It has been some time since we have offered a report on the work at N. Sierra Vista. The Lord has, indeed, blessed our efforts and given us many opportunities. About 40 have been added to our ranks the past year and many more visitors are coming our way. An architect is now drawing plans for a new auditorium to be added to our present facilities. We hope to complete this program by the end of this year. A rather massive program of correspondence courses is providing us with more contacts than expected. We are now in our second year with this program and continue to be pleased with the response. We are utilizing the services of Val-Pak for this part of our agenda. Dan Shipley was with us for our spring meeting and Bill Moseley will be with us in the fall. Robert Scifers, whom we formerly supported elsewhere, is now working with us locally, training for more effective service. In addition, we are assisting in the support of two other gospel preachers: George Garrison of Lodi, California and Bobby Goodman of Tulare, California. Come see us!

OLD FASHIONED CAMP MEETING

June 12, 13, 15, 16, 17 (no Wednesday service) there will be an old fashioned camp meeting at Old Ezell place, Cedar Creek Lake, near Belgreen, west of Russellville, Alabama at 6: 30 P. M. (come early). There will be gospel singing and two speakers nightly. Services will be in open air (with shelter available). Earl Kimbrough will speak each night on the spread and growth of the gospel in this area. Other speakers will be: Billy Norris (Monday), Lindsey Allen (Tuesday), Steve Patton (Thursday), Ed Bragwell (Friday) and Eugene Britnell (Saturday). For more information call Jackie Richardson (205) 332-9114, or 332-2525; or Eugene Britnell (205) 332-5451.

WHIT SASSER, 1819 Vinland Rd., Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901 — A congregation has been started in Oshkosh which meets in my home at the above address. We are striving to be a church patterned after the divine plan in everything. If you know of people in this area whom we might contact, please let us know. Our mailing address is: P. O. Box 3188, Oshkosh, WI 54903. Phone (414) 426-0235.

NIGERIAN REPORT AND ELDERS

WILLIAM V. BEASLEY, 1513 W. Roller Coaster Rd., Tucson, Arizona — From December 26, 1988 through January 17, 1989 Allan Martin, a deacon of the Pekin, Indiana church, and I were preaching/ teaching in Nigeria. Our work was limited to three states (Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and Imo) in eastern Nigeria. We have reason to believe that some good was done. In addition to the three preacher training classes conducted, we visited and preached in as many congregations as possible. There were more than thirty baptisms in the places we visited. This is credited to the work of the Nigerian preachers. Two of the problems we tried to deal with were liberalism (World Bible School) and the "no-class" position. Both of these were, by circum-stances, forced upon us. The brethren seemed to appreciate our efforts. I was encouraged by being with the Nigerian brethren and by working so closely with Allan. He is a good friend, and an excellent Bible teacher and co-laborer.

By keeping our eyes and ears open we were able to identify some problems. It is because of one of these that I would like to offer some advise to the elders of congregations which support Nigerian preachers. It would be good if you would write those with whom you have fellowship in the gospel and ask the following questions: (1) What is your position on the social drinking of alcoholic beverages? (2) Do you drink alcoholic beverages socially? (3) Have you ever done so? (4) If so, when was the last time?

Please do not take this as an accusation against any individual. No preacher, worthy of support, should object to being asked about his teaching or manner of life. The Lord willing, I would like to make another trip to Nigeria to help deal with this and other problems which were noted. Remember the saints and work in Nigeria in your prayers.

HELP NEEDED

The Westside church in Clarksburg, West Virginia began on December 13, 1981 with four families. After meeting for several weeks in various homes, they were able to meet at the Westside Town House Motor Lodge, one mile west of Clarksburg on Route 50, where the church continues to meet. We have experienced both numerical and spiritual growth. But we have outgrown the present facilities, especially space for classes for children, which range in age from 5 to 16 years of age. Right now we only have space for two classes for them.

We have been able to locate a good piece of land (1. 6 acres) at a purchase price of \$33, 500. The church has thus far paid \$12, 211 of this amount. Due to the poor economic conditions in this area, our growth has not given us all the financial support needed. At this time we cannot afford to pay rent at the motel, pay for the land and build a building. We are doing the best we can, but we need some help. Once the land is paid for, we can use that as collateral for a building loan. We would like to contact individuals who might be willing to help with this problem. The following brethren have conducted meetings here: Ronny Milliner, Steve Reeves, Marshall E. Patton, Paul Casebolt, Barry Hudson and Stan Adams. Others who have preached here on occasion include: Landon Hope, Paul Rockwell, John Veyon, Connie W. Adams and John Underwood. These brethren all know our circum-stances and we invite any interested in knowing more about the work to contact any of these who might be known to you. Please contact: David Cochran, Rt. 2, Box 203, Bristol, WV 26332. Phone (304) 782-2132.

DON'T FORGET TO PRAY!

BILL DODD, Rt 6, Box 200, Oxford, MS 38665 — I have decided to undertake the writing of a biography on the life of Luther Blackmon while many are yet living who knew brother Blackmon and appreciated his work. His life touched the lives of many people over many years. If you have articles or other writings penned by him or have personal anecdotes, or other information about his life and work, please forward these to me.

NEY RIEBER, 6413 Zion Church Road, Sanford, NC 27330 — We have just passed the 900 figure on people to whom we have sent the correspondence course. Over 600 of these have responded. I have fifty contacts now in Murfreesboro, NC which is over 100 miles from where I live. There is no conservative church within 50 miles. Anyone have a suggestion? We have made a commitment to construct a much needed meeting house in Chapel Hill but we are facing a great amount of red tape. My problem with the chaplain at Polk Youth Center continues. He refuses to let me baptize more than once a quarter. I am persuaded that he is trying to undermine my work, but I will weather the harassment. At Blanch Youth Center, things look good. This past month there were 18 inmates baptized.

AUSTIN MOBLEY, 75 W. Tick Ridge Rd., Waynesburg, KY 40489 — Since June, 1988 we have been working with the small church at Waynesburg, KY. Attendance has doubled and there is good reason to believe we will continue to grow spiritually and numerically. You can see that the rumors of my "retiring" have been highly exaggerated. I have 17 bound volumes of STS for sale — 1966-1988. 1966-1977 are hard bound and the balance spiral bound. I'm asking \$100 and the buyer pays the postage.

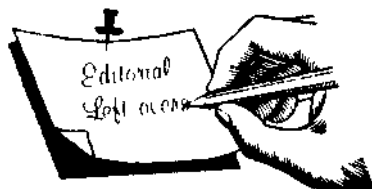
CORRECTION

ART OGDEN, 212 Cherokee Trail, Somerset, KY 42501 — In your pre-publication notice of the exchange between myself and Ferrell Jenkins, one statement was incorrect. You stated that in my commentary I argued forcefully against a Domitian persecution. The fact is, I wrote my commentary thinking Domitian was the greatest persecutor of all times. My discovery about Domitian came in the latter part of 1985 after my commentary was published in the spring of 1985. (Editor's note: We thank brother Ogden for this correction and offer our apology to him for the mistake).

PREACHERS NEEDED

CLEARWATER, FLORIDA — The Northeast congregation in Clearwater is beginning a search for an experienced gospel preacher to spend all his time here in the work of preaching and teaching. We anticipate being able to provide his living expenses. Any who wish to inquire about it should write to: Northeast Church of Christ, 2040 N. McMullen-Booth Rd., Clearwater, FL 34619.

MARTINSVILLE, VIRGINIA — This congregation of about 40 seeks a full time preacher. We would desire one who possesses the qualifications of an elder, but this is not a must. We need someone older in the faith and who likes to do personal work who could help us grow in spirit and number. We will do our part. Martinsville is located in the foothills of the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains. With an area population of 76,000, there is potential for much good work if we can locate the right man. We can supply \$325 a week toward support. Contact James L. Blankenship, Route 7, Box 339, Martinsville, VA 24112. Phone (703) 638-1892 or 666-1240.



TRAVELING AND WORSHIP

As summer draws near, many Americans, including brethren, will be traveling all over this country. It is refreshing to the spirit to have

a change of scenery. Christians from areas where there are congregations readily accessible, are sometimes taken by surprise in certain sections of the country to discover how far apart faithful congregations are. You may have to drive 100 miles out of your way and spend an extra night if you are in the upper tier of states between Minnesota and Washington. Plan carefully in New England. In the midwest, you will have to also make plans with care. In traveling, we have found the directories published by GUARDIAN OF TRUTH and the one by Bob Buchanon to be very useful. These are updated regularly and are inexpensive. You can get them from RELIGIOUS SUPPLY CENTER. We keep one in the car always when traveling to and from meetings. Also, we have made good use of the church ads in the back of STS and other periodicals which carry such ads. These give times of services, addresses and phone numbers to call. If you are going into an area and are uncertain about where brethren meet, then ask someone you think would be able to help you BEFORE YOU START YOUR TRIP. In areas of the country where congregations are very small and far apart, you will not only be blessed by worshipping with such brethren, but your visit will be a great blessing to them. And please, if you find the information in one of these directories to be incorrect, please inform the publishers to that effect. You are the Lord's whether at home or away. The Lord's Day is still the Lord's Day whether you are on vacation or not. Be careful, have a good summer and DON'T FORGET WHO YOU ARE and WHOSE YOU ARE.

LIGHT SUCCESSFULLY CONCEALED

Recently, Bobby and I were traveling across the country after a gospel meeting in the southwest and drove 35 miles from where we spent the night to worship with a congregation listed in a directory we had with us. We found the address in the small town of 2,000 but there was an insurance company at that location. We asked but got no help. One said "I have lived here all my life and if there has ever been a Church of Christ in this town, I never heard of it." We drove out of town on every main road without success. We drove up one street and down the other until we had covered the town, but to no avail. Finally we had to give up and drive the 35 miles back. I do not know if there was ever a congregation in that place. It is possible the information was incorrect in the directory. But it put me to thinking. What about the church where you live and worship? Is it aggressively trying to reach the community? Do you ever advertise in the paper: a gospel meeting, or a free tract available, or a correspondence course, or a phone number to call for a gospel message? Have you ever printed posters to advertise a meeting and approached local businesses to see if they would allow you to put one in the window? Have you ever made any kind of door-to-door effort? Even if these efforts do not bring many contacts, at least the people of the community know you are there and that you are trying to reach out in some way. Christians who do business with local establishments ought to have some influence, or impact over a period of time. Brethren, don't hide your light. "A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid."

COULD YOU? WOULD YOU?

Did you know that for \$7. 50 a month you could have this paper sent to 12 of your friends or relatives? Do you realize how much good this might do them over a period of a year's time? Do you know of anyone who is reading too much Bible-based material? Have you ever sent anyone a gift subscription to a magazine? How much did it cost you a year to send it to just one person? We have had a loyal group of supporters over the years who have, year after year, sent the paper to a list of people. Many of these have had to stop because of declining health and income. It seems that the younger generation, as a whole, does not see the importance of this as well as their parents and grandparents did. We need your help, friends, to get this paper in the hands of as many as possible. Now, **Could** you? Well, **WOULD** you? Let us hear from you.

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(Taken from bulletins and papers received by the editor)