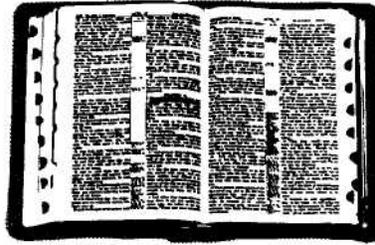


SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"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

H. E. Phillips

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Lutz, FL 33549



IF YOU BELIEVE THE BIBLE

The evidence is strong that most people who read and claim to live by the Bible do not really believe what it says. They do not, in fact, accept Jesus Christ as the only and final authority in all things. Instead, they use tradition, custom, morality, theology and history to establish the proof of what is doctrinally right and what is wrong. Many do not accept the claim of the Bible that it is verbally inspired of God. Problems will continue to multiply as long as religious leaders insert their opinions into Bible teaching.

Jesus said to those Jews who relied so much on their scriptures: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5: 39). They had the scriptures from God, but they did not really believe them. If they had understood and believed what the Old Testament said, they would have believed what it said concerning Christ. We would criticize these Jews for their unbelief, while at the same time revealing exactly the same disposition toward the New Testament scriptures.

The Bible is important. It is the only means of knowing the will of God. If we do not believe it, we are no better off than if we had no revelation at all. On the other hand, if we really believe the Bible, we must accept some facts that most people will reject in modern religion. Note these few:

1. **It is all-sufficient.** If we really believe what the Bible says, we must believe it to be all-sufficient and complete as a revelation from God to man. "All scripture

is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17). When men feel the need to create "creeds" which will define their various "beliefs," they are saying by that act that the New Testament is not sufficient to do the job.

2. **The only way to heaven.** If we really believe what the Bible teaches, we must believe that there is but one way to heaven, and that is by Christ and his word. Jesus said, "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7: 14). "... I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14: 6). "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6: 63). Denominationalism contends that there are many ways to heaven, each denomination claiming its own doctrine to be one way. But Jesus said, "I am the way the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14: 6). "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way..." (Heb. 10: 19, 20). The only way one can come to God by Christ is to obey the full authority of Christ in the New Testament. All who go beyond in any respect, or come short in any matter, of that which is the authority of Jesus Christ are not in the one way. We have to believe this if we believe the Bible.

3. **All the saved are in the church.** If we really believe what the Bible says, we must believe that the church is important to salvation. Usually denominational teachers will insist that the church is not important to one's salvation because to do so would present the problem of deciding WHICH ONE IS IMPORTANT! "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20: 28). The one body, the church, was so important to Christ that he died for it (Eph. 5: 25). The blood that was shed for the one church he built was for the remission of sins (Eph. 1: 7). Christ is the head of this church (Eph. 1: 22, 23; Col.

1: 18). He is the head of no other. The Bible also teaches that there is but one body of Christ (Eph. 1: 22, 23; 4: 4; Col. 1: 11, 24; 1 Cor. 12: 20).

4. **Only the pure gospel is the power to save.** If we really believe what the Bible says, we must believe that only the pure gospel of Christ is the power of God to save. Not all that is called "the gospel" is the pure gospel of Christ. Paul wrote, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1: 16). He also said, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed..." (Gal. 1: 6-8). This one gospel requires faith in Christ and his authority. It requires repentance of sins (Acts 2: 38; Acts 17: 30; 2 Peter 3: 9). It requires a confession with the mouth, the faith in the heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Rom. 10: 9, 10; Acts 8: 37). It requires baptism, a burial in water, for the remission of sins (Acts 2: 28; Mark 16: 16; Col. 2: 12; Rom. 6: 3, 4). To believe the Bible means to believe all these facts, commands and promises that are revealed in it, without addition or subtraction.

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Editorial

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"RICH IN GOODS, BUT RAGGED IN SPIRIT"

A few well chosen words can capture the spirit of a moment in history. In a time of great apprehension, Franklin D. Roosevelt put things in perspective when he said "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." In the aftermath of the Civil War when the nation was battle weary and deeply scarred, Abraham Lincoln appealed to noble instincts when he said "With malice toward none, but charity for all..." John F. Kennedy will be long remembered for his inaugural appeal "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." In 1968 Richard M. Nixon summarized the general state of our society when he said "We find ourselves rich in goods but ragged in spirit, reaching with magnificent precision for the moon but falling into the rock of discord on earth." How true that was then, and now.

This was the paradox of Israel of old. Amos painted a picture of a nation "at ease in Zion" which stretched itself upon ivory couches, ate fatted lambs and calves, relaxed to music, sipped wine in bowls and perfumed their bodies expensively. "But they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph" (Amos 6: 1-6). They were rich, but poor. Haggai prodded the returned captives into completing the temple by reminding them that they had time to build and ceil their own houses, to earn wages and supply their own needs while the temple remained nothing more than a foundation for sixteen years. Their spirit was ragged.

This was the problem with the rich fool of Luke 12: 16-21. He made plans for the material to the neglect of his soul and the Lord called him a Fool." Paul warned those who would be "rich in this world's goods" not to be "highminded" and to "trust in the living God" (1 Tim. 6: 17-19). Anytime we place the material above the spiritual, we are ragged in spirit, regardless of how rich we may be in goods. There are many practical applications of this principle.

It is true in our **nation** now. A recent report indicated that we have the highest rate of employment since 1972. Our homes are filled with conveniences and even luxuries undreamed of in a former time, or by a large portion of the rest of the world now. Our highways are choked with trucks moving goods of a rich nation, with expensive cars, campers, motor homes, boats and tour buses. Restaurants are packed. Does anyone eat at home anymore? Motels and hotels must be reserved ahead. Theme parks are crowded. Overnight accommodations in many state and national parks require booking a year

in advance. We have a strange thing in our country in that many workers are retired at 50-55 years of age. But with all that, we are a nation ragged in spirit. Evidence of wrong doing by those in high office is commonplace. The threat of murder and mayhem hangs like a tornadic cloud over our great cities. All too many of our citizens are mesmerized with drugs, from the small hamlet to the metroplex. School children all over America know where and how to obtain drugs if they want them. Divorce rages out of control. AIDS threatens even the morally upright through the "lifestyles" of the immoral. Our schools have, in many instances, become more our enemies than our benefactors. God has been ruled out of education and some of our schools have become anti-religion for all practical purposes.

It is still true that "righteousness exalteth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14: 34). All is not lost, nor should we seek for Elijah's cave to withdraw from the human race. Christians are still the "light of the world" and the "salt of the earth" (Mt. 5: 13-16). But we have to be careful not to hide our light nor allow our salt to "lose its savour."

The principle is true in **denominationalism**. Although doctrinal errors have provided the foundation for denominationalism, time was that they could be counted on to exert an influence for good morally. They stood up against drunkenness, adultery, homosexuality, dishonesty, indecency of every sort. But now the great mainline denominations of the day, with their large memberships, elaborate facilities, institutional projects and influential members, are platforms for radicals of every stripe. They tolerate infidelity, homosexuality (even officially endorsing such perverts for "the ministry"), social drinking, dancing, trial marriages, and you name it. Though rich in goods and politically powerful, they have contributed to the destruction of morals and the loss of faith. They are ragged in spirit.

It is true in many of our **homes**. Our penchant for material things, career advancement, multiple incomes, sports, exotic trips and relaxation has left us with frazzled marriages where we are too tired or preoccupied to have any romance left. Children are left unattended or with strangers. Many families don't even sit down to eat together. Home has become an overnight motel, a fast food counter and sadly, too often a place of unrest, if not outright strife.

We must not forget to bring up our children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6: 3-4). Husbands must love their wives "even as Christ loved the church" and wives must see that they "reverence" their husbands. Children must be taught to "obey" and "honor" their parents (Eph. 6: 1-3).

It is true in many **local churches**. It is evident that, as a whole, congregations have larger and finer buildings than they had a few years ago. They have larger budgets. Many are equipped with the latest tools for visual aids in teaching from the pulpit and in the classroom. Without doubt gospel preachers are better supported and stay longer in most places. But there is a ragged spirit in evidence in too many places. Complacency is too common. A deadly spirit of "keeping house

for the Lord" has set in with many. Sermons that seek to stir evangelistic fervor to spread the gospel to the whole world are sometimes met with a puzzled stare. Pride afflicts many. While none of us should want services to be disorderly, neither should they become stilted performances of eloquence, elegance and sophistication so that we worry about getting a little chalk dust on the carpet, or concern ourselves with whether or not the preacher's tie clashes with the drapes or carpet.

We are ragged in spirit when we are too comfortable with error and do not want it exposed for what it is. When every gathering becomes a pep rally for feeling good about yourself and when sermons become more entertaining than instructive, we are in trouble. When Christians look upon refraining from the works of the flesh as a penalty rather than a blessing from God, we have ragged spirits. When we exert most of our energies fussing with each other and choosing up sides to the exclusion of being on "the Lord's side" our spirits are tattered. Already there are signs of churches which once were large, thriving and aggressively reaching out to the lost, who are dwindling because of infighting, and/or love for the world.

Thank God for those who are still rich in spirit. We all remember the church at Laodicea which thought it was rich but was, in reality, deeply impoverished spiritually. But don't forget the church at Smyrna which was in poverty but to whom the Lord said "but thou art rich" (Rev. 2: 8-9). It is not wrong to have material riches. But it is wrong to trust them. It is wrong to misuse them. Let us learn to be "rich in good works" (1 Tim. 6: 18).

**WAKE THE WORLD
AND TELL THE
PEOPLE**

Wilson Adams
891 Autumn Valley Lane
Gambrills, MD 21054



**ANTIOCH — THE POWER OF THE
LOCAL CHURCH**

The passage is Acts 11. The place was Antioch. If you are not aware of the power of God as it moved in the midst of that mega-population center of long ago, then you are probably not alone. The church of Christ in Antioch stands as an exemplary congregation that needs to be closely studied and reviewed in light of our attempt to establish New Testament churches today. It's not enough to compare ourselves with ourselves. That's easy. One can always find a local church that is failing in an area where another is succeeding. Such shallow comparisons may build confidence but they do nothing to draw us closer to the New Testament pattern. We need to study New Testament churches. We need to take a closer look at Antioch.

They Exemplified Selfless Love

John said it this way: "**Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth**" (1 John 3: 18). It's easy to pledge allegiance to the name of Christ. But the real question is: does our life mirror the life of Him who first wore that name? Are we willing to sacrifice to the same degree of selfless love that we see in Him? Look again at Antioch in Acts 11: 27-30 and observe some commendable qualities of these Christians who abounded in benevolent love.

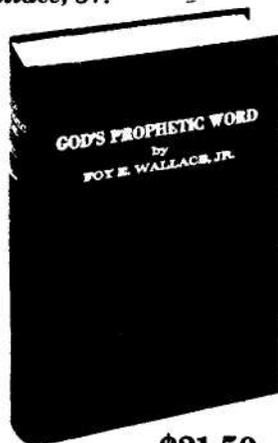
1. **The assurance of historical confirmation**, vs. 27-28. First, the writer of Acts reminds us that the activities of the early church take place in a historical context. "There was a great famine," says Luke, "during the reign of Claudius." History records that Claudius Caesar reigned thirteen years (A. D. 41-54). Josephus reports that during his rule there was a famine and that "many people died from want of food." Fact: there was a Roman emperor by the name of Claudius. Fact: there was a severe famine during his reign. Fact: what we believe and practice as a local church of Christ does not rest in fictitious ignorance but in the root of historical reality. Remember that.

2. **Their confidence in the spoken Word**, vs. 27-28. There were in the early church a group of God-inspired men known as "prophets" (Eph. 4: 11). Several came to the church in Antioch and one of them, a certain "Agabus," began to foretell. (This is the same Agabus who later would, in Ezekiel like fashion, bind himself with the belt of Paul as a sign of the apostle's coming capture and arrest, Acts 21: 10-11). But observe in our text the warm receptivity that the Antioch brethren

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gave the prophet of God. These Christians had no written word. Their book, chapter and verse rested in the form of a prophet. He spoke and they listened as he told of a coming famine that would cause their Jewish brothers to greatly suffer. And their reaction? They respected the word of God so much that they were willing to send a financial contribution IN ADVANCE of the need! That's how much confidence they had in the promises of God.

Think about it. Think what would happen if we had that same degree of confident trust in what God has said. Local churches often fail in their objectives because they lack confidence in the divine guarantees. If we really believed what God promises in passages like Matt. 28: 20 or in 1 Cor. 3: 7 then we would see local churches leaving the mode of mediocrity and launching out in faith with visions and dreams dependent not upon their own ability but upon the power of God. It's the attitude we see in Antioch. It's the attitude seen today in New Testament churches.

3. They **experienced the thrill of giving**, vs. 29. Let's note four things about their benevolent response to need:

a. Their spontaneous generosity. Nowhere in the passage does one get the impression that this was an arm-twisting, guilt trip lecture laid upon the church by Paul and Barnabus. In fact, the whole scene seems to be framed with the words of 2 Cor. 9: 7 which defines true giving as being without grudging and with genuine joy. Look closer. The word for "cheerful" is the Greek word, *hilaros*. Literally it says: "God loves the hilarious giver!" The hilarious giver is one who gives out of a heart filled with overflowing generosity while understanding that true giving is measured not in terms of giving until it hurts but rather in giving until it feels good! The hilarious giver feels good when he gives. He doesn't have to be pushed or prodded or begged. That's why the hilarious giver smiles when he gives; not a smile of self-righteous pride but one that simply acknowledges a heart which has learned that the thrill of living is GIVING! It's called joyful generosity. It's called blessedness (Acts 20: 35).

The Antioch disciples were hilarious givers. They reflected well the liberality of the Macedonians (2 Cor. 8: 1-5) or those in Exodus 36 who gave with such generosity that Moses had to beg them to stop. (I bet you've never seen that done!) Giving. It's a touchy subject. But only for those who haven't learned yet how to do it. In Antioch, it was not a problem.

b. They were willing to take the risk. Did you see it? Look again at verse 28. This was prophesied to be a general famine. Certainly it would hit Judea hard because of hardships already there, but there was no guarantee that the fingers of famine would not reach to even Antioch. These Christians were willing to take the risk and give in the face of the fact that one day they themselves might have need! That's love. That's selflessness. That's Christianity.

c. They gave according to their prosperity. **"In the proportion that any of the disciples had means..."** These weren't rich folks who had more money than they knew what to do with. They were people struggling to

carve out a life for their families in a big city where costs were high and hardships many (especially for Christians). But they had prospered and they gave accordingly (1 Cor. 16: 1-2). Do we? (The problem in too many churches is that there are folks making \$35,000 per year and giving \$25 per week. That works out to a whopping 3. 7% of their income going to the Lord's work. People, that's not sacrifice; it is stealing!)

d. Every member was involved. Verse 29 reports that of those who had means, **"each of them sent a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea."** This was not an activity for the few but for the many. The point: If the local church is to accomplish its work then it must actively seek the involvement of everyone. Elders need to be talent scouts and opportunity seekers as they seek to involve every member in the work. The Old Testament reminder that **"every man stood in his place"** (Judges 7: 21) is apropos to the New Testament local church. All of us need to look for those who tend to be marginal participants and help motivate them to move into the mainstream of the local work. Indeed, there is work that we all can do.

4. **The power of unity**, vs. 29. New Testament Christianity was introduced into a world filled with racial hatred, bitterness and bigotry. And, yet, the story of the Cross is the story of a Savior whose love was so great that no man could accept Him and still hate his brother. Back up to verses 22-26. It was then that Antioch had a need. This infant church of young Gentile believers stood in great need of stability. The Jerusalem Jews responded by sending Barnabus to Antioch. No church would ever want to lose a Barnabus. But Jerusalem was willing to let him go in order to help lay a foundation in scriptural instruction for their Gentile brothers. **JEW'S REACHING OUT TO GENTILES...**

Now the situation was reversed. Now the Jews stood in need. **GENTILES REACHING OUT TO JEWS** is what we see in 11: 27-30 and later described by Paul, **"For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things"** (Rom. 15: 27). The Jews had shared their spiritual heritage with the Gentiles. Now the Gentiles had the opportunity of giving in return. There was no hesitation.

The Antioch church buried racial hatred. She stood as a shining light in a darkened sea of prejudice. In fact, Antioch herself was a racially mixed congregation (vs. 19-21). But it didn't matter in Antioch — not the color of your skin, nor your country of origin, nor your economic background. Only one thing mattered in Antioch: do you belong to Jesus Christ! (Gal. 3: 28-29).

Let me say this about racial prejudice. **JESUS HATES IT!** And if you are going to be His then you have to hate it, too. It pains me to say this but it's true. There are still churches in this country today who make a claim to Christ where a black man would not be welcome as a member. It is false advertisement. That church is not of Christ because that church stands opposed to everything that the Cross stands for. Prejudice is sinful. Period. Brethren, we have not restored the New Testament church until, like Antioch, we bury racial prejudice

and treat every man as equal in the sight of God. And any local congregation that fails in this area can in no way claim allegiance to Jesus. In no way.

**WRITTEN FOR
OUR INSTRUCTION**

Frank Himmel

1575 14th Ave W.
Palmetto, Florida 33561



JEALOUSY AMONG THE LORD'S SERVANTS

Israel's journey to Canaan was laden with difficulties, many of them self-imposed. Such was the case in the episode at Hazeroth (Num. 12).

The Event

Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because he married a Cushite woman. They complained, "has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us as well? Meek Moses did not reply. God did. He summoned the three to the tabernacle and came down in the pillar of cloud. God explained that he spoke to prophets in visions and dreams, but to Moses He spoke mouth to mouth. This difference should have been obvious. It should have made Miriam or Aaron afraid to speak against Moses.

When God departed, Miriam was leprous. Aaron confessed their sin to Moses, who interceded for Miriam. The Lord agreed to heal her, but insisted she be shut up outside the camp seven days to bear her shame.

Practical Lessons

The first lesson from this incident is about honesty. What did Moses marrying a Cushite woman have to do with God speaking through Miriam and Aaron as well as Moses? Nothing. It was merely a pretext, an occasion to voice their pent-up ill will. Real complaints are often disguised in superficial issues. When someone gets his feelings hurt and decides to leave a congregation, it does not take him long to find a "valid reason" for doing so. If you do not care for a man personally, you are more likely to detect something that makes him unfit to serve as an elder or deacon. How many churches have divided, ostensibly over some doctrinal matter, when the real problem was brethren did not like each other, or would not humble themselves and learn to get along? This text challenges us to be honest with ourselves.

Miriam and Aaron's complaint betrayed their real feelings, and points to the main lesson from this episode: jealousy. Jealousy is a feeling of hostility toward those we perceive to have some advantage over us. It threatens all. Children become jealous if they sense that one has the special affection of a mother or father. Workers often envy fellow-laborers who make more money, get more time off, or receive a promotion. Stu-

dents sometimes snub those who get the best grades.

Jealousy creeps into the Lord's church, too. Brethren who want to run things covet the elders' position. Some envy others' God-given skills or accomplishments. Preachers can be among the worst about this. One resents another because he is a more eloquent speaker or writer, or is mightier in the Scriptures, or baptizes more people, or holds more meetings. Unfortunately, preaching Christ from envy and strife is nothing new (Ph. 1: 15). Even whole congregations can be jealous of each other, especially if one in town is growing faster than the rest.

Miriam's jealousy bore three fruits: personal uncleanness, disrupted fellowship, and hindered progress. Leprosy made one unclean (Lev. 13). So does envy. It is rottenness to the bones (Pro. 14: 30). It is a work of the flesh that will cause us to forfeit our inheritance (Gal. 5: 20, 21). Leprosy is contagious. Miriam had to be put outside the camp to prevent her disease from spreading. Perhaps envy is contagious. At any rate, it can sever ties between brethren as well as with God.

Forgiveness does not remove all the consequences of sin. Miriam had to spend seven days in quarantine, as did all lepers who were healed. The march toward Canaan halted while Miriam bore her shame. Bitter feelings and rivalries have the same effect among God's people today. Attention that should be focused on our work is diverted. A dying world is neglected while we tend to internal problems. Wounds may be inflicted that will take years to heal.

Jealousy and strife are signs of carnality, of walking by human standards (1 Cor. 3: 3). "When we remember that talents and position and power are granted in the providence of God, it is real rebellion against His will to be envious of those to whom these powers or privileges have been assigned" (Charles Eerdman). Accept the place God has chosen for you. As for others, do not envy them. Instead, learn to "rejoice with them that rejoice."

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THE DOMITIAN PERSECUTION (NO. 2)

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Ferrell Jenkins, whom I love dearly in the Lord and whose scholarship I respect highly, has responded to my presentation on the supposed Domitian persecution. I appreciate his skilled defense of his position and his brotherly spirit. He did an excellent job of presenting his evidence. I believe, however, that a careful reading of my previous offering is sufficient to serve as an answer to his response. In that article I anticipated the case to be made for a Domitian persecution. I showed why it is weak, and I also showed that in order to prove a Domitian persecution one must appeal to the book of Revelation.

Evidence Not Rejected

Ferrell did a good job of showing the contribution made to our understanding of the early years of Christianity by the evidence sifted from early pagan sources and the "Church Fathers." Yet, we both understand that many things found in these sources are contradictory and others are false. He accepts these no more than I. The evidence must be sifted and questions asked: What is fact? What is fiction? What is opinion?

Somehow Ferrell concluded from my article that I reject the patristic evidence. Reread my article and see if I rejected the evidence. I simply questioned whether the evidence is strong enough, in the absence of corroborating contemporary sources, to convict Domitian of directing a persecution against Christians of the magnitude described by many historians and Revelation commentators. I readily admit that Domitian MAY have persecuted some Christians. I reach this conclusion by considering the kind of evidence presented by Ferrell. If I totally rejected that evidence, I could not say there MAY have been a persecution.

The Case is Overstated

Ferrell readily admitted that the case for a Domitian persecution has been overstated. No longer will he say "Domitian bathed the empire in the blood of the Christians." What will he say? His evidence from "Christian" sources, except for his use of Revelation, reveals that Melito (175 AD), Hegesippus (117-189 AD), Tertullian (197 AD) and Eusebius (325 AD) said there was persecution, but the sum total of their evidence reveals two banishments (the apostle John and Domitilla), and an inquiry of some relatives of the Lord. No deaths are presented. Though Edward Gibbon accepted all of this evidence, plus accepting Flavius Clemens (husband to Domitilla) as a martyred Christian, did not think this ordeal deserved the right to be called a persecution.

Just how strong is the evidence from "Christian" sources? Ferrell thinks it is "too strong to reject." I think

it is too weak to build a case upon. The case for John's banishment to Patmos during Domitian's reign is weak because it contradicts the internal evidence of the book of Revelation,² and the evidence that Domitilla was banished by Domitian because she was a Christian is weak because no one knows whether or not she was a Christian at the time of her exile. Even if she was, our earliest information about her banishment indicates that she was banished for political reasons rather than religious.³ All of this boils down to there being too little evidence to convict. Domitian may have persecuted some Christians but the evidence from "Christian" sources does not prove it, certainly not to the proportions claimed by so many today.

The Contemporary Evidence

The impression is left that Tacitus, writing 50 years after (115 AD), was not contemporary with Nero any more than Hegesippus and Melito, writing 75 years after, were contemporary with Domitian. Contemporary means "living, occurring, or existing at the same period of time; contemporaneous" (Webster). Tacitus (55-120 AD), Suetonius (69?-140 AD), and Pliny (61-113? AD) were Roman writers who left at least a partial record of the history of Domitian's reign. Though only a lad of 9 to 12 years of age, Tacitus leaves a record of Nero's persecution as does his contemporary Suetonius, yet neither of them, though men of age and maturity and in a position to have witnessed it, tell anything about efforts on Domitian's part to persecute Christians. They are as silent as the tomb. Could a persecution of the magnitude often pictured have gone unnoticed by them?

Ferrell thinks that Pliny's letter to Trajan (111 AD) implies an earlier policy of the Empire toward Christianity. He had concluded, since some Christians defected 25 years previous to their inquest before Pliny (i. e., 86 AD), that they ceased to be Christians because Domitian persecuted them, yet no one charges Domitian with persecuting Christians before the last two years of his reign (95-96) AD). Their defection, therefore, had nothing to do with persecution. It is then reasoned, since Pliny states he had never been present for trials of Christians, that implies there had been such trials under Domitian. It is assumed there were earlier trials of Christians and then assumed that those trials were conducted during the reign of Domitian. This is assuming too much.

Ferrell says if I were affirming the Neronian persecution I would seek to establish it the same way he establishes the Domitian persecution. He is mistaken. Tacitus was contemporary with Nero and the people of his reign. He revealed the Neronian persecution. Suetonius also recorded it. Be assured that if Ferrell had evidence like this for the Domitian persecution, he would have used it.

The Book of Revelation

Without the book of Revelation there is practically no case that can be made for a Domitian persecution. We probably would never have heard of it if the Apocalypse had not been written. The book of Revelation indicates some kind of persecution in progress in Asia while the book was being witnessed by John. This is not a problem with the early date. It matters not how far reaching

Nero's persecution was because the scriptures reveal Jewish persecution of saints in every place Jews resided and also some Gentile persecution. I maintain the primary persecutors in Revelation are Jewish and that the Roman conflict with the saints is secondary covering 200 years from the time of Trajan until it ended. The advocates of the late date will not accept this explanation of the persecution depicted in Revelation, so in order to substantiate their position, they MUST have a Domitian Persecution. The early date is too early to satisfy their view of the Apocalypse, and the reign of Trajan too late.

Ferrell has written, The book of Revelation is the most thoroughly Jewish in its language and imagery of any New Testament book. "4 To me it is amazing that the most thoroughly Jewish book of the N. T. describes what has been concluded is a thoroughly Gentile persecution of a predominantly Gentile church. I rather think the most thoroughly Jewish book of the N. T. was designed to reveal God's judgment upon the Jews, the primary persecutors of God's people in both the Old and New Testaments ages.

Efforts are made to prove the date of the Apocalypse by calling upon Irenaeus (130-200 AD) who states that the "apocalyptic vision... was seen... towards the end of Domitian's reign." The impression is left that Irenaeus got this information from Polycarp, though he did not indicate the source of his statement. The uninspired statement of Irenaeus' opinion about dating the book is of no more strength than my own uninspired statement. Ferrell thinks I would like such a statement to establish the early date but, if that were the strongest case for it, I would reject it. Like the evidence from the Syriac Version,⁵ which Ferrell mistakenly thinks I use to establish the early date of Revelation, this kind of evidence only indicates that early church fathers also had opinions about the date of the book's composition.

The Early Date

Restraining the urge to present a counter argument for the early date is difficult, however, I must forego because our discussion concerns the question of whether Domitian was a persecutor of Christians and not the date of the Apocalypse. If Ferrell wishes an exchange upon that topic, let him read my commentary on Revelation (1985), **THE AVENGING OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS**, and answer my arguments. This book has been in print for three and one half years and to date, though the first printing is nearly depleted, **not one person having read the book and holding to the late date has offered to refute my scriptural arguments.** I have received nothing but commendation for the work. **A Challenge to Ferrell**

It would be of help if Ferrell would describe for us exactly what he deems the Domitian persecution to have been. To help him with this task, I challenge him to tell us if the statements quoted in my previous article from (1) Halley, (2) Butterworth and Shaver are true statements? (3) Is the description given by Weldon Warnock in **REVELATION: MESSAGE FROM**

PATMOS (page 10) a true description of the Domitian persecution? (4) Do you really believe that "Domitian attempted to crush Christianity"?⁶ (5) Do you believe he developed a new policy toward Christianity? (6) Do you believe that the number of Christians slain by Domitian was in the thousands, hundreds, fifties, teens or single digits? (7) Can you identify just one Christian who died as a result of a persecution instigated by Domitian? (8) Can you prove beyond all shadow of doubt that he persecuted anyone simply because they were Christians? A forthright answer with historical evidence to substantiate the claim would be in order.

Footnotes

¹ Edward Gibbon, **The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire**, p. 278.

²The internal evidence from the book of Revelation which makes this argument weak is the evidence within the book demanding the book be written before 70 AD. See my arguments in **The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets**, pp. 17-23.

³Elmer T. Merrill, **Essays In Christian History**, pp. 149-150.

⁴Ferrell Jenkins, **The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation**, p. 22.

⁵The **Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets** is CORRECT in stating the Syriac Version dates back to the 2nd century (pp. 15-16). However, Ferrell is probably correct also in stating that the earliest manuscript of that version, carrying the 68 AD date, is dated in 508 AD. Thanks to Ferrell for pointing out this error.

⁶Ferrell Jenkins, **Emperor Worship in the Book of Revelation**, p. 4 I highly recommend this much needed work on Emperor Worship. Apart from the author's speculation on the date and interpretation of Revelation, it is an excellent work.

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THE DOMITIANIC PERSECUTION (A RESPONSE) (NO. 2)

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Not only did I get the impression from Art's first article that he rejected the evidence from the "Church Fathers," but I still have that impression despite his disavowal. Art wants to know "What is fact? What is fiction? What is opinion?," and I want to know the same thing! In my previous article I set forth "The Case for the Domitianic Persecution." Since I admitted that the case for the Domitianic persecution has been overstated, Art wants to know what I will say now? Let's summarize again.

Summary of the Patristic Evidence

1. The Book of Revelation. John was on Patmos because of his preaching of the word (1: 9). Antipas had already been martyred (2: 13). The patristic evidence says that John was exiled under Domitian, released upon the death of the emperor, and then wrote the book of Revelation. Adela Collins says the fact that Irenaeus "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."¹ Colin Hemer says "if John suffered exile in Domitian's reign, and the emperor was remembered as a persecutor, it is easy to account for the growth of the tradition."² Art is of the **opinion** that all of these early writers just gave their **opinion** and that it was wrong. If Nero, or one of the other emperors, or the Jews were responsible for the exiling of John and the death of Antipas, why didn't the early writers just say so? Why did they incorrectly attribute these things to Domitian? Why couldn't just one writer before the sixth century have a different opinion?

2. Pliny. In A. D. 111 Pliny wrote to the Emperor Trajan for advice on how to conduct the trials for Christians in Bithynia. He stated that he had never been present for any of these trials. Even Albert Bell, who dates the book of Revelation to the reign of Galba (A. D. 68/69), points out that this 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."³

3. Melito. Melito, in his apology to the emperor Marcus Aurelius, singled out Nero and Domitian as showing "a disposition to slander our faith..."⁴ Why would Melito make such a blunder in writing to the emperor of Rome?

4. Tertullian. Tertullian, in his **Apology to Septimius Severus**, even called upon the emperor to "Consult your histories." He stated that Nero was the first to "rage with the imperial sword" against Christians. He stated that "Domitian too, who was a good deal of a Nero

in cruelty, attempted it" but "soon stopped... restored those he had banished. Such are ever our persecutors..."⁵ Why would Tertullian, trained as an attorney, challenge the emperor to consult his histories about something that did not happen?

5. Eusebius. This church historian quoted several earlier writers to the effect that Domitian was a persecutor of Christians. He says that Domitian persecuted some "for professing Christ," and names Flavia Domitilla. Art states that no one knows whether Domitilla was a Christian at the time of her exile. In this he follows the **opinion** of Merrill. The Roman historian A. N. Sherwin-White reminds us that "Eusebius is not lightly to be set aside when he names a particular person..."⁶ My question was, and is: "If these people were not Christians, why would the Christians, such as Eusebius, want to claim them?"

6. Hegesippus. This church historian recites the story of Jewish disciples of the Lord who were brought before Domitian. He states that the emperor dismissed these individuals and "by a decree ordered the persecution to cease."⁸

Who Is Contemporary?

It was pointed out in my first article that 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 thinks that Tacitus, a lad of 9 years of age, and Suetonius, born about 5 years after the persecution, were **contemporary** with Nero. He rejects the evidence of Pliny, Melito, Tertullian, Eusebius, and Hegesippus regarding the persecution under Domitian as not being contemporary. President Franklin D. Roosevelt died when I was 9 years old (if my encyclopedic sources can be trusted) and I have **never** thought of him as my contemporary.

Argument From Silence

The argument from silence is appealed to by Art. He wonders why Tacitus and Suetonius tell nothing of "efforts on Domitian's part to persecute Christians. They are silent as the tomb. Could a persecution of the magnitude often pictured have gone unnoticed by them?" The answer: "Yes, they could have failed to mention such." We pointed out in the beginning of our first article that unbelievers often make much of the fact that we have only a few early references to Christ and the church outside the New Testament. A. J. Hoover, a reputable historian, comments on this insistence for evidence that does not exist: "Unbelievers have a bad habit of demanding perfect evidence for various aspects of the Christian faith. For example, in this matter they wonder why we have no record of the report that, presumably, Pontius Pilate, prefect of Judaea, sent to Rome concerning the trial and execution of Jesus of Nazareth. We simply remind them that no official record has been preserved of any report which Pilate, or any other Roman governor of Judaea, sent to Rome about anything!"⁹

The first known historical allusion to the book of Revelation is in the writings of Justin Martyr who died in A. D. 165. The earliest manuscript fragments are from

the third century. Yet, Art believes the book belongs to the seventh decade of the first century. He was curiously silent about my comments on the **date of composition** and the **specific identification of the author** of Revelation. These things we know because of the testimony of the "Church Fathers." I think the reader can see why I thought Art rejected the evidence from patristics.

Must "Later Daters" Have a Domitianic Persecution?

Art thinks that these who believe Revelation was written during the reign of Domitian "MUST have a Domitian persecution." Let's set the record straight. My own view is that John received the Revelation while on Patmos during the reign of Domitian. John was returned from exile upon the death of Domitian (A. D. 96). I don't know whether the Seven Churches received the book before or after the death of Domitian. The book itself mentions only the exile of John and the death of Antipas as having taken place at the time of writing. Revelation was written to explain "the things which must shortly take place" (1: 1). The emperors of Rome continued periodically to persecute Christians until early in the fourth century.

My view of Revelation does NOT necessitate a persecution of Christians by Domitian. The evidence which I presented in my first article does lead me to believe that such persecution took place.

Art's Defense of the Early Date

We are informed that **The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets** has been in print for nearly four years and that no one answered the arguments. Portions of my **Studies in the Book of Revelation** have been in print since 1973. In the "Introduction" I examined the major arguments for the early date presented by James M. MacDonald, **The Life and Writings of St. John** (1877). This was the source followed by Foy E. Wallace, which in turn was followed generally by Art. Numerous commentators have replied to these same arguments in the past. I have no inclination, and less time, to enter into an exchange with every person who advances these views. In fact, I urge students to read all the views and draw their own conclusion. That's what the readers will have to do with this exchange.

A Challenge Answered

My friend wants me to describe exactly what I deem the Domitianic persecution to have been. Colin Hemer's book, which was developed from his PhD thesis at Manchester, deals with these matters. He suggests that "persecution" is not "a simply defined term, to be discovered by clear criteria, but that complex pressures existed in the historical situation, and might be activated by authorities not necessarily predisposed to 'persecute,' but adopting policies which impinged on a vulnerable group... I want to stress the severity of the trial present and impending, and not to deny it the title 'persecution' from the Christian viewpoint, whatever the official view."¹¹ This very point may well account for the fact that the "Church Fathers" mentioned the persecution and that the Roman writers did not. Bell says that the total number of Christians brought before the imperial courts must have been "insignificant from the Roman point of view, but to the small fellowship of

Christians the sudden loss of even three or four prominent members would be staggering blow"¹²

Here are my answers to Art's questions. (1, 2) I think Halley was incorrect about number; Butterworth is wrong about the severity. (3) Warnock's correctness depends on what he means by "widespread." (4) Domitian did attempt to "crush Christianity" through the persecution of John and others mentioned in my first article.¹³ (5) Hemer says "No Domitianic edict against Christianity is extant."¹⁴ But see the case built by Hemer and by Jenkins who presents Revelation as a "Polemic against the Imperial cult" in **Emperor Worship**. (6) I only know what has been presented in the evidence cited. The total number persecuted or slain remains a conjecture. Persecution may exist without killing. (7) I think Antipas belongs in this category. (8) The evidence for a persecution by Domitian seems, to me, too strong to reject.

A Friendly Challenge Returned

It is easy to ask for specific names of people killed and then incorrectly to conclude in the absence or scarcity of such that no persecution took place. I would like for Art to (1) name a single person of Asia Minor who was killed because he was a Christian as a result of either the Neronian or Jewish persecution during the years A. D. 60 to 70. (2) If the New Testament canon was closed by A. D. 70, why didn't the "Church Fathers" know this? (3) Why were they of the "opinion" that John was exiled by Domitian and that he lived until the time of Trajan? (4) Why were they of the "opinion" that Domitian was the second to raise a persecution against the church? (5) Since the "Church Fathers" left volumes upon volumes (far more than the Roman historians), and since they differed on many things, why wasn't a single one of them during the first five centuries of the "opinion" that Revelation was written during the reign of Nero? (6) Why do you consider the pagans, Tacitus and Suetonius, good historians when failing to mention Christians, but consider the Christians, Hegesippus and Eusebius, as bad historians when they mention what the Romans did to the Christians?

Conclusion

With the modern Italian scholar **Marta Sordi** "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."¹⁵ I wish to close with the words of the nineteenth century scholar, Sir William Ramsay: "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, be consistent, resolve to dismiss nine-tenths of what appears in books as ancient history, including most that is interesting and valuable."¹⁶

Works Cited

¹Collins 34.

²Colin Hemer, **The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting** (Sheffield: The University of Sheffield, 1986) 222.

³Bell 96.⁴**Ecclesiastical History**, III. xx.⁵**Ecclesiastical History**, iv. xxvi.⁶**Apology**, V. 3, 4; **Ecclesiastical History**, III. xx.⁷AN. Sherwin-White, **The Letters of Pliny. A Historical and Social Commentary** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966) 695.⁸**Ecclesiastical History**, III. xix.⁹Arlie J. Hoover, "Jesus and the Historians," **Firm Foundation**, April 29, 1980, 278.¹⁰See G. B. Caird, **The Apostolic Age** (London: Duckworth, 1955) 167.¹¹Hemer 213-214. Consider the comment by Edward Gibbon in this light.¹²Bell 96.¹³This statement was made by Donald L. Jones, "Christianity and the Roman Imperial Cult," in **Aufstieg un Niedergang der Romischen Welt** (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 1033. I have found his essay most helpful.¹⁴Hemer 216.¹⁵Sordi 45.¹⁶Ramsay 259.

REBUTTAL

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Due to limited space, I cannot respond to everything presented in Ferrell's previous article. The 12 questions asked must be by-passed due to space and being unable to introduce new material needed in response.

Ferrell has ably presented the case for a Domitian persecution. The evidence is before us. We must weigh it for value. If we grant validity to all of his evidence, this is the sum total of what he has proven: two banishments, an inquiry, and one death (Antipas, Rev. 2: 13). Realizing the difficulty, Ferrell summoned Colin Hemer to define persecution so that it will include what he has tried to prove. Surely you can see by now the weakness of the case for a Domitian persecution.

Ferrell wants us to fear questioning the patristic evidence. He quotes Ramsay to the effect that if we do not accept this weak evidence, to be consistent, we must be ready to reject 9/10 of all we call ancient history. Ferrell does not believe this himself for, as I have pointed out already, there are many things revealed by the "Church Fathers" which he questions and often rejects. In fact, two of Ferrell's quoted sources contradicted each other on who "recalled the exiles," Domitian or Nerva? Tertullian said it was Domitian. Eusebius said it was Nerva. Ferrell chose to believe Eusebius. I wonder how he made his decision?

It should further be observed that not all who hold to the same general interpretation of Revelation as Ferrell place the same degree of confidence in the statement of

Irenaeus. Jim McGuiggan, whose Commentary on Revelation ranks #1 among Revelation commentaries in sales at the Religious Supply Center, dates the Apocalypse during the last years of Vespasian's reign. Many brethren with sound Bible background are now agreeing with McGuiggan. Wonder if these brethren have ever heard of Irenaeus?

Ferrell needs more than an implication from Pliny's letter to prove a Domitian persecution. He needs a necessary implication. He overlooks the obvious, namely, that Pliny's letter (111 AD) implies trials of Christians under Trajan (98-117 AD). This is the most reasonable implication since Trajan was a persecutor. Pliny was appointed governor of Bithynia in 111 AD, the thirteenth year of Trajan's reign.

To use the Book of Revelation, whose date of writing and application is debatable, to prove Domitian was a persecutor, to me, is unreasonable. It assumes a thing as proven which is yet to be proven. If Ferrell is wrong about the Apocalypse, he is likewise wrong about Domitian, and vice versa, despite his disavowal.

I admitted in my first article that historical silence does not prove Domitian was not a persecutor. I realize that history does not record all events. This is why we say there MAY have been persecution during Domitian's reign. At the same time, it must be recognized that historical silence **does not prove** persecution either. I doubt seriously that history would have recorded a persecution of the size indicated by Ferrell's evidence, however, I believe history would have recorded a persecution of the size and intensity implied by Ferrell and taught by others.

Ferrell thinks he answered the arguments for the early dating of Revelation in his **Studies in the Book of Revelation** (1973). Sorry, but my main arguments were not dealt with in his work and those he dealt with, which were used by Macdonald and Wallace, he did not answer. He only stated them and showed why he and others do not accept them. I would welcome the opportunity for just one hour to present my case for the early date of Revelation before Ferrell and all others who are interested and, then, let them take all the time they need to see if they can destroy it. Take me up. I challenge you.

I stated in my first article that the strongest case that can be made for a Domitian persecution is that there MAY have been one. This is still the case. Ferrell has admitted that much of what has been said about a Domitian persecution is false, that it has been overstated, that no edict against Christianity during Domitian's reign is extant, and that he does not know how many, if any, were killed by Domitian. He even said, "Persecution may exist without killing." What has he proven? He has merely proven that there MAY have been a persecution. What have I proven? I have merely proven that there MAY NOT have been persecution under Domitian. My point in all of this is very simple. Let us stop this non-sense of declaring Domitian as the (greatest) persecutor of all times. If you believe the evidence presented by Ferrell, then teach what the evidence says. As far as the Book of Revelation is concerned, there is another view of the Apocalypse that

does not depend upon Domitian as one of its chief characters. Read and study **The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets.**

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the EDITOR of STS for suggesting and planning this exchange and to my dear friend Ferrell Jenkins for his honorable part in this discussion. Their interest in truth and fair play is evident. I love them for this and because they are my brethren.

DIVINE COMMUNIQUES

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WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER

DIVINE COMMUNIQUE: "What God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt. 19: 6).

I shared with you in the last issue the wedding message presented at the marriage of our daughter. Perhaps some would like to see the vows they used. They are a blend of traditional and current wording of great promises all husbands and wives should make both to God and to one another.

Your marriage, endorsed by your loved ones and sealed in conjugal union, is meant to be the most binding relationship of your life next to your union to God through Christ. It must be cherished, preserved, and protected in view of the eternal destiny of your souls. It is, therefore, God who now enjoins upon you both the lasting bond of your vows to each other. The promises you make to God and to each other can be severed only by one of your dying.

MARK, WILL YOU TAKE SHERRI TO BE YOUR WEDDED WIFE, TO LIVE TOGETHER ACCORDING TO THE ORDINANCES OF GOD; WILL YOU LOVE, HONOR, AND CHERISH HER IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH, IN PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY; AND WILL YOU PROMISE TO KEEP YOURSELF TO HER ONLY, AS LONG AS YOU BOTH SHALL LIVE? Response: "I Will"
SHERRI WILL YOU TAKE MARK TO BE YOUR WEDDED HUSBAND, TO LIVE TOGETHER ACCORDING TO THE ORDINANCES OF GOD; WILL YOU LOVE, HONOR, OBEY, AND CHERISH HIM IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH, IN PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY; AND WILL YOU PROMISE TO KEEP YOURSELF TO HIM ONLY, AS LONG AS YOU BOTH SHALL LIVE? Response: "I Will"

Since it is your desire to become one in marriage, will you please join your right hands and each in turn repeat the vows of love and loyalty to each other:

I TAKE YOU SHERRI/MARK TO BE MY WIFE/HUSBAND, TO HAVE AND TO HOLD, TO LOVE AND CARE FOR, ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD UNTIL DEATH SHALL SEPARATE US. I PROMISE MY LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS, MY LOYALTY AND DEVOTION, MY TRUST AND CONFIDENCE. YOU WILL BE MY CLOSEST COMPANION AND FRIEND, MY TRUSTED HELPER AND SUPPORTER, THE INTIMATE LOVE OF MY LIFE. I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU OR FORSAKE YOU AS LONG AS WE BOTH SHALL LIVE.

Mark/Sherri, what symbol of your love for Sherri/Mark and of your marriage do you bring for your new wife? **A ring.**

I GIVE YOU THIS RING, AS A SYMBOL OF OUR PLEDGE OF CONSTANT FAITHFULNESS AND ABIDING LOVE. WITH THIS RING WE ARE WED, AND ALL THAT IS MINE I NOW SHARE WITH YOU.

Sherri, you are a marvelous joy to us. Mark, you do not realize the pride you give to your family. Today is a new beginning in your relationship with one another and in ours with you. All of us will be with you so long as God gives us breath. Our active prayer will be that you will never forget the love of God and the love of your family and friends who have come today both to hear your vows and to pledge ourselves to surround you not as mere spectators but as loving supporters along the pathway of life. God go with you as do we.

Dear Lord, please accept the vows of these Thy children and join them in marriage. In keeping with thy will as expressed in Thy Word and in accord with the laws of this state, I pronounce that Mark and Sherri are husband and wife.

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SMOKELESS BRETHREN

In my own personal experience, I have encountered two cases where the victims of lung cancer requested the preacher to warn about the dangers of smoking. One was a brother in Christ, and requested on his death bed that I continue to warn brethren about the relationship of smoking and lung cancer. He was convinced there was a connection between the two, and that was years before present statistics were available.

The other individual was not a member of the church. I visited her a few months before she died, and she continued to smoke her cigarettes in spite of her emphysema, violent coughing spells, and pleas of her family and friends to stop smoking. Her lung cancer was diagnosed shortly thereafter, but the heart gave out, maybe mercifully, before the lung cancer could take its toll. On her death bed, she requested that the preacher say something in the funeral sermon about the dangers of smoking.

Back in the days of black powder, we could always tell where dad was in the woods when he had a squirrel in the sights of that ancient twelve gauge, and pulled the trigger. An enormous cloud of black smoke arose from his position, and I am sure the remaining squirrels knew where he was by then. Then, smokeless powder made its advent, and it was heralded as an improvement over the smoking kind. Maybe so for the hunter, but the squirrels may argue the point.

Now, smokeless tobacco is becoming more popular with the avalanche of evidence indicating a link between smoking, lung cancer, and heart disease. Some brethren are switching to smokeless tobacco, in spite of evidence and statistics which indicate that it may cause cancer of the mouth. What will it take to produce a generation of smokeless, chewless, spitless brethren?

I have just read a **partial** list of seventeen famous personalities who died of lung cancer, and who were all heavy smokers. When I taught first-aid and CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation), for the Red Cross and the American Heart Association, **I was required** to teach that smoking was a factor in heart disease. At the same time, some brethren object if I warned them about the ill effects of smoking on the human body.

Now, local, state, and federal laws have been enacted to protect the non-smoker in the work place, restaurants, and food preparation areas. There are still the die-hards who resist all the evidence, including brethren who do not think that 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20 and

Rom. 12: 1 have any application to those who abuse their physical bodies in any fashion. We recall a period of time in the history of God's people when they became so hardened to their condition that it took a drastic demonstration to bring them to their senses. A man cut a woman's body into twelve pieces and sent a piece to each of the twelve tribes (Judges 19: 29, 30). This got their attention. It is sad when people resist the truth to such an extent. It is also sad when a friend or loved one dies of lung cancer by inches, and requests the preacher to warn others not to follow their example.

All lung cancer isn't caused by smoking. And, it is conceded that there are other dangers which threaten the human body, such as alcohol, other drugs, automobile exhausts, and overeating. But all that doesn't minimize or justify the ill effects of tobacco on the human body. And, you can always find a preacher who will agree with you on any subject, be it marriage, grace, faith, baptism, or smoking.

Israel was reproved for offering the halt and the lame in sacrifice unto God. And, while the soul is of greater value than the body, a body which has been wrecked and ruined by a senseless habit cannot be presented as much of a "living sacrifice... unto God. "

THE NEW RESPONSE

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Jesus urged his followers to have and to show unusual reactions. Perhaps we have not seen just what He meant in Matthew 5: 41, "And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. "

Few of us have ever been made subjects of impressment. But civilian conscription has not always been illegal in our country. Years ago two young men had saved money and vacation time to spend two weeks in a lovely Northwest location. A forest fire there caused them to be pressed into the service of fighting it the entire time.

In Judea, then under military rule, the common reaction was to resent the restrictions of the Roman army. A soldier, walking through a region, could demand that, for free, a citizen, in his turn, carry his baggage for him. One mile for each was not too great a distance for one easily to walk back home. We can understand how the soldier would come to expect unenthusiastic compliance. Sullen obedience surely was the usual attitude during the demanded service which was next to slavery.

Now, say that our military lone traveler encounters a husky, pleasant young man. No doubt he is surprised at how cheerfully and readily the Jew sets out with him. He even visits a little. They ask about each other's work and background. At the end of the seemingly short walk together the relationship takes another startling turn. The subject says, "Sir, do not bother to find your next

helper here. Let me go another leg of your trip with you. We could talk some more."

Perhaps it would not be supposing too much to suggest that the Roman might ask why the helper has such an attitude. The probable answer would be, "I am a Christian. Jesus, the Son of God, whom I serve, told me to act in this way." Would not such a reply cause the soldier to remember the words, "Christ", and, "Christian," long and favorably? Might this not affect his later life?

Who can say that the positive attitude would not also be beneficial to the mental and emotional health of the Christian? Resentments are corrosive to the one holding them. Blessing others is helpful. Helping others is a blessing in both directions.

In all the cases where people saw Jesus or a disciple showing a viewpoint of this kind their reactions were described by words of similar meanings. They marveled, or wondered, or were amazed. Such decidedly unexpected conduct always evoked surprise and was regarded as strange. At the time that tortured victims

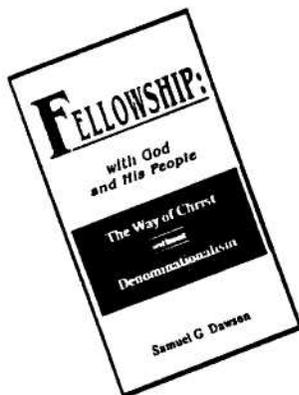
sometimes cursed their tormentors, the hardened executioner heard Jesus pray, "Father, forgive them. They do not understand what they are doing." Later, as the result of seeing how our Lord died, surprisingly that heathen said, "Truly this innocent man was the son of God!"

In the experience of Saul of Tarsus the memory of a reaction displayed in prayer lingered and rankled, becoming hard for him, and helping to lead to his conversion.

Yes, the response required is still unusual behavior. This is very difficult to do. But it is included in being a disciple of Christ.

**"Behold, I have set before thee
an open door ..."**

—Rev. 3:8



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THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

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STEVE KEARNEY, 140 Woodlawn Park Grove, Firhouse, Dublin 24, Ireland — Five have been baptized here between January and April. A young man who had fallen away and become a Punk with his dyed hair, weird clothes, drug abuse and other sins, has returned to the Lord. He has since converted his girl friend who was baptized on March 12. Keiran Murphy also reports five baptisms over the last few months. We have enlarged our pre-fab building to 36' x 24' and this should accommodate us for perhaps the next four years. By then we hope to get a loan to build. Old Street in London, England has informed me that they will not be able to continue to support me. They need the funds to support their own preacher, with which I agree. But it does mean that the greater part of 225 lbs will be missing. They have given me 3 months notice to try and replace it.

VIVION ROAD LECTURES

We regret that we received announcement of the lectures at Vivion Road in Kansas City, MO too late to include it before it occurred June 19-22. The speakers were Hoyt Houchen, Grover Stevens and Kenneth Chumley. Subjects covered included authority, institutionalism/social gospel, spiritual growth and worldliness. Both video and audio tapes are available. Write to: Church of Christ, P. O. Box 28478, Kansas City, MO 64118. Copy for material in this column goes to the printer a month before the date printed on the issue. That means copy for June had to be sent in by May 1 at. We request that those who wish to have announcements of such events appear in the paper, please let us know 4-5 weeks in advance.

CHICAGO CONGREGATION DISBANDS

JAMES D. ELAM, 5220 Grove St., Skokie, IL—On Dec. 18, 1988, the congregation known for nearly four decades as the "410 S. Michigan Ave. Church of Christ" ceased meeting in the Fine Arts Building in downtown Chicago. Through the years, the group has been a beginning place for many young preachers, has supported works in various locations on a continuing basis and also contributed to travel funds for preachers overseas and in difficult places in northern and eastern USA. After 33 years at the 410 S. Michigan address and a nearly 3 year span at the Americana Congress at 520 S. Michigan, we returned to the 410 address in 1987 in a sublease-type arrangement which severely restricted our efforts. We could not find another suitable location in the downtown area which would permit the type of work needful for us to grow.

The contributions are being distributed to Whit Sasser, Oshkosh, WI; Jerry Folk in New Jersey; Dale Pennock, Palatine, Illinois; Rick Boswell, De Motte, IN; Rudolph Berry, S. Ashland Ave., Chicago; and two brethren who are in physical need.

In late February, a group formerly known as the 19 S. LaSalle St. church began meeting at our old location. This group has been liberal in teaching for all the years they have been downtown. Efforts were made in years past to persuade them differently but to no avail. The nearest sound church is the one in Berwyn. Please call us for any directions you may need. Please remember us in your prayers as the members work with other congregations in the area. We wish to keep in touch with our many friends. Phone (312) 967-9667.

HELP NEEDED

BELL DODD, Rt. 6, Box 200, Oxford, MS 38665 — This is an appeal for brother Ray Roberts, gospel preacher of Coffeerville, Alabama. His wife, Erline, suffered a massive heart attack last November requiring

open heart surgery. Her extensive hospital stay resulted in a debt of \$60,000. Ray had just dropped an insurance policy on which they had paid premiums for years. The reason for dropping the policy was a premium raise from over \$300 per month to over \$500 per month. These folks are worthy. Ray has preached in southwest Alabama for more than a quarter of a century and is a very able preacher. For references contact Horace Hugging of Thomasville, Alabama or the writer. You may contact Ray Roberts at: Rt. 1, Coffeerville, Alabama. Phone (205) 276-3341.

MIKE SCHMTTT, 6808 Oakdale Dr., Tampa, 33610 — We at the Northeast church in Tampa, Florida have just finished a week-long meeting with Ron Daly of Millington, TN doing the preaching. And what preaching it was! Ron was a stranger to us at Northeast. We had heard good things about him, and he certainly did not disappoint us. Northeast is in an integrated neighborhood, and we have been trying to reach the people who live near the building with the gospel. We thought that having a black man for a meeting might go a long way toward proving our good intentions toward all people, so we contacted Ron and rented a tent to put up on the corner of our property. There are apartments all around the building and a 7-11 store across the street.

Ron came and used our big PA. to literally draw in the people with his powerful and Scripture-packed preaching. He spoke for an hour every night, quoting and explaining lengthy passages without once looking at any notes, and kept everyone's attention riveted upon the word of God. His powerful voice literally echoed the Scriptures off the walls of the surrounding apartments, causing people 2 blocks away to listen from their porches. (I just got off the phone with a woman requesting that I come over and study this week with her and her grown children — a direct result of this meeting). Before every service he was out by the road shaking hands with passers-by and urging them to come in — which several did right on the spot.

Every member of Northeast, both black and white, was tremendously impressed with Ron Daly, the man, and the preacher. We were lifted up, exhorted, encouraged and emboldened to go forward. Ron doesn't know I am writing this, and will probably be embarrassed, but I know that there are many churches across America that could use a man of his caliber if they only knew he was out there. He is needed to preach not only to blacks, but to all of us. He has recently lost 3/4 of his support, and is having to do secular work to support his family. He never complained about that, but it is a shame that a man of his talents is not able to work full time for the cause of Christ. There are many of us, both black and white, with far less ability who are free to work completely at preaching. Are there not churches or individuals who will meet this need? I believe so. Won't you? Ron Daly can be contacted at: P. O. Box 401, Millington, TN 38053. Phone (901) 873-4254.

BARRY MARK PENNINGTON, Rt. 1, Box 12-B, Grand Saline, TX 75140—We have been with the work here for nearly a year. On April 9, 1989 we had 90 present for morning worship. I preached in a meeting here in April with the house filled each night. We had a good number from neighboring institutional congregations with several doors now open for further study. We also had a number of denominational people to come.

A new congregation has been established in Mineola, Texas. On Sunday morning, April 30, 1989, 34 people met in the old school administration building in Mineola. The new work will be known as

the West McDonald Street church. Mineola is at the intersection of Highway 69 and Highway 80 (north of Tyler and Lindale, east of Grand Saline, west of Longview). The meeting place is P. O. Box 963, Mineola, TX 75773. Phone (214) 569-3117. Ardie P. Brown of Carrollton, TX was to hold a meeting in June.

**IN MEMORY OF T. E. WEBB
(1917-1989)**

T. E. Webb, Texas preacher, passed away on May 1, 1989 during open heart surgery. He was born June 12, 1917 in Fairfield, Texas. He was married to Minnie Rebecca Long and to this union three children were born. In 1941 they moved to the Gulf Coast of Texas where they lived for 22 years. During this time he taught and baptized M. Roy Stevens. They helped establish several new churches in the Brazosport area. He was a quiet man who worked diligently and excelled in home Bible studies. He taught and baptized many precious souls. Funeral services were conducted on May 3, 1989 before a large audience. The writer spoke and read the obituary and W. R. Jones preached.

— Barry M. Pennington

GIANNI BERDINL Via Battisti 20, Nuggia (TS) 34015, Italy — We recently had a very successful meeting with Arrigo Corazza of Alessandria, Italy speaking. He spoke on "What is the Bible?" and "Can We Trust the Bible?" These lessons were well illustrated with slides. The first night there were 100 in attendance, with 65 of these being non-members. The second night about 80 came, with 45 of these being non-members. We had rented a hall and advertised with large posters, radio and newspaper. It is highly unusual in Italy to draw that many non-members (a total of 90 different ones for the two nights). The church in Trieste is much encouraged and we are following up all leads.

PAUL WILLIAMS, P. O. Box 324, Eshowe, 3815 South Africa — The church at Alra Park, Nigel were able to accommodate about 300 people in their new church building for the lectures held March 24-26. The building seats 200 normally, but children were seated on the platform and many people sat on folding chairs in the aisles. Most were blacks, though there were whites, Indians and Coloureds. Brethren came from far and wide. A bus load of Indian brethren came from the Durban area, 100 miles south of Eshowe. The lectures were on first principles. On Friday afternoon there were four hour-long lectures plus an hour of singing. Saturday morning there were two lectures with three more in the afternoon. There was one on Sunday morning. All sermons were interpreted into Zulu and on Saturday into Northern Sotho as well. In my estimation the finest lectures were delivered by South Africans: Basil Cass on "Repentance," Leslie Maydell on "Baptism, What, Who, Why: and Paddy Kendall-Ball on "The Curse of Denominationalism."

On March 30 the Eshowe church received permission from the town council to use our rented building as a meeting place and the church had its first services there the weekend of April 8-9. We had 28 Saturday evening, 35 Sunday morning and 24 Sunday evening. The building is quite adequate to our needs for sometime. With no carpets or curtains the building has quite a ring to it, encouraging singers to give their best. On Saturday night we sang until we were breathless. We are located opposite the police station which makes it easy to direct people to us.

PREACHERS NEEDED

GLADESVILLE, WEST VIRGINIA—We are looking for a full time gospel preacher. Only apply if you preach the word exactly as contained in the Bible. We are able to supply about \$1,000 a month support. We have a house. We have about 54 in attendance. If interested please contact: Church of Christ, Route 1, Box 193, Independence, WV 26374, or call (304) 864-6721 or (304) 864-6835.

ALMAVLLLE, TENNESSEE — This congregation, located between Franklin and Murfreesboro, is looking for a full time gospel preacher. We are small with about 30 in attendance. In the past we have had only part-time preachers. The area has grown considerably and is potentially capable of much growth. We need a man who can do door-to-door work. We can supply about \$500 a month, possibly more. For more information call: James King (615) 395-4567.



PICTURES IN POETRY

P. J. Casebolt, who writes a column in this paper has published Volume I of a book of poetry. He is gifted in such writing. It is entitled PICTURES IN POETRY. All poems in Section I are Boyhood Memories; Section II - Inspiration; Section III - Seasons and Scenery; Section IV - Solitude and Serenity; Section V - Loving Memory, Living Tribute. There is a blend of tears, songs and laughter. The book is a neatly printed paperback and sells for \$6. We are glad to recommend it. You may order it from: P. J. Casebolt, Route 1, Box 210, Middlebourne, WV 26149.

SISTER MARIE

We met her in Tupelo, Mississippi. She has only been a Christian for one year. She is the only black member of the church which meets on Hamm Road. She regularly brings visitors to the services and brought some to the gospel meeting in which I preached. She was included in three social gatherings to which we were also invited. In the summer she personally conducts a daily Bible school for one week with neighborhood children. Many come. She and her husband have brought up four children and have seen them all obtain college degrees. At 67 she is still a hard working woman and has a keen appetite for the truth of the Bible. She is a respected sister in the Lord and we are richer for having her as a sister and a friend. By the way, I think I have seen as many integrated churches in Mississippi as I have anywhere in the country. In fact, over the last few years I have seen more in the deep south than anywhere else. And why not? We must reach out the gospel to men and women of every race.

DRESSED FOR THE OCCASION

My brother, Wiley, has a knack for attracting unusual situations. Either that, or he has surely bent coincidence out of shape. During a meeting in which he preached in the deep south, a young preacher from another congregation came with a man to baptize after their service was over and most of the people had gone home. The local preacher took them inside, showed the young preacher the garments for baptism and the baptismal boots. He and Wiley sat down on the front row to witness the baptism. When the two men came down into the baptistery, the preacher had on the fresh clothes for baptism and the man to be baptized had on the boots! It was too late to stop them. When the preacher laid the man back beneath the water, he floated up, feet first, and there was quite an effort required to get him back on his feet. I guess you could say there had been a "communication problem."

PERSECUTION, ANYONE?

It took a persecution to scatter the disciples out of Jerusalem and into a broadened effort to take the gospel into Samaria and ultimately "unto the uttermost part of the earth." I know a number of congregations which are abundantly blessed with talented men, many of whom are capable teachers and preachers of the Word. In fact, there are some men like that in several congregations I know about than are laboring in some states, and in a few cases, in a whole region of the country. Rudolfo Berdini and Sandro Corazza, both of Rome, Italy, have each told me that we ought to pray for them to have a severe persecution because the church in Italy grew faster under those circumstances than at any other time. And maybe we should consider that here, too.

IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH

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