

# FIG LEAF FORUM

A meeting place for Bible-believing Christian nudists

Issue Number 1

November 12, 1994

## Editorial

### So what's behind the fig leaf?

Welcome! You hold in your hands the premiere issue of *Fig Leaf Forum*, and I'm so pleased that you took the time to request it. First, a few words to explain what this publication is all about.

**The name.** It seems somewhat ironic that history's first clothing (the *fig leaf*) should figure so prominently in the title of a publication intended for nudists. Just about everyone is familiar with the account in Genesis of Adam and Eve and their attempt at using fig leaves to clothe themselves after eating of the forbidden fruit. The beginning chapters of Genesis offer such profound insights into mankind's original nakedness and the origins of clothing that I believe they deserve close scrutiny. Mentioning the fig leaf draws our attention to these scriptures. Studying them with care and discernment can profoundly affect a Christian's view of the human body and nakedness (see the article entitled "The second sin" on page 2). For Christian nudists these scriptures can play an important role in clearly defining their own philosophy of nudism.

The dictionary defines a *forum* as an assembly or meeting place for the discussion of questions of public interest. My greatest desire is that the pages of this newsletter become just that—a meeting place where Christian nudists from all parts of North America and from all walks of life

can share fellowship with those of like mind.

**The content.** The Bible will play a prominent role in these pages. As with this first issue, future issues will have features dealing with the Bible and what it has to say about nakedness. There will be articles examining Christianity and nakedness from a historical perspective (see the review of "Women in Roman Baths" on page 3). And there will be articles dealing with contemporary issues affecting Christian nudists. I will write many of these features and I hope some of you will want to participate by contributing as well.

The most significant part of what will be published in each issue, however, will be letters. While articles and other features are important, they lack the intimate and conversational tone found in letters. Letters will be the life-blood of *Fig Leaf Forum*. Our letters will tell us something about ourselves—they will express thoughts and ideas about the Bible and Christianity and nudism; some will pose questions and hopefully others will render answers; they will address mutual concerns and offer help and hope; they will be our means to fellowship with each other.

**The vision.** Many of us have friends and acquaintances from our place of worship. We may also have friends and acquaintances from nudist clubs that we visit. But how many Christian nudists also know and are friends with other Christian nudists? Few of us, I suspect, are that fortunate. Each of us feels like a voice in the wilderness. Fellowship with like-minded brothers and sisters in Christ is important. Hence, the quotation from Hebrews that appears with the *Fig Leaf Forum* banner. May this newsletter become

a gathering place for Christian nudists—a place of fellowship, edification and encouragement for those who love our Lord, believe the Bible, and share an interest in nudism.

I hope that even though we will meet only on paper and over long distances through the mail we will, over time, develop the intimacy and closeness which should be a part of this *family* of Christian nudists which exists within the larger Body of Christ.

Well, what do you think? Does the vision I have for this newsletter arouse your interest? If it does, why not send a letter to *Fig Leaf Forum* today. In no time at all the next issue will be in your mailbox and an exciting new Christian Nudist Fellowship will begin! (JK)

## The second sin

*An ongoing dialog between two Christians about nakedness and the Bible.*

*Christian nudist:* What do you think was the second sin of mankind?

*Skeptic:* The first sin that we learn about in the Bible was when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. If memory serves, the second sin took place when Cain murdered Able, right?

*Christian nudist:* That's what most people think. Let's look closer at Genesis and we'll see if that's true. First of all, though, lets be clear about what is meant by the word *sin*. For our purposes, let's define sin as doing something that God does not

want us to do, or not doing something that God does want us to do.

*Skeptic:* That seems clear enough. Now what?

*Christian nudist:* Okay. We agree that the first sin of mankind was the eating of the forbidden fruit. This took place in Genesis 3.1-6. Now, if you look closely at the text, the very next thing that happened in verse seven was that Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness and they chose to cover themselves. That, in fact, was the second sin of mankind.

*Skeptic:* Wait a minute! I thought God was the one who decided that people should wear clothes. See, my Bible says here in Genesis 3.21, "And the LORD God made clothes out of animal skins for Adam and his wife, and he clothed them." What about that?

*Christian nudist:* I don't deny that God made clothing for Adam and Eve, but let's look at what had transpired between verse seven where Adam and Eve made their first attempt at fashion design and verse 21, which you just quoted.

When the first bites were taken from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, *SELF* and *EGO* were born. No longer would life be lived as was intended from the beginning, in total dependence on God and with total submission to God. Now Adam and Eve were self-aware, and they immediately started to do things independently of God.

Have you ever looked in the dictionary for all the words that begin with the prefix *self*? Among others we find self-absorbed, self-advantage, self-centered, self-conscious, self-determined, self-important, self-interest, self-reliant, self-

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righteous, self-sufficient, not to mention the simple but powerful little word *selfish*.

*Skeptic*: I get the picture, and it's not a very pleasant one, I admit. But you still haven't explained why God made clothes for Adam and Eve if they weren't supposed to have them.

*Christian nudist*: You're right, so let's go back to Genesis. After God listened to the feeble excuses of the man and woman about why they did their sinful deeds, He pronounced the curse on mankind that has been with us ever since. Among other things He proclaimed that unlike the way things had been in Eden, life would become much harsher. The ground from which they must wrestle their sustenance would now bring forth "thorns and thistles" in addition to their food. On top of that, God decided to expel Adam and Eve from the pleasant environment of the garden into the world, where there were great variations in climate.

God must have looked at the pathetic clothes the man and woman had made for themselves out of fig leaves and known that they would do little or nothing to protect them from the rigors of their new environment, so I believe that it was out of compassion that God made protective and durable clothes from animal skins.

*Skeptic*: That makes sense, I guess. So now clothes are not sinful anymore, right?

*Christian nudist*: Not so fast! The key to understanding all of this is to examine motives. Why did mankind decide to wear clothes, and why did God decide to clothe mankind. Here we come to the real issue.

Verse 25 of Genesis 2 says that before they sinned, Adam and Eve were both naked and were not ashamed. Why should they be, since they were created by God in His image and God pronounced all that He had created "very good." After they ate of the forbidden fruit, *they* took it upon themselves to cover up and hide this *good*

creation from each other and from God. The audacity of these people was unbelievable! It's not until we get to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden that any real or legitimate need to clothe the body appeared.

*Skeptic*: Very interesting! So you're saying that covering the body for protection was okay but covering the body for the reason Adam and Eve did was sin.

*Christian nudist*: Right! God's motivation for clothing mankind was compassionate and purposeful, while Adam and Eve's motivation was distorted by sin and self-consciousness. By clothing Adam and Eve God was not validating their sinful act. Those who believe that the Bible teaches that God agreed with Adam and Eve and that He wanted human nakedness covered at all times have got it wrong. The second sin is *still* sin!

Next time: The skeptic learns the difference between voluntary and involuntary nakedness in the Bible. (JK)

## Review

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"Women in Roman Baths"

by Roy Bowen Ward

Published in *Harvard Theological Review*  
85:2 A 1992 by the President and Fellows  
of Harvard College

A fascinating study has appeared in the *Harvard Theological Review* entitled "Women in Roman Baths." The article explores the historical evidence suggesting that nude mixed bathing in the public baths was common among citizens of the Roman Empire (including Christians) well into the fourth century.

Author Roy Bowen Ward begins by quoting three passages from historical writings which strongly indicate that Christians frequented the

Roman baths. He then meticulously explores the concept of nude mixed bathing and whether it would have been practiced at the time of these writings. He examines the architecture of the baths in detail, showing the evolution of separate bathing areas for men and women into the single facilities open to both sexes which predominated during the time of the early Church. He explores and discounts the theory held by some scholars that these large public facilities were open to men and women during different periods of the day in order to continue the separation of the sexes.

Evidence is presented which indicates that some used the public baths for immoral purposes (i.e. prostitution). It is shown, however, that despite these limited abuses the baths continued to be used for their intended purposes by the respectable in Roman society, including Christians.

Mr. Ward presents writings from early Christian leaders, some decrying the practice of mixed bathing, and others approving it. Since the writings span a period of centuries it is clearly shown that nude mixed bathing was commonly practiced by Christians for a very long time. It was only after the end of the fourth century that changes in bath architecture show mixed bathing coming to an end.

Despite a large body of Christian writings that have come down to us from this period, very little was written addressing the subject of mixed bathing in the public baths. The author concludes that on the basis of the evidence, "one will surely be driven to raise questions about key social institutions and practices that early Christian authors pass over in silence. Peter Brown comments on the 'indifference to nudity in Roman public life,' citing the public baths as one locus for nudity. It appears the earliest Christian authors may have been equally indifferent."

### ***Commentary***

So often Christians tend to transfer present-day

codes of social conduct to Bible times and assume that what is deemed moral and immoral today reflects the values held by the first Christians. When confronting others with anything that significantly departs from present-day Christian culture (like Christian nudism) we usually encounter stiff opposition based upon their understanding of Church history, tradition and the Bible. "Why would you want to change moral conduct that has been a part of the Church throughout history?" they may ask. Ah, but has it? Because something *is* today, must it naturally follow that it has *always* been so? Recent scholarship like that of "Women in Roman Baths" would seem to indicate otherwise! I wonder how our understanding of other areas of Christian conduct might benefit from similar eye-opening investigative scholarship? I live in hope of the day when more Christians will be interested in the truth of the Bible and the reality of history rather than in the preservation of the traditions of men and the cultural status-quo. (JK)

## **About anonymity**

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In a perfect world we could freely share the Gospel of Christ without fear of rejection or ridicule. In a perfect world we could easily share our interest in nudism without any fear of misunderstanding, social retribution, or even financial loss. Alas, this is *not* a perfect world.

Some Christian nudists are publicly bold and confident about their beliefs and lifestyle. Others have a God-given demeanor that is less bold and outgoing. Some are independent in their ways and means, while others are very dependent on the good graces and understanding of their employer or others that they must associate with. Clearly, God does not make "cookie-cutter" Christians. We are all unique, with different personalities and physical circumstances, yet we all have Christ in common and we all have our part to play in the grand plan of God, which for us includes Christian nudism.

Regretfully, the history of social nudism has always required anonymity for some of those involved. This is changing with time but we have not yet arrived at a point where complete openness is appropriate for all.

Authors of letters and other submissions to *Fig Leaf Forum* will be identified with first names only, along with the city and state or province in which they reside. This level of anonymity should allow everyone to comfortably and fully participate in our fellowship together. If a greater degree of anonymity is required by a contributor it will be granted.

## Our letters

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*This being the first issue of Fig Leaf Forum, one would not expect to find any letters. After all, you've only just found us and haven't had a chance to write yet! But letters are important (they're our primary way of communicating through these pages) so I've taken this opportunity to write a letter to all of you, sharing a bit of my personal Christian nudist history and beliefs.*

Greetings,

My name is John and I'm the editor of *Fig Leaf Forum*. My wife Eleanor and I first experienced social nudism early in 1988 while on an extended camping vacation in Texas and Florida. While looking through the campground guides that were available that year I came across a description of Cypress Cove Resort in Kissimmee, FL. I was intrigued. Some time later I was browsing in a bookstore and happened upon a book about nude beaches and recreation. I read what it had to say about nudism and nudist parks. I knew this was something that I wanted to experience.

What was it that so attracted me to the whole concept of nudism and clothes-free living? Curiosity, sure, and the chance to try something

new and different, but on a deeper level it seemed like such a profound expression of freedom—freedom in a physical sense but also freedom in a spiritual sense.

I was convinced in my heart and mind that there was nothing immoral about nudism if people conducted themselves like I read about in the book. I knew I was going into this with honorable motives. I have always disliked the worldly *moralistic legalism* often found in the Church. I decided not to let possible external criticisms override my internal sense of permission.

I was also attracted to nudism because it seemed like such a superb way to *celebrate life*. I've never been able to adequately explain what I mean by that. Perhaps many of you who read this letter will instinctively know what I mean.

I must confess that I had a difficult time convincing Eleanor to try nudism. We had both been Christians for a number of years and she had some reservations about the morality of the practice. We thoroughly talked it out and we discussed what the Bible seemed to say about nakedness. She finally agreed to give it a try.

We made reservations and arrived at the gate on a cool and rainy day. The poor weather persisted for a couple of days and so did our nervousness, but then the sun came out from under the clouds, the people came out from under their clothes—and so did we. Nudism proved to be delightful! The openness of the friendly and helpful people we met there made us feel so welcome and safe. We ended up staying a month, and have been nudists ever since.

Our spiritual background might best be described as evangelical. The Bible is *very* important to us. If someone could conclusively prove to us from the Scriptures that social nudism is sinful we would end our involvement with it immediately. After years of study and reflection, however, I don't think that will happen. I am more convinced than ever of the *rightness* of nudism for us.

Eleanor does have a concern that our lifestyle might be a spiritual stumbling block to some individuals (Romans 14). I share her concern but believe that if we call ourselves *Christian nudists* then we must be *very* sensitive to the moral and spiritual sensibilities of those around us—more so, perhaps, than the average social nudist. We must take care that nothing we do in the presence of others be allowed to compromise their faith or cause temptation to sin. On the other hand, we must lovingly balance this sensitivity with a firm commitment not to let the values of others nullify the precious liberty we have in Christ.

Many years have come and gone since our first exposure to nudism. One thing has always been missing though, and that is fellowship with other Christian nudists. I have always wished that I could find some way to fellowship—a club, a magazine or, dare I say, perhaps even some congregation—something *purely* Christian for nudists. If it's out there I've never found it.

In the belief that there are others sharing a similar yearning I decided to bring this publication into being. This is my attempt at finding others who are Christian first and nudist second—to find you and bring you together within the pages of *Fig Leaf Forum*. I am truly looking forward to meeting you all!

John  
Winnipeg, MB

## Suggestions for contributors

*Fig Leaf Forum exists to allow you to share fellowship with other Christian nudists. If you'd like to share something but can't think of anything to write, please allow me to make a few suggestions:*

Send a letter to the editor.

- Respond to a letter that has already appeared. Let's get a dialog going!
- Write an article of interest to Christian nudists.
- Comment on an article that has already appeared.
- Send a review of a book or article that you have read that pertains to nudism.
- Comment on a review that has already appeared in *Fig Leaf Forum*.
- Start a regular column about a subject of interest to Christian nudists.
- Send a news item that might interest readers.
- Write a poem about Christian nudism.
- Make suggestions about what you would like to see in future issues of *Fig Leaf Forum*.
- Send along a favorite quotation that would be appreciated by readers.
- Share an idea or concern with fellow readers.
- Write a gospel message.
- Construct a crossword or word search puzzle with clues appropriate for Christian nudists.
- Write a fictional short story involving Christian nudists.

*Enter the biographical spotlight and share with readers some details about yourself and your family, or share some interesting experiences. Help us get to know you better by sharing answers to questions such as:*

- What is your spiritual background?
- How did you become interested in nudism?
- What was your first nudist experience like?
- How have you explained your interest in nudism to friends, family, pastor or priest? What was their reaction?
- Did you ever have (or do you now have) lingering doubts about the morality of nudism? Perhaps you are fully convinced but your spouse is not. How have you coped?
- Has nudism had any effect on your spiritual growth?
- Has nudism changed the way you feel about yourself?
- Has nudism influenced your marriage or family life?

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*The possibilities are almost without limit! The contribution of your writings to Fig Leaf Forum is truly appreciated and is vital to our success.*

## How to receive the next issue

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*Fig Leaf Forum* is available free of charge to anyone with a serious interest in Christian nudism. Each issue must be separately requested.

To request your first issue send your name and address to: *Fig Leaf Forum*, P.O. Box 1955, Winnipeg, MB R3C 3R2, Canada.

If you have previously sent for a copy of *Fig Leaf Forum* you will have received a request envelope with your return address label affixed.

**Option one:** Simply seal the empty envelope, apply the correct postage and drop it in the mail. Receipt of your request envelope here in Winnipeg will ensure delivery of the next copy of *Fig Leaf Forum* to your mailbox. It will be a pleasure to know that you value this publication enough to ask for another issue.

**Option two:** Return the request envelope with a letter, article or other material enclosed for publication. By doing so you will accomplish much more than guarantee the delivery of the next issue of *Fig Leaf Forum*. If your contribution is published you will have shared something of yourself with other Christian nudists who will hopefully be edified and encouraged by what you have written. This is what our long-distance fellowship is all about—meeting and sharing with nudist brothers and sisters in Christ through active participation in *Fig Leaf Forum*.

\*Please note: If your return address label is incorrect or if you have moved or intend to move, make the appropriate changes to your label before mailing. If you live outside of Canada the postage

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required to return your request envelope may be slightly higher than your regular domestic rate.

## The Good News

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As a Christian nudist I declare that I am not ashamed of my nakedness. My body is the good creation of God, created in His image. More importantly I declare that:

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes”—Rom 1.16 (NIV throughout)

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”—Rom 3.23

“...the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—Rom 6.23

“By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures”—1 Cor 15.2-4

“That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”—Rom 10.9

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”—John 3.16

## A reflection...

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Rather than being ashamed of their nakedness, perhaps Christians might more properly be ashamed of being ashamed of their nakedness! Think about it. (JK)