

# THINGS STRANGE TO GOD

By Joe W. Nichols

According to Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, the word "strange" carries the idea of alien, foreign, and stranger. It is applied to doctrine, opinion, tongues, land, people and flesh.

As Bible students, we are familiar with Nadab and Abihu who *"offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not"* (Leviticus 10:1). God had forbade the offering of "strange" incense, burnt offerings, meal offerings, and drink offerings in the tabernacle worship (Exodus 30:9-10). God had also specified that *"fire from off the altar"* was to be used in the offering of incense (Leviticus 16:12).

A parallelism could be drawn in applying the plight of Nadab and Abihu to those in "Christianity" who offer "strange music" to the Lord. There are two distinctive kinds of music: the kind made with instruments (Psalm 150), and the kind that is made with the human heart (Ephesians 5:19). During the early restoration movement in the United States (ca. 1800), in restoring New Testament purity to worship, the use of instruments in Christian worship was rejected as unscriptural. From the inception of the church until the sixth century, the church had worshipped a cappella. Digression after the sixth century had brought in the use of instruments that remained until the restoration movement (ca. 1800). However, the census of churches in 1906 listed a distinction between the churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ (the digressive group). The bringing in again of instruments into Christian worship was the major issue of division-the culprit being the re-introduction of "strange music" into worship. In the parallelism drawn, what difference would there be in offering "strange fire" in worship and in offering "strange music?" Since the one is unacceptable to God and condemned, most assuredly the other is also.

Jude, the brother of the Lord, in his short epistle concerned himself in exhorting brethren to *"contend earnestly for the faith"* (Verse 3). In his dealing with *"lasciviousness"* (Verse 4), he mentions those who give *"themselves over to fornication and gone after strange flesh"* (Verse 7). In his condemnation of sexual immorality, he specifically notes those who practice homosexuality (*"gone after strange flesh"*). Paul in his list of sins of the flesh also denotes the same in the words *"abusers of themselves with mankind"* (1 Corinthians 6:9; translated "homosexuals" in the New American Standard Version).

When we group together "strange fire," "strange music," and "strange flesh," they differ only in that they are different ways of practicing unrighteousness before God (1 Corinthians 6:9). According to Paul, the Corinthians made a decision to put away such spiritual abuses - *"and such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of God"* (1 Corinthians 6:11; emphasis mine, JN). However, according to the apostle Peter, some would choose to *"turn back"* to *"wallowing in the mire"* rather than to practice righteousness through *"the holy commandments delivered unto them"* (2 Peter 2:21-22).

Things that are strange to God are things that show contempt for God. One can only know God and love God, and love his brethren, through keeping the commandments of God (1 John 2:3-5; 5:2). Moreover, when one loves God by keeping His commandments, he is loved of God (John 14:21, 23).