

TRUTH

Now, This Is Strange!

Lewis Willis

Many modern Christians know very little of the history of the church of Christ in America. As a result, they are unaware that a sad but major division occurred in the church in the 1950-1960s. Most congregations abandoned N.T. authority and started engaging in practices and programs for which there is no biblical sanction. This article is about one of those churches.

In Nashville, Tennessee, the Madison church came to be regarded as “our flagship” congregation, which in its heyday was the largest congregation among us, reaching an attendance of 3,240 in 1998 (*Christian Chronicle*, 01/02). The much-heralded preacher was the late Ira North, and the entertainer Pat Boone’s brother was the song leader. Today, the attendance is about 2,400, reflecting a loss of about 800 members. The paper cited said the church “has gone from a well-oiled machine to one in need of overhaul.”

The Madison church’s problem began in 2001 when a *contemporary worship* was introduced in the basement fellowship hall, in addition to the two *traditional worships* already being conducted. Soon the contemporary worship needed more space, so the elders decided to switch places with one of the traditional worships and the contemporary ones. Doesn’t seem to be a big deal, Right?

Contemporary worship is usually defined in the use of instrumental music, with special singing groups, hand clapping, arm raising exuberance, etc. How much of the standard contemporary fare these Nashville brethren brought into the service, the article cited does not say. However, the *traditional crowd* would not buy into the change, so a division occurred. Because the church was so large, the division has even been covered by the local media in Nashville.

What was the church to do? Well, they hired a *conflict resolution specialist* from Pepperdine University to come help them. *A What?* What Bible verse mentions a conflict resolution specialist? Yet, the man they brought in instructed them “in dispute resolution skills, interviewed the members from various factions, and assembled teams to discuss differences.” The next issue of *Christian Chronicle* (02/02) discussed “dispute resolution” techniques further, particularly noting the strategies used in dealing with “religious” disputes and divisions.

As it turns out, the *solution* of the *conflict resolution expert* is worse than the *problem*. He shared the thought that

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*“And ye shall
know the truth,
and the truth
shall make
you free”
(John 8:32).*

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Lessons From Sodom and Gomorrah

Mike Willis

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah has many lessons for men to learn. You will recall that the text relates that God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because the wickedness was so great in those cities that there were not ten righteous souls to prevent the cities from being destroyed. As we think about the Lord's judgment, here are some lessons that come to mind:



The sinfulness of sodomy. The English word “sodomy” means “any sexual intercourse regarded as abnormal, as between persons of the same sex, especially males, or between a person and an animal” (Webster). The word is derived from the name of the city of Sodom. The angels of the Lord went down to Sodom to see if the city was wholly given to wickedness, so much that it should be destroyed (Gen. 18:20-21). Abraham interceded for the city asking God not to destroy the city if so few as ten righteous souls were there. The angels came to Sodom where Lot invited them into his home. At the evening, the men of the city came to Lot's door demanding him to send out the sojourners that they might “know” them (i.e., have sexual relationship with them). The text says, “But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter” (Gen. 19:4). Notice these points: (a) People from every quarter of the city were present. Most cities have a “red-light district” or neighborhood where sin runs rampant. That is where most drugs are sold, murders occur, rapes happen, etc. However, Sodom had become so corrupt that this immorality was not limited to a “red-light district”; these wicked men were present from every quarter of the city, for immorality pervaded the city. (b) It included both young and old. Generally the older generation clings to the traditional standards of morality. However, immorality had been practiced so long in Sodom that it spread through all generations.

The sin that the men wished to commit was not merely homosexuality. Homosexuality is sinful and condemned by Scripture. The Law of Moses said, “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination” (Lev. 18:22). “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to see “Sodom and Gomorrah” on p. 281

A False Sense of Security

Walton Weaver

The chilling events of September 11, 2001 are a reminder to all of us who have felt secure as American citizens that no nation of people is ever immune from attack and the possibility of destruction. With the possible destruction of our entire civilization staring us in the face, the majority of people are totally unprepared for such an event.

People generally are not prepared when tragedy strikes, even when such events are brought about by their own failures or their own misdeeds. Oftentimes people are unable to see (sometimes willing, sometimes not) their own shortcomings, and as a result they feel secure in spite of the impending danger. Sometime before the Second World War, Prime Minister Chamberlin returned from a conference with Adolf Hitler, saying, "Peace in our time." Not long after this visit Hitler started his campaign to conquer the world by force. Reminds us of President Reagan's statement when dealing with the leaders of the former Soviet Union: "Trust, but verify."

In Jeremiah's day the nation of Israel was made to feel secure by the prophets and priests who cried out, "Saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14). Sadly, with these words ("peace, peace"), Jeremiah says, "They have healed the hurt of my people slightly." How was that? They were giving false assurances that all was well. For the prophets and priests to say "peace, peace" made the people feel good, but it was only a superficial healing. F.B. Huey, Jr. likens this to "physicians putting bandages over cancer and pronouncing it healed." He goes on to say that "their promise of peace was a hollow mockery. There is no peace for the wicked (Isa. 48:22; 57:21), nor can empty assuring words avert punishment (1 Thess. 5:3)."

There is a much needed spiritual lesson to be found here. It has always been true that people often feel secure in times of great danger, and tragically this is often true even when sufficient warning has been given. Let's first consider a few examples, then we will make a few brief observations on why people say peace and safety when destruction is near.

EXAMPLES ILLUSTRATING THE POINT

1. People Before the Flood. Jesus describes how those before the flood in Noah's day failed to give heed to the warning of this great preacher of righteousness. In spite of Noah's preaching the people felt safe and secure enough to go on about their daily business without giving any serious thought

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to the possibility of a coming great flood that would destroy them (Matt. 21:38-39). In fact, the Bible says that the wickedness of man became so great that God repented that he had ever made man (Gen. 6:5-7).

2. Lot and His Family. Lot and his family stayed in Sodom until the angels made special appearances to Lot and then took them by the hand and led them out of the city to a place of safety. Even upon the urging of the angels for him to hurry and leave

(Gen. 19:15), the Bible says that “he lingered” (Gen. 19:16). But the Lord “was merciful to him,” and “the men took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters . . . and brought him out and set him outside the city.” They did not see the danger. This is a great reminder of just how dangerous it is to delay, and yet multitudes of people in our own time are doing that very thing. Evidently they feel safe and secure, and they do not sense the urgency of doing something *now*.

3. The Rich Man of Luke 16. This is the case of one who evidently felt safe and secure until it was too late. He does not seem to have given much thought to his soul’s condition when he had the opportunity. His riches no doubt had something to do with his failure. While he was yet alive on earth he gave no thought to the needs of others but lived in luxury himself. Do you suppose he felt self-sufficient in his possessions and therefore had no sense of need for God? This sometimes happens even to Christians.

This was true of the Laodiceans: “Because you say, ‘I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked’” (Rev. 3:17). How sad for one to be so rich and yet so poor! The rich man of Luke 12:16-21 had the same problem. He was rich, but as Jesus told him, he was not “rich toward God.” It is a tragedy for one to feel safe and secure in his own possessions and die unprepared to meet God in judgment.

4. The Foolish Virgins. The five virgins who failed to take a sufficient supply of oil felt secure in the supply they had taken with them (Matt. 25:1-13). It was the delay in the bridegroom’s coming that gave them their problem.

Under ordinary circumstances the bridegroom would have made his arrival much earlier. This is a clear warning to Christians to always be ready, which is to be faithful and always busy in the Lord’s work.

Whom do the foolish virgins represent? “The foolish virgins are not the unconverted, for they make no preparation; they are not apostates, for they, after waiting at their post for a time, abandon it and go their way; but they evidently represent those who enter the Church and stand at their post until the bridegroom comes, and are then found without sufficient preparation to meet him. They make the preparation which they are led by their own indulgence or indifference to regard as sufficient, and content themselves with that, knowing that they run some risk of being lost. All who follow any questionable indulgence; all who neglect any of the ordinances of God; and all who are indifferent about soundness as it is in Christ, belong to this class” (McGarvey, *Matthew and Mark*, 216). They may have felt secure, but they were unprepared to meet God.

CAUSES OF A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

1. Oftentimes people do not realize they are not prepared to die. Many have never considered that preparation is necessary if one is to be saved from the wrath of God. The plea of Amos to his people of old, “prepare to meet thy God” (Amos 4:12), is just as much needed today as it was in his time. Yet some feel *good enough* to be saved without any special preparation. Is being good to one’s companion, being a good father or mother, practicing brotherly love, and living an exemplary life enough to save one’s soul? If it is, why did Jesus need to die for our sins?

The good life of Cornelius was not enough. He yet needed “words” whereby he and all his house might be saved (Acts 11:15). There are positive divine laws that must be obeyed in order for one’s sins to be forgiven (Mark 16:16; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38). Had Cornelius continued without a knowledge of Jesus Christ, being the good man that he was, he doubtlessly would have felt secure in the good life he was living. But such feelings of safety would have been misguided. He would still be in need of words (the gospel) whereby he might be saved. No feeling of being right with God would have made it so.

2. Some do not realize they are sinners. Too many times the reason the good moral person does not feel he is unprepared to meet God in judgment is because he fails to face up to the fact that he is a sinner. This was the problem with the Pharisee of Luke 18 that we noted earlier. He thought within himself that he was justified before God. But no one can ever be justified “in himself.” Saul was a good man and, “concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless” (Phil. 3:6). He thought he was serving God by persecuting Christians, but he was the chief of sinners.

Thank God, he finally did come to see himself in this way. He knew he was nothing but a sinner. Once he had come to know the truth about Christ, he became aware that all the “confidence in the flesh” that he had depended upon under the law was of no avail. As a result of this new understanding, he then counted all the accomplishments “in the flesh” as loss in order that he might gain Christ and attain the salvation he so desperately sought. He felt safe while he was in the Jew’s religion, but what he felt merely gave him a false sense of security.

3. There are also those who do not understand that being a member of the Lord’s church is necessary. Some would have us believe that the church a non-essential. Yet Christ loved and gave himself up (died) for the church (Eph. 5:25). He purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28). He is the savior of the body (Eph. 5:23), and his body is the church (Eph. 1:22-23). Did he do all this for something that is not necessary? Hardly.

The church is necessary because one cannot be saved and not be a member of the church. The Lord takes care of church membership by adding each person to it as he is saved (Acts 2:47). The church is the saved, so how can the church be non-essential, or unnecessary? Since one must obey the gospel to be saved, and thereby become a part of the Lord’s church, no one has the right to feel safe and secure before he in the church. Why is that? Because that is to feel safe before one is saved, before one has obeyed the gospel. Yet, this misunderstanding concerning the church leaves some feeling safe and secure before they are saved. This is a false sense of security.

4. Others are convinced that God will not condemn them to an everlasting hell. They feel confident in this conclusion and therefore make no effort to obey the gospel and live for Jesus Christ. They believe God is too good to inflict such a punishment upon men and women. God is good, and he provides every good and perfect gift to men

(Jas. 1:17), including their salvation (Jas. 1:18). His goodness should lead men to repentance (Rom. 2:4). But God is also severe. Paul tells us to “consider the goodness and severity of God” (Rom. 11:22) and one makes a terrible mistake when he considers only God’s goodness. One must not close his eyes to the fact that when Jesus comes “with his mighty angels, in flaming fire” he will take vengeance “on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:7-8), and “these shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power” (2 Thess. 1:9). Let no one deceive you into believing that only peace and safety awaits you at the Lord’s coming if you have not obeyed the gospel of Christ or if you are not being faithful to him as a Christian (1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10).

CONCLUSION

We must not think only in terms of the second coming of Christ when thinking of our readiness to meet God in judgment. We conclude our remarks here with another quote from McGarvey, a comment he makes on this very point. In his closing remarks on the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, he says: “At this point it may be well to remind the reader that all the warnings in reference to his second coming, in the preceding as well as in the following divisions of this discourse, are equally applicable to our departure to meet him. Whether he first comes to us, or we first go to him, the result will be the same, for as we are at death we will be at his coming, seeing that it is concerning the deeds done in the body that we will be judged. (2 Cor. v. 10)” (*Ibid.* 215).

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Larry Ray Hafley

Identifying Marks

(Recently, a congregation requested an article to be used as an ad for their gospel meeting. Below is the article.)



Other churches may use it if they desire to do so. They may remove my name as the author. Also, they may adjust the article in any way that will suit their purposes. Note the last paragraph and insert the pertinent local information — LRH.)

Identification marks are important. If one wants to identify a person, a site, or an object, he describes its nature and character, its features. We understand this concept. It holds true in spiritual matters, too.

If someone claimed they had found “Noah’s ark,” the world would be awake with interest and excitement about such a find. However, if it were found that the object was constructed of many kinds of wood and that it was only 250 cubits long and had many windows and doors on six floors, we would know it was not the right “boat” (Gen. 6:14-16).

If someone claimed they had found the cross on which Jesus was crucified and that it was in the shape of an “X,” we would know it was false, for Jesus was crucified on a cross in the shape of a “T” (remember that Pilate posted his title “over his head,” Matt. 27:37, thus, the shape of a “T”).

Jesus warned about “false Christs,” against those who would claim to be the Savior (Matt. 24:5, 23, 24). If one born in this city claimed to be Christ, we would know he was false, because Christ was born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:1-6).

If a man was purported to be the head of the church, and if he resided in Salt Lake City, Utah or Rome, Italy, we would know he could not be the true head of the body of Christ, for the head of the church lives in heaven (Eph. 1:22, 23; Phil. 3:20; 1 Pet. 3:22).

When men today claim they have the same baptism of the Holy Spirit which the apostles had, we know their claims are false when they cannot perform “the signs of an apostle” (2 Cor. 12:12; cf. Mark 16:17, 18; Acts 9:40, 41; 28:3-6 — No men can perform these miracles today!).

We know that it is a perversion of the word of Christ to say, “He that believeth is saved and then he should be baptized,” because Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). Likewise, if a preacher says, “Call on the name of the Lord, have your sins washed away, and then arise and be baptized,” we know he has twisted the Scripture which says, “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

During the meeting (*insert date here*), at the meeting-house of the (*insert name here*) church (*insert address here*), we will discuss these and other Bible topics and see how we can identify the real Jesus and his body, the church. “Come now, let us reason together” (Isa. 1:18; Acts 17:11).

4626 Osage, Baytown, Texas 77521

Restoration Roots

by Lynn McMillon

Students of the Restoration Movement will profit from this study of the movement’s earliest roots.
Paper. #17109

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A Virtuous Woman

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies” (Prov. 31:10, KJV). In our ever increasing immoral

A person could be said to have virtue when they are capable of making distinction between right and wrong, when their character and conduct conform to that which is noble, pure, and right. Perhaps with this in mind, and with a brief look at the Bible description of a virtuous woman, we will be better informed and equipped to help reverse the breakdown of the home in our society.

society women have indeed “come a long way, baby.” Our “playboy” philosophy has led our women to lose their virtue, to dishonor their God-given role in the home, to become “sex symbols” in show biz, to seek “equal rights” which often is little more than unhindered display of profanity and immorality as though none else had any rights of protection from such, and to join the labor task force, all too often at the expense of the serenity and security that God intended the home to be. The generations that follow, having been spawned in ungodliness, can only wax worse and worse. Children, repulsed by hypocrisy, rebel against the “old man” and the “old lady.” Not having seen nor been taught respect for authority they have little. Dear reader, our nation is in trouble because the home is in trouble. As the home goes, so goes the nation. God intended that women play a significant role in the home. Someone has well written and it applies in all things, “Are you part of the problem or part of the answer?” In a day in which being a housewife is looked down upon, we need to heed these words of Daniel Webster, “If we work upon marble, it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we work upon immortal souls, if we imbue them with principles, with the just fear of the Creator and love of fellow men, we engrave on those tablets something which will brighten all eternity.”

The righteous influence of a virtuous mother is graphically portrayed in Proverbs 31:10-31. It is recommended that you turn and read these verses now, as they will constitute the basis for much that follows. The young evangelist Timothy was blessed to have a pious mother and grandmother. “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (2 Tim. 1:5). “A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones” (Prov. 12:4). Let us look at Clark’s definition of virtuous taken from his commentary on Proverbs 12:4: “A strong woman. Our word ‘virtue’ (*virtus*) is derived from *vir*, a man; and as man is the noblest of God’s creatures, virtue expresses what is becoming to man; what is noble, courageous, and dignified: and as *vir*, a man, comes from *vis*, power or strength; so it implies what is strong and vigorous in principle; the denomination of all excellent moral qualities; and is now applied to what ever constitutes the system of morality and moral duties.” A person could be said to have virtue when they are capable of making distinction between right and wrong, when their character and conduct conform to that which is noble, pure, and right. Perhaps with this in mind, and with a brief look at the Bible description of a virtuous woman, we will be better informed and equipped to help reverse the breakdown of the home in

our society.

Much of her character is seen in verses 25-31. Verse 30 shows her reverence for God. "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." Not only does she have faith in, but she respects him who made the world and all that is in it. She is not arrogantly and presumptuously proud, but humbles herself before the great I AM. She realizes that earthly favors and even fleshly appearance have no lasting value. Fleshly beauty is marred and deranged by sickness and suffering. It is completely gone in death. She realizes that to build a way of life upon such can only be vanity and bitterness in the end. Hers is the inward adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, valuable in God's sight (1 Pet. 3:4). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments" (Ps. 111:10). One does not truly have wisdom and understanding while without fear of the Lord. This is the only foundation upon which any person can build a meaningful life, especially a mother.

The righteous commend the honor of those who know them best. The virtuous woman is no exception: "Strength and honor are her clothing" (v. 25). She is unspotted, she has the confidence of her husband. He can "safely trust in her" (v. 11). Her speech and manner do not arouse his suspicion and doubt. She is not a flirt with wayward eyes and thoughts. She knows and loves her place in life and handles herself discreetly. She knows she was created to be a help, suitable for her husband, not a ball and chain tied to his leg. She knows she is to be sober, to love her husband and children, to be discreet, chaste (not chased), a keeper at home, good and obedient to her own husband (Tit. 2:4-

5). It is very doubtful that her husband would praise her (v. 28) if she did not practice these things. If all mothers were so disposed, there would be little "soap-opera" material today. It has been said that behind every good man there is a good woman. A woman can be a blessing or a curse, an angel or a Jezebel. "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman" (Prov. 21:19).

"She looketh well to the ways of

the household, and eateth not the bread of idleness" (v. 27). Hers is the sterling quality of cementing her love for her family by diligent devotion to the many tasks that need to be done. Done with a song on her lips and love in her heart, she works willingly and not grudgingly, creating an atmosphere of warmth and security. But, oh, how often do we see immature teen-age brides today not even knowing how to cook an egg, wax a floor, or keep a house orderly and attractive. After a few months of eating out and living in a pigpen, the new husband cannot resist the nagging doubt of his wife's love as she lays around reading romance stories of adultery, if she is not watching the same on the daily TV programs while her child crawls around in the filth, in danger of being hit on the head from a dirty pan falling from the high stack in the kitchen sink. Love declared but not demonstrated is indeed worthless. Mothers, are you teaching and showing your daughters the importance of such basic, common-sense necessities for success in life?

Look at the virtuous woman in

verses 13, 21, 22, 24. "She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands." I want you to focus your attention on the word "willingly." Who can truly appreciate something done grudgingly? A wife who complains with every stroke of the scrub brush, who gripes, growls and snarls constantly at her family has little difficulty conveying to them that she does not work willingly, hence with little if any love. But in contrast, we can see in verses 21, 22, and 24 that the virtuous woman has so willingly and industriously labored that she not only has her family supplied in clothing for the winter ahead but has excess that she might sell to provide other necessities. Can you imagine this woman allowing her daughters to parade around in provocative clothing while offering the flimsy excuse, "Well, that is all you can buy at the stores these days." What happened to the old-fashioned ingenuity and industry? In those days, they not only made the garments but also the cloth. I strongly suspect she made enough for more than a mini-skirt or bikini. Today with all our conveniences of ready made cloth, frills, and sewing machines, mothers seemingly cannot master the difficult art of lengthening a dress or making one of the proper length. I suspect it is more unwilling than unable, of being more worldly minded than spiritual.

The virtuous woman is aware of the responsibility to properly feed her family. "She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and portion to her maidens" (vv. 14-15). It has been well said that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. A man certainly appreciates a wife who can and willingly cooks delicious, healthy meals for him. Daughters allowed to grow up and enter marriage without this basic skill have indeed

been neglected by her mother or herself.

All too often household duties are looked upon as hindrances as drudgery. Perhaps this poem will help. I do not now know the author.

Complex Career

It sounds so unimportant
“A housewife” so they say,
And yet how many people
She must be every day.

A cook, a nurse, a chauffeur,
Dressmaker, budgeteer,
A governess, adviser,
All steps in her career.

A secretary, a gardener,
A diplomat as well —
Executive and shopper,
But still there’s more to tell.

Companion to her husband,
Must always look her best,
And be a tireless creature
Immaculately dressed.

The house should be in order
If she’s at work or at play,
It sounds so unimportant,
“A housewife” so they say.

We can see the proper balance between the physical and the spiritual in the virtuous woman. Psalm 111:10 states, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness” (v. 26). I believe we can safely conclude that her speaking includes that basic respect she has for the Lord. The “looking well to the ways of her household” would include teaching them of the Lord. Too many mothers allow TV to occupy much of the short and precious time we have to teach them of the word and ways of God. “. . . in her tongue is the law of kindness.” This is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Again she demonstrates it by giving to the poor and needy (v. 20).

VALUE OF TIME

Because of physical and spiritual duties zealously performed, she is an economist of time. She “. . . eateth not the bread of idleness” (v. 27), and “She riseth also while it is yet night . . .” (v. 15). There will always linger in my mind the memory of a mother who was up before the break of day to tend not only to outside chores on the farm but to see that her family had a hearty breakfast. She was busy all day and yet after set of sun with a song on her lips. I doubt she will ever realize the value of the time she took to read

her son some Bible stories. Mothers, do you allow an idle mind to become the devil’s workshop?

The reward of the virtuous woman is seen in verse 10, “. . . her price is far above rubies.” “Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellent them all” (vv. 28, 29). She would not have the honor of those nearest were she not truly virtuous.

CONCLUSION

I readily acknowledge that a slothful and immoral husband can indeed mar the home picture, but he does not come within the scope of this essay. The virtuous woman had a husband “known in the gates” and who sat “among the elders of the land” (v. 23). Husbands, fathers, do you measure up? Young man, think before you marry. If you want a virtuous wife, marry a virtuous girl. Girls, you have much to learn to make a future home as God intended (1 Tim. 5:14). It begins with making the right choice for a husband. Rare are those capable of doing so at the tender age of sixteen. Determine to so live that when you are an aged mother, the following poem could be said of you:

A Portrait of Mother

Paint her as you see her, artist,
Let the lines and wrinkles show,
And the silver hair that crowns her
Like a halo’s beauteous glow.

Can you picture on your canvas
All the years of sacrifice,
How she tended well her household,
Ever counting naught the price?

Let your brushes tell the story
Of her patient toil and care,
Mingle love with joy and sorrow
Just as life has put them there.

Blend your colors softly, artist
Face her toward the setting sun,
Smiling — calm — serene and peaceful,
For her task is almost done.

Call the portrait simply, “Mother,”
All the world will understand;
Nations thrive and empires prosper,
Guided by her gentle hand.

(author unknown to me-LDK)

Truth Magazine, XX:1(January 1, 1976) 5-8.

Where We Have Been — Where Are We Now — Where Are We Going (3)

In writing this series of articles, reviewing 56 years of life and experiences in the Lord's church, February 1946 until February 2002, I would ask the readers to understand that these are my reminiscences, my recollections of events and peoples, my experiences, impressions, and thoughts as I reflect over the events and peoples of these years. I realize the limitations of such essays, for one person cannot begin to know, understand, and evaluate all that transpired among all brethren in all congregations during those times. I, solely, am responsible for what is written herein. I speak for no one but me. And even then memories of some events can be vague, assessments and judgments can be faulty, and unintended prejudices can be manifested. My intentions are simply to remember and to write of some events and people in which, and with whom, I had association, participation, and knowledge during this span of over one-half century.

The times at David Lipscomb College (fall quarter of 1947 through the spring of 1950), preaching and working with the church at Ashland City, Tennessee (summer of 1948 to mid-May 1951) and living in the Nashville area, were times of many great experiences. I was able to hear many outstanding preachers and visit gospel meetings of many congregations. I formed friendships with several preachers. Two were on the faculty at Lipscomb: Paul Matthews, who taught history and church history (in my previous essay I wrote of brother Matthews and his helpfulness to me), and Eugene W. Clevenger, who taught Greek. I remember that brother Clevenger did not teach at Lipscomb very long, about two or three years. He left there and went to Florida Christian College (as it was named then), taught for a rather brief period and then went to Abilene Christian College, where he taught for years and retired there. I last saw him in April 1974, during a meeting with the North Park church in Abilene. Roy Foutz was the local preacher at North Park. I stayed with him during the meeting. He was a fine man and an excellent, faithful preacher. Brother Clevenger came to that meeting one night when I spoke on "the issues" of church support of human institutions,

centralization of authority, and money under "sponsoring elderships," as in the Herald of Truth program, etc. He was polite and cordial but declined an invitation to come by brother Foutz's home for a visit afterwards. We had no discussion of my sermon topic for that evening's service.

There were some great debates with denominational preachers in those days. Already I had heard debates at Bemis, Tennessee in 1946-47 and later. The first one, shortly after I returned home from the U.S. Navy in August 1946, was between James D. Bales of Searcy, Arkansas and Sam Ballard, an older, well-known, wily Baptist preacher and debater from Dallas, Texas. Ballard administered a real good spanking to brother Bales, not with the truth of the New Testament, but with Baptist doctrine and error, debating techniques, sophistry, and appeals to audience prejudices. This was Bales' first formal debate with an experienced Baptist. He was newly "doctored" with a PhD, was a teacher at Harding College, and was making quite a name and fame for himself in his writings. Brethren at Bemis thought that Bales, being so highly educated and reputable, could deal with any error, with Ballard, and "The Landmark Baptist Church" in Bemis, who endorsed him (L.H. Brown was their "pastor," an aggressive, loud-mouthed, argumentative preacher, who was spoiling for a debate continually with "The Campbellite Church" in Bemis). Bales never got down to the level of the people, his arguments and answers were so "high-flown" and generalized, his language so "wordy" and lengthy, that one could hardly grasp and understand what he was talking about. Ballard "ate him up." The brethren at Bemis realized the truth had suffered in the hands of Bales. Shortly afterwards there was another debate, this time between the two local preachers, Harold V. Trimble representing the brethren and L.H. Brown representing the Baptist people. Trimble really administered a good Bible-whipping to error, Baptist doctrine, and Brown. Several Baptists obeyed the gospel within a short period of time after that debate. Not long afterwards brother James R. Cope, who was still teaching at



Freed-Hardeman College, debated Brown and administered him and his Baptist doctrine another sound thrashing. It was for this debate that brother Cope prepared the “Notes On Baptist Doctrine” which were printed afterwards and were so widely circulated.

In March 1948 four of us students at Lipscomb, “played hookey” from school and went over to Damascus, Arkansas, north of Conway, Arkansas, to hear the debate between brother W. Curtis Porter of Monette, Arkansas and Ben M. Bogard of Little Rock, Arkansas. Already I had become acquainted with brother Porter through his writings in various papers of the brethren and by hearing brethren comment about the debating abilities of W. Curtis Porter. Bogard was the oldest, and one of the three best-known Baptist debaters of that time, the others being Sam Ballard of Dallas, Texas and D.N. Jackson of Jackson, Mississippi, the youngest of the three. The four of us, delinquents from school, obtained lodging in Conway for four nights, drove back and forth to Damascus each day, and heard this entire debate. Bogard affirmed for two days (four hours per day; two sessions of two hours each day, an afternoon session and an evening session) that “The church known as the Missionary Baptist Church is scriptural in origin, doctrine, practice, and name.” Porter denied that proposition. Brother Porter then affirmed for two days (four hours per day; two sessions of two hours each day, an afternoon session and an evening session) that “The church known as the Church of Christ is scriptural in origin, doctrine, practice, and name.” Bogard denied this. Thus there were sixteen hours of debating in four days, each man having sixteen speeches, affirmative and negative. The old white frame meetinghouse at Damascus was filled with people every session. I had to stand outside for one afternoon session, looking in a window, being tardy from lunch and all the seats inside the building being occupied. Otherwise, we were “early birds” for every session, getting a seat, and not wanting to stand for over two hours at a time. This was a great debate. I think it is still in print. Every Christian, and especially every elder and preacher, ought to read this debate fairly often. This was Bogard’s last debate. Brother Porter was “in his prime.” He was an unpretentious and unassuming man, very humble and gracious, very quiet and soft-spoken, living with his wife on their small farm near Monette, Arkansas, raising his cows and hogs, milking his milk cows, raising his garden vegetables, studying his Bible, and battling for years a blood problem and disease called “polycythemia” (too many red blood cells and mass-

ing of these cells which causes the blood to thicken), which eventually took his life. But when he would come out of the hills of Arkansas to defend the truth of the gospel of the kingdom of God, he was a “tiger turned loose” on error. I have never heard a debater the equal of W. Curtis Porter. He knew every mis-used Scripture, every argument, every quibble and dodge of denominational preachers.

No man could so thoroughly and so devastatingly answer an opponent and teacher of error, as could W. Curtis Porter. He was “the master debater,” when debating was popular and our brethren were a debating, Bible-oriented, error-exposing people. Our modern, up-to-date, million dollars church-buildings, non-offensive, non-Bible-quoting brethren in the churches are not that way anymore. Those times and attitudes of the forties, after World War II, have “Gone With The Wind” of changes, softness, compromise, and lack of Bible knowledge.

Also in 1948, brother Clevenger and I “played hookey” from Lipscomb for a couple of days and attended the first two nights of a debate in Fulton, Mississippi between brother G.C. Brewer and D.N. Jackson, the most able of the Baptist debaters after Bogard and Ballard (brother Roy E. Cogdill had debated D.N. Jackson some two years earlier. That debate is still in print. This debate between Brewer and Jackson was never printed). Brother W.D. Jeffcoat was preaching in Fulton at that time. The first night Jackson affirmed the Baptist doctrine of “faith only,” i.e., that the sinner is forgiven by God and counted to be righteous at the point of faith, without any further acts of obedience, namely baptism. He read and quoted many passages from the Testament concerning “faith” and being “justified by faith.” Brewer listened, combed his hair, looked at the audience and took not one note. He wrote not a word that Jackson said that night. When Brewer arose to speak, he quoted verbatim, never looking at the Testament nor reading from it, every Scripture that Jackson had introduced, beginning at the last Scripture that Jackson had used, and going backwards to the first Scripture Jackson had used. I had never seen nor heard anything like this. Brewer thoroughly exposed Jackson’s misuse of these passages of Scripture. The second night of this debate, Brewer was in the affirmative, affirming that baptism in water, as an act of faith and obedience to God, is essential to salvation of the sinner. Brewer only used one argument, one passage(s) of Scripture — Romans 6:1-7, 16-18. He quoted these passages, diagramed them in detail on the blackboard, and never quoted that night any other Scripture in the Testament regarding baptism. Jackson was completely non-plussed, confused, and spent his time that evening trying to find something to say, having expected Brewer to introduce all the “baptism passages” in the Testament. Brewer never opened his Bible during those two nights of debating. He had it. It was very effective. I came away from that debate convinced that Romans, chapter six, correctly defined and

diagramed, is the strongest and clearest argument in the Testament regarding the essentiality of baptism to salvation. I do not diminish all the other Scriptures in the Testament regarding this subject. Each and every passage is strong, clear and unanswerable regarding baptism and its place in God's scheme of redemption. If I were debating the subject of baptism with a denominational preacher, Romans, chapter six, would be my main proof-text.

I have been privileged to hear many great debates and many great debaters. Those days are gone, possibly forever. Denominational preachers of stature, knowledge, and ability do not debate. Our brethren do not challenge denominational preachers and doctrine very much anymore. There are only two or three men among us today whom I would want to trust with the truth in debate against a Baptist preacher of the ability of Jackson, or Ballard, or Bogard. I heard Eugene S. Smith debate twice in Dallas, also Flavil Colley, Jake Hires, Carl Ketcherside, Roy Cogdill, Guy N. Woods, A.C. Grider, Charles A. Holt, W.L. Totty, Elmer Moore, Yater Tant, E.R. Harper, Thomas B. Warren, Roy Deaver, Cecil Willis, Jesse Jenkins, and a number of other able men, some for truth and some for error. But, in my judgment, the greatest and most thorough debater I ever heard was W. Curtis Porter. I heard him in three debates, heard him preach a number of times, and was around him on other occasions, especially at the Tant-Harper debate in Lufkin, Texas in 1955. The W. Curtis Porter/Guy N. Woods debate in January 1956 on "Institutionalism" was, in my judgment, the best of all the debates our brethren had in those days on this subject.

If I were a Bible teacher at Florida College, or any other college or university operated by brethren, each student in my Bible classes would be required to read and to write a report or synopsis of one great debate which has occurred among our brethren beginning with Alexander Campbell's five great debates each quarter or semester. From my earliest days in the church of Christ, I have attended, bought, read, and studied debates. I suppose I have at least fifty or sixty printed debates in my library. I have read them all over the years. To me, this is one of the very best methods of learning Scripture, of understanding the differences between the truth of God and the errors of men. (To Be Continued)

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A Church of Christ Pass- over Festival

John Isaac Edwards

The Bering Drive church of Christ in Houston, Texas and the Westminster United Methodist Church got together for a "Passover Festival" Thursday evening, March 28. The was portrayed as "an attempt to recreate a Passover meal much like the one that Jesus and his disciples celebrated the night before his death."

1. There will be roast lamb, unleavened bread, 'bitter herbs' and wine mixed with water (or grape juice for those who prefer).
2. There will be remembrance of God delivering Israel from slavery in Egypt with a mighty hand.
3. Participants will reenact Jesus' last supper with his disciples, including the beginning of the Lord's supper.

Can you imagine such activities taking place among a group of people calling themselves the church of Christ?

1. The Passover belonged to the children of Israel.
A reading of Exodus 12 will show that the Passover was observed by "the congregation of Israel" (Exod. 12:3). If you try to observe the Passover today, are you among the congregation of Israel?

2. The Passover was observed in Jerusalem. The teaching of Deuteronomy 16:1-8 puts the Passover in the place which the Lord chose to place his name, Jerusalem (1 Kings 11:36). Houston, Texas is not Jerusalem.

3. The Passover law was nailed to the cross. Colossians 2:14-17 teaches the Passover has gone by the wayside. It has given way to the Lord's supper observance (Acts 20:7). The New Testament church has as much business observing the Passover as they do building the tabernacle!

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“The Divine Nature”

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the

divine nature . . . (2 Pet. 1:4).

Earlier in this passage of Scripture, Peter refers to the “divine power” from which source we have “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (v. 3). The terms “divine power” and “divine nature” are inseparably related to each other and, until we acknowledge this fact, we cannot benefit from “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” nor can we be “partakers of the divine nature.”

The term “divine” means “God-like, divinity, godhead” (Strong). Or, as used in Hebrews 9:1, “ministration of God, worship” (*Ibid.*). The term “nature” means “lineal descent, disposition, constitution” (*Ibid.*). In the flesh, Jesus had the “lineal descent” of David, but his “divine nature” declares him to be “the Son of God” (Rom. 1:3, 4). Let us see how this “divine nature” was manifested in Jesus as the Son of God and how we “might be partakers of the divine nature.” And if we don’t believe in his divine nature and are not willing to confess him as the Son of God, we cannot be partakers of that divine nature.

IN CREATION

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God” (Heb. 1:3). John says that Jesus was that Word, and that “the Word was with God, and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him” (John 1:1-3). With reference to Jesus “who is the image of the invisible God” Paul further said, “For by him were all things created” (Col. 1:15-17).

The Hebrew writer said that it is through faith that we

understand the things involved in creation, and if we believe in the divine nature of Jesus and his part in that creation, we should have no trouble in believing that through the divine power of the Creator he could complete his creation in six days just as easily as he could in six million years.

“I Am.” “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exod. 3:14). “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8). To the seven churches of Asia John said, “. . . from him which is, and which was, and which is to come . . .” (Rev. 1:4). These things concerning Jesus can only be true because he has the same “divine nature” (lineal descent) as the Father.

Light. “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12; 9:5; 12:35, 46). “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). Jesus said, “He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me” (John 12:44, 45).

Jesus is the light of the world because he possesses the same divine nature as the Father. You and I may be partakers of the divine nature in that we reflect that light which proceeds from God (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:15). But Jesus doesn’t just reflect light, he is the light.

Bread/Water. Jesus said that he was “the bread of life” (John 6:33, 35, 48, 51). Jesus also designated himself as the source of “living water” (John 4:10, 14). Paul adds to this, “And did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ”

(1 Cor. 10:3, 4). This, along with such Scriptures as have already been cited, shows that Jesus had the same *divine nature* while on earth that he had before he came to earth, and that he now has since his return back into heaven. And I might add, the same *divine nature* which he had in that period of time between his first and second ascension (some 40 days, read Acts 1:3) when Thomas acknowledged his divine nature with the confession, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). And if Jesus could possess that divine nature while in the same fleshly body after his resurrection, he could also have possessed that same divine nature (deity) during his earthly sojourn of some 33 years. And the fact that we may not understand how God does things, only tends to emphasize the difference between the divine nature and human nature (cf. 1 Cor. 2:13, 14).

The Way, The Truth, The Life. A threefold manifestation of the divine nature is expressed in the words of Jesus when he said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Jesus doesn’t just point people to “the way,” he is that way; he doesn’t just declare “the truth,” he is the truth (John 1:17); he doesn’t just tell people “the life,” he is that life (John 11:25).

Good. When Jesus said to the rich man, “There is none good but one, that is, God” (Matt. 19:17), Jesus was not denying his own goodness, but simply implying that he possessed the divine nature of God. “Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:18). The good works which Jesus did testified of his divine nature, but the Jews couldn’t understand how Jesus could be “a man” and yet at the same time claim the divine nature which belonged to God (John 10:32, 33, 37, 38). Like the unbelieving Jew, some of my brethren seem to have difficulty in believing that Jesus could maintain his divine nature while in a fleshly body.

Virtue. “And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him” (Mark 5:30). “. . . for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all” (Luke 6:19). Peter says, “. . . add to your faith virtue . . .” (2 Pet. 1:5), and this is how you and I can become “partakers of the divine nature,” to the extent that we allow such characteristics to dwell in us. But like the two olive branches which emptied “the golden oil out of themselves” (Zech. 4:12), Jesus possesses an unlimited supply of virtue because of his divine nature. Jesus is the light, we only reflect a portion of that light; we reflect a portion of virtue, but Jesus is virtue itself.

Authority. “For he taught them as one having authority” (Matt. 7:29). Jesus could do this because as part of his divine nature he had “all authority” (Matt. 28:18; John 5:27). When you and I do and speak things “in the name of

the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17), we are drawing on the source of “all authority” which is vested in Jesus because of his divine nature.

Fulness. “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). This pleases the Father and it should please us (Col. 1:19). Because of his divine nature, Jesus is the source of all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). To the extent that it is humanly possible, we should be partakers of that divine nature which is personified in Jesus himself.

It is no accident that after informing us of the divine power and the divine nature, that Peter (by the Holy Spirit) exhorts us, “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge” (vv. 5-7). If we have faith in the divine nature (lineal descent) of Jesus Christ, a faith which comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17), then (and only then), we can be partakers of such divine nature. But if we do not believe in Jesus as the Son of God and all that the term implies, then we will not confess that which we do not believe. And without such faith and confession, we are in no position to partake of the divine nature (John 8:24; Matt. 10:32, 33).

The eunuch confessed what he believed, “that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37), but without such a faith it would be impossible to please God in repentance, baptism, or in an attempt to add to our faith those qualities which would allow us to be “partakers of the divine nature” (Heb. 11:6).

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Visiting Garfield's Home

Last summer, while visiting family in Ohio, I took the opportunity to visit the home of James Abram Garfield in Men-



tor, Ohio. Accompanied by my brother, John, and brother-in-law, Mike Vierheller, I took the guided tour of the house and visited other sites of interest on the property. The site has been designated as a National Historic Site since December 28, 1980.

Why would three preachers be interested in visiting the home of James Garfield? Garfield was the 20th President of the United States, as well as a distinguished senator, statesman, and orator. But he was also a frontier preacher of the gospel and notable figure in the Restoration Movement. For the lover of history, both American and Restoration, Garfield is a significant character.

Garfield was born on November 19, 1831 in a log cabin in Cuyahoga County, Ohio. His father died when he was only eighteen months old, leaving his mother to raise him and the rest of the family. He was baptized on March 4, 1849 after hearing A.A. Lillie preach the truth. He attended the Western Reserve Eclectic Institute at Hiram, Portage County, Ohio where A.S. Hayden was president. Garfield preached his first sermon in the winter of 1853-1854, and became the president of the Eclectic Institute at the young age of twenty-six. He met Alexander Campbell in August 1860, and later would serve as the lawyer in settling Campbell's estate. Garfield married Lucretia Randolph in 1858, a marriage that lasted thirty-two years.

Garfield gained fame as an orator, and was impressive in his 1858 debate with the skeptic and evolutionist William Denton. He distinguished himself in the Civil War, rising in the Union Army from lieutenant colonel to major general. He then turned to politics, and was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1863 representing the nineteenth district of Ohio. He spent seventeen years in Congress before he was the surprise Republican Party nominee for president in 1880. He won a close election in November of that year, and was inaugurated March 4, 1881. He only served two

hundred days, eighty of which he lay mortally wounded by an assassin's bullet (shot in the Washington D.C. depot by Charles Guiteau, July 2, 1881). He died September 19, 1881 and was buried in Cleveland, Ohio. His close friend, Isaac Errett (editor of the *Christian Standard*, Cincinnati, Ohio), among others, spoke at his funeral.

Garfield preached the gospel in his earlier years before politics dominated his life. His influence eventually went with the liberal movement of the late 1800s that embraced the missionary society and instrumental music, issues that caused a major division among brethren. One will only hear a few references to his religious background while touring his home and the nearby visitor's center. A short film that is shown to visitors gives the most information about his religious background. Most everyone associated with the site now has little to no knowledge of the history and principles of the Restoration Movement. The same situation exists at Bethany, West Virginia, where those of the modern Disciples of Christ that control the Alexander Campbell home site and Bethany College have little knowledge or respect for the truth the man stood for and the errors he opposed.

A visit to the James A. Garfield National Historical Site would be enjoyable for anyone interested in American, presidential, and/or Restoration history. It is located at 8095 Mentor Avenue in Mentor, Ohio, east of Cleveland. There is a guided tour of the house (which came to be called "Lawnfield" and where you will find Garfield's impressive library), and a self-guided tour of other buildings on the property. A museum is located in the visitor center in what was the old carriage house. One of the more interesting parts of the museum is where you can push several buttons on a console to hear what Garfield believed about women's issues, creation/evolution, religion, etc., taken from his own writings and speeches. Overall, the experience was enlightening, and a visit is recommended if you happen to be in northeast Ohio.

Suggested Reading on James A. Garfield:

Motherhood

Millions of Americans will celebrate “Mother’s Day.” This practice dates back to May 9, 1914 when “President Woodrow Wilson signed a joint resolution of Congress recommending that Congress and the executive departments of the government observe Mother’s Day” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, Vol. 13).

You will note, however, that this article bears the title “Motherhood” — it is not entitled “Mother’s Day.” Yes, I strongly believe real “mothers” should be honored. In fact, one of the Ten Commandments was worded thusly: “Honor your father and your *mother*, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you” (Exod. 20:12). In the New Testament, to the saints at Ephesus, the apostle Paul wrote, saying: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and *mother*, which is the first commandment with promise” (Eph. 6:1, 2). The same apostle wrote to Timothy, saying, “Honor widows that are widows indeed,” and one of the qualifications for a widow “indeed” is that she shall have “brought up children” (1 Tim. 5:3, 10). Among other things, “widows indeed” are mothers, and they should be honored.

However, I have mixed emotions about setting aside a particular Sunday and calling it “Mother’s Day.” On the one hand, “the Lord’s day” (Rev. 1:10) is every first day of

the week. As near and dear as good mothers are, biblically speaking, Sunday is still “the Lord’s day.” When we turn “the Lord’s day” into another “day,” we could inadvertently neglect to give the Lord the reverence and devotion he both deserves and demands. And on the other hand, the practice of giving due honor to mothers should be an every day occurrence, and not something done just one day a year. I have no objection to children honoring their mothers on this day, but I do object to making such “honor” an annual event instead of a daily occurrence. Mindful, however, that mothers are generally remembered on Mother’s Day and that such practice is on the minds of millions, I am taking the liberty of writing on “Motherhood” — not just “Mother’s Day.” *Motherhood was designed by God; Mother’s Day was designated by man.*

“Mother” is a Bible word. It was first used in Genesis. 3:20 which says that “Adam called his wife’s name Eve; because she was the *mother of all living*.” In fact, the word “mother” is said to occur 226 times in the Bible. Deborah described herself as “a mother in Israel” (Judg. 5:7), an expression reflecting great honor. Yes, as each of us surely recognize, there is something magic in that word “mother” which stirs up the tenderest affections in the human heart.

Biblically speaking, in terms of origin, wifehood must precede motherhood. Eve was first a “wife” and then a mother (Gen. 4:1). In the order set forth in 1 Timothy 5:14 getting married comes before bearing children. The marriage “bed” is “undefiled,” but any other such co-habitation involves fornication and adultery (Heb. 13:4).

However, the essence of motherhood is in *nurturing children, not simply having children*. Women, by nature, are endowed with qualifications which fit them for the role of “mother,” and for nurturing. Generally speaking, a mother’s love is more tender and kind; emotionally, she is nearer the child’s world, and her maternal instincts make her more suited for nurturing children. By design, nature, and divine intent, a “mother” (whether natural or adoptive) is vastly

Allan Peskin, *Garfield*, The Kent State University Press, 1999.
Earl Irvin West, *The Search for the Ancient Order*, Vol. 2 (197-220).

C.E. Fuller, *Reminiscences of James A. Garfield*, Restoration Reprint Library.

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better equipped to bring “up children” (1 Tim. 5:10) than any government agency, day care center, or any community or church-funded baby sitting service. It doesn’t take “a village” to raise children; it takes *parents* — including both *mothers and fathers!*

With regards to the perspective of this article, without fear of successful contradiction, we affirm that it is impossible to over emphasize the strength of a mother’s influence — whether for good or evil.

The good influence of a mother can be seen in the example of Hannah, the mother of Samuel. Grieving because she was barren, Hannah prayed to the Lord for “a man child,” and she vowed that she would lend him to the Lord as long as he lived — if only the Lord would answer her petitions and give her a child (1 Sam. 1:5, 10, 11, 28). In due season the Lord answered her prayers; Samuel was born, and Hannah honored her vow. Samuel became a great tower of influence, serving God as a judge (1 Sam. 7:15), prophet (Acts 3:24), and priest, as is indicated by his offering sacrifices (1 Sam. 10:17, 25). Then, too, we think about the mother of Moses who, defying Pharaoh, hid her child for three months, and in the wonderful providence of God was hired to “nurse the child”

after Pharaoh’s daughter took the child as “her son” when she found the ark in which he was lovingly placed for his protection (Exod. 2:7-10). Even though Moses, by the Egyptians, was regarded as “the son of Pharaoh’s daughter” (Heb. 11:24), you can be sure that it was his actual mother (Jochebed, Exod. 6:20) who helped instill faith in the heart of Moses. And what a great man Moses turned out to be! Through Moses’ leadership, God delivered Israel out of Egypt (Exod. 12:31-51). Through Moses, God gave the law to Israel (Exod. 20; Deut 5), and Moses even served as a type of Christ (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:20-22). Moses was the only person to have God as his undertaker (Deut. 34:6), and some fifteen centuries after his death, he, with Elijah, appeared “talking with” Jesus when Jesus “was transfigured before” Peter, James, and John (Matt. 17:1, 2). Moses was truly a great Bible hero, but were it not for a courageous mother named Jochebed there would not have been a faithful lawgiver named Moses. And time and space fail me to tell of Ruth, the grandmother of David, of Lois and Eunice the grandmother and mother of Timothy, and countless other great mothers who (for the better) changed the course of human history. No wonder W.S. Ross said, “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world!” No wonder Napoleon said, “The future destiny of the child is always

the work of a mother.”

Conversely, the *evil influence of a bad mother cannot be over-stated*. For example, Ahaziah was Israel’s eighth king; he reigned two years over Israel, and “did evil in the sight of the Lord.” He “served Baal and worshipped him, and provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger” (1 Kings 22:51-53). But let us not forget that he was the son of Ahab who was married to Jezebel, whose name has become so synonymous with evil that no righteous mother would even consider naming her daughter “Jezebel.” Then, too, we call to mind Herodias who influenced her daughter (who had danced before Herod) to ask Herod to behead John the Baptist and bring his head to her “on a platter” (Mark 6:21-25). Many examples, both good and bad, could be cited,

and which serve to buttress the conclusion reached by an unknown writer, namely this: “A bad woman can take herself and 1000 men (who were good) to hell, and a good woman can take herself and 1,000 men (who were bad) to heaven.” The point is clear — there is simply no way to overstate the influence (for good or bad) of mothers!

We need mothers today — mothers who regard children as precious gifts from God (Ps. 127:3), not unwanted accidents of nature. We need mothers whose “career” is in nurturing and loving their children, women who strive to be “discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands” (Tit. 2:4, 5), women who recognize the great honor God attaches to motherhood, and who willingly

submit their wills to his. Indeed, America’s greatest crisis is not a shortage of energy; it is a shortage of mothers (and all that the term “mother” implies).

CONCLUSION

We also need husbands who will recognize that the value of a mother’s influence in the home is greater than all the “second incomes” in the world. And we need children who will “honor” their mothers, and all that the word “honor” implies. Too many ingrate children take undue advantage of a mother’s love, continuing to lean on mother long after they reach adulthood, and long after time, hardship, age, and overwork has sapped her energies.

Dear reader, if you have a good mother, consider yourself fortunate. Multitudes are not so lucky. If you have a wife who is a good mother, consider yourself fortunate. Multitudes are not so lucky. Let us look up to mothers who really are mothers, the kind of mothers who meet God’s approval and are role models for others to follow. Indeed, let us restore the dignity of true motherhood, let us uphold the sanctity of the home, and let us give honor to those precious women who made possible our very existence. Do it daily; not just one day a year!



“Providing For Our Families”

Paul told Timothy, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of ‘his own house, he hath denied the



faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8). I believe most Christians are aware of this passage and have an interest in providing financially for their children with the necessities of life. Many parents willingly sacrifice in order that their children might not be in want. If it came to it, there are many parents who would sacrifice their health in order

to provide their children with medicine. Some would not eat food in order that their children might eat and not go hungry. In considering the love a parent has for a child, many parents willingly make sacrifices for the physical well-being of their children.

While we certainly must provide for the physical necessities of our children, let us understand that if we spend our lives merely providing for the financial comfort and security of our children, we will have been negligent in our duties before God. There is more to “providing” than merely providing in a physical sense! To provide food, clothing, and shelter for our children, and not to provide for their spiritual needs is to fail in our duties as parents. Our children have spiritual needs which must be met if they are going to be the kind of people God wants them to be. If we are the kind of parents God wants us to be, we will not be negligent when it comes to providing for their spiritual needs.

SOME MISTAKES MADE WHICH RESULT IN NOT “PROVIDING” LIKE WE SHOULD

Perhaps by noting some mistakes parents make today, it will help us in avoiding the mistakes, or repenting of the mistakes made while there is still time to change! As we begin this study, let us understand that the parents under consideration are good, moral people who have good in-

tentions toward their children, striving to give them all the “advantages” possible in this world. Yet, they are making some major mistakes. Let us consider four major mistakes many parents make.

Mistake #1: “I am going to allow my children to make their own decisions about spiritual matters.” Would this same parent say: “I am going to allow my children to make their own decisions about premarital sex, drugs, drinking, driving a car before legally allowed, staying out all night, whether or not they will finish high school, etc.?” They would not say such things. Why not? Because the children are not yet mature enough, nor able to make such decisions. Yet in spiritual matters, it seems parents throw away all restraints. How foolish. Parents must provide children with the necessary training and show them what is right (Matt. 5:16; Tit. 2:2-6; Eph. 6:4!)

Mistake #2: “My child is too young to sit through a sermon, so we won’t be coming to church until he is older.” The later one starts in their spiritual training, the harder it is to teach them! (Remember: Prov. 22:6.) If a young child is not taught that “in this family we go to church and worship God,” and is not taught to sit still at an early age, what makes us think that an older child will suddenly know how to do it? Yes, small children cry and fuss; yes, they need to be taken out from time to time, disciplined, and brought back in, but this is the only way they learn! Delaying a child’s learning of God and learning how to behave during worship times is a detriment. I have seen these “older” ones at times act just as bad or worse than the babies. Procrastination lays the groundwork for children (and their parents) never coming and worshipping God!

Mistake #3: Assuming that all spiritual training begins and ends in attending two Bible classes per week. Some among us are faithful to bring our children and grandchildren every time the doors are open. Yet, if we assume this will sufficiently satisfy a child’s spiritual needs, we are sadly mistaken! A child’s spiritual needs must be satisfied daily (just like the parent!). They need to be taught God’s word and trained daily if parents are going to sufficiently

provide for their children. Wouldn't 1 Peter 3:15 apply to our children, too!

Mistake #4: "I didn't have _____ when I was growing up, and my child will not grow up without _____. He will not have it as bad as I did."

Why are we so intent on giving our children what we "didn't have"? Perhaps it is what we "didn't have" that has made us what we are today! Why not start today and give your children what you "had"! The drive for children to have it better/easier than we did is not uncommon, but is that really conducive to their spiritual well-being? Many times, it is not.

SOME POINTED QUESTIONS CONCERNING MEN'S "PROVISIONS"

- When children are brought up thinking that all they want and desire will be handed to them, how can they appreciate the necessity of work (Lam. 3:27; Eph. 4:28)?
- When children are not taught to obey mother and father, nor taught to respect the authority of their father, how can we expect them to respect the authority of God and obey our Father in Heaven (Eph. 6:1-3; Heb. 12:9)?
- When children are not disciplined, how can they learn that there are consequences to their actions when they deliberately disobey and flaunt the rules that have been laid down by God (Prov. 19:18; 13:24; 22:15; 29:15, 17; Heb. 12:5-11)?
- When children are brought up without responsibilities, not being held accountable around the house and in other ways, how can they be taught to take responsibility for their soul, and realize they will one day be held accountable before God (Acts 17:30-31; Rom. 14:11-12; 2 Cor. 5:10; John 5:28-29)?

- When children do not see their parents reading the Bible, praying, speaking kindly to one another, and interested in spiritual matters in other ways, why should our children feel compelled to take an interest in spiritual things (Matt. 5:14-16)?

CONCLUSION

I realize one could point to several people in this world who, despite their parents and despite their surroundings have obeyed the Lord and are serving him faithfully today. Yet, these are the exceptions, and not the rule! Further, why bring up a child in such a way that he already has two strikes against them before he even reaches the plate?

Let us as parents consider well our influence, and what exactly we are "providing" for our children (1 Tim. 5:8)! If we have done nothing but feed, clothe, keep them in good physical health, and educate them in men's wisdom, we haven't done a thing for them! They need to be taught the ways of God, to respect his will, and serve and live for him all the days of their lives! Please heed this warning, because for some, I'm afraid reality will not hit them until the day they see their children cast into hell.

May God help us all that we will not be negligent in our duties as parents, but get busy in the Lord's work providing for our children while there is still time and hope for them (1 Tim. 5:8)!

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The Lord's Supper In Derision

I am referring to the practice, by some, in taking the elements of the Lord's supper with them on vacations,

trips, or to recreational activities. Supposedly such folks are partaking of the Lord's supper in this way. This practice is not new for I can remember dealing with this practice some thirty or forty years ago. However, there seems to be a "rebirth" of the practice more recently. Nearly everywhere I go I run into this.

Perhaps some of this is due to the increased and improved means of transportation. In any case, this writer is convinced that there is a need for study (or restudy) of this practice. Does the Scripture authorize, or even allow, such practice? Is it a matter of faith or is it a matter of opinion?

That there be no misunderstanding, this writer believes that such practice is dead wrong, and if the reader can think of any scriptural justification for such, he will happily consider it. We shall now set forth our reasoning on the subject.

PROOF IS NEEDED!

Those who practice such have the responsibility to "prove all things" (1 Thess. 5:21). If a thing is scripturally right, it can be proven by the Scriptures. People often say to me, on many things, "Prove me wrong!" Should this be the case with you, you have the shoe on the wrong foot. My practice is not under question, and I know of no Christian who would argue that my practice of assembling regularly with a local congregation of God's people to partake of the Lord's supper to be wrong. It is your practice that is under question, therefore, you have the responsibility of proof. What Scripture does one use to show such practice to be right? When such Scripture is produced, that will settle the matter.

Most faithful Christians will admit that Scripture authorizes a thing in one or more of three ways: command,



approved apostolic example, and necessary inference (conclusion). Now, where is the command, example, or inference for such practice? Again, when such Scripture is produced, it will settle the question. Yes, proof is needed, badly needed!

ROMANS 14:23

"... whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Yes, I am aware of the context of this passage, but that does not negate the principle being applied to other areas. The passage says, "Whatsoever," not limiting itself to just the one item there mentioned. Since faith comes by hearing God's Word (Rom. 10:17), how can one claim to practice such by faith? I repeat, proof is needed! Do you have it?

WHAT KIND OF AN ASSEMBLY?

There is no need to quote Acts 20:7, but I ask, "What kind of an assembly was that?" "Was it a church assembly; or was it an assembly of a few folks on a trip or vacation?" (See 1 Cor. 11:17-20.) In these four verses the expression "come together" is used three times. Paul is here discussing the Lord's supper. Looking ahead to verse 33, "When ye come together to eat," I ask, what kind of an assembly was under consideration in these verses? Was it the kind of assembly found in 1 Corinthians 14:23, "... the whole church be come together in one place ..." or was it some other kind? Which of these assemblies does the practice of taking the elements of the Lord's supper on trips emulate?

THE WHAT, THE WHEN, THE WHERE

When we consider the Lord's supper we have all three of these considerations. The *what* would be the bread and the fruit of the vine. I know of no problems concerning the *what*. The *when* would be the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), and, there appears to be no problem among faithful Christians on this item. The *where* would be the assembly of the local church, as we have shown above.

We may pervert the *where* in trying to respect the *what* and the *when*. Could we pervert the *when* to accommodate the *where*, perhaps taking the Lord's supper a couple days early, giving us a longer weekend for pleasure? Maybe we could pervert the *what*, after all grape juice may not everywhere be available. So, we simply substitute tomato juice. And if one's heart is right, should it make any difference of what the bread is composed? As foolish as one may think this to be, I ask, "What makes it right to pervert the *where*, yet wrong to pervert the *what* or *when*?"

THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURE

The "silence of the Scripture" has been used to try to justify instrumental music in worship as well as many liberal practices, all of which has caused considerable uproar and division among God's people. Are denominations and our liberal brethren the only ones guilty of operating on the "silence of the Scripture"?

Can we not be guilty of the same? Until someone finds the Scripture that justifies the taking of the elements of the Lord's supper on trips or vacations, the practice must be assigned to the "silence of the Scripture." What makes such right for us but wrong for our religious neighbors? As God said to Nathan long ago, "Where did I speak one word about such?"

MOTIVES

Motives, of course, are important to the Christian. What is the motive for the Christian to take the elements of the Lord's supper with him on trips, vacations, or recreational events? Are such motives to be found in the proper observance of the Lord's supper, at the proper place and at the proper time? It seems obvious to this writer that the motive is to accommodate certain desires of the flesh. The Ephesians, in the past, had walked so as to "Fulfill(ing) the desires of the flesh and of the mind." ". . . walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal. 6:8). These are enough to show the dangers attached to such motives; and, therefore invite more study of the same.

In 2 Corinthians 13:5, we read, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." My fellow Christian, what is your motive for making such plans? Do I hear some one say, "We made these plans, and we want to serve the Lord at the same time." Which came first, the Lord or the plans? Do you take the Lord into consideration in making your plans, or is it your plans that get the consideration and somehow you will work the Lord into those plans? Motives! You had better believe their importance! Can you say with Paul, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1)?

BEING A GOOD EXAMPLE

No one, that I know, denies the importance of every Christian being a good example for all to observe. "Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God" (Rom. 14:19-20). Paul argues the same thing with the Corinthians and concludes by saying, "If meat maketh by brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Cor. 8:13).

I insist that if every member of a local church should follow the example of those who take the elements of the Lord's supper with them on vacations, trips, and recreational events, that it would destroy the local church. Any practice which does that cannot be right! Love demands that we have more concern for our fellow Christian than that, otherwise it is selfish through and through.

CONCLUSION

The above thoughts should, at least, cause us to restudy our practice, and if these thoughts should help just one fellow Christian to get his priorities straightened out, it will be sufficient reason for having written them. Should anyone think of using Matthew 18:20 to defend such practices, may I kindly suggest a reconsideration of that passage, in its context.

I close with Paul's statement to the Romans, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (12:2). My friend, if you cannot prove it by God's will, you best leave it alone. May God help us all to that end.

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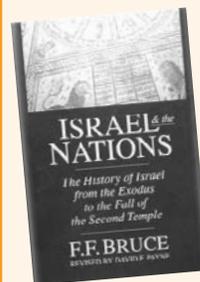
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“This is Strange” continued from front page

strife over such questions should be resolved with “Romans 14, where matters of opinion have been given the status of core Christian doctrine . . . Matters of belief . . . often hinge on how much *uncertainty about the meaning of scripture* members in churches of Christ can tolerate.” (Where have I heard of this before?) The man’s point is, the Scripture is so uncertain about what we are to do in worship that we should not cause trouble over changes which violate the Scriptures.

As you likely suspect already, I would like to have that *conflict resolution expert’s* job. I would tell that church what the New Testament teaches on worship, and what will happen to them if they choose to corrupt it. I’d then give them the Scripture’s instruction about what to do with those who refuse to comply. “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly*, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 Thess. 3:6). I would also take that church to Romans, not chapter 14, but chapter 16, verse 17: “Now I beseech you, brethren, *mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them.*” Sounds simple to me. The difficulty is not in knowing *scriptural conflict resolution tactics*, it’s getting churches to follow the conflict resolution commandments God appointed in the Bible.

Then, after having covered that with them, I might give them the formula for avoiding such problems in the future. I’d tell them to follow the instructions Paul gave to the church in Corinth. He said, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that ye all speak the same thing*, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). I’d stress that God, who planned the church, knows more about how to get it to function peacefully than modern *conflict resolution experts!*

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This seems rather simple, if you have respect for the Scripture, doesn’t it? In fact, with this information you could all become *conflict resolution experts*. Just remember one thing, *I thought of it first!* There’s just one thing I need to figure out: How much does a church pay a *conflict resolution expert*? I suspect it would be a lot cheaper to just buy a copy of the New Testament and follow its teaching.

BEFORE WE LEAVE NASHVILLE . . .

I saw a statement in the Akron *Beacon Journal* a few weeks ago from another person who gained fame in Nashville. *Loretta Lynn*, the “coal miner’s daughter,” has made a fortune with her singing. Loretta was quoted as saying, “There’s more hypocrites in church than any place else.” Now, I don’t know where she learned this. Perhaps it is true of the church she attends in Tennessee. But, I don’t believe this to be generally true. Do you? I certainly do not believe such is true here.

What I really think is that the “coal miner” must have brought home so much coal dust which Loretta had to breathe through the years, that it corrupted her thinking ability. Another possibility is she became so caught up in the dirty lyrics in her songs that she concluded everyone must think like she does. Why I might even venture to say, “There’s more hypocrites *in country music* than any place else.” I think I might be closer to right than Loretta!

SOME STUFF ABOUT ARCHAEOLOGISTS

In today’s world, unless the scientific community pronounces it so, any idea is false. They reject the testimony of the Bible, so none of its message is true, in their view. With that in mind, let me share a letter which a reader sent to *U.S. News & World Report* (02/04/02) regarding the unfounded assumptions of scientists in a recent issue of their paper on “Bible Stories.” The writer was Allen Hoergmeyer, and he made an excellent point.

Just because archaeologists cannot unearth proof of every historical event recorded in the Bible does not prove it never happened. For example, if 3,000 years from now scientists were unable to find archaeological evidence of the twin towers in New York, that would not prove they had never existed.



Today, the rubble from those buildings is being removed; some scrap metal was recently sold to China. Imagine some Islamic archaeologist, 3000 years from now, calling for proof that terrorists ever destroyed those buildings. Mr. Hoergmeyer is right!

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“Sodom and Gomorrah” continued from page 2

death; their blood shall be upon them” (Lev. 20:13). What the men at Sodom want is not consensual homosexuality, which is sinful as described in these verses. Rather, it is *gang homosexual rape*. One is absolutely amazed that these men persist in trying to commit their sin even after the angels struck them with blindness (Gen. 19:11).

The New Testament looks back upon Sodom and condemns the practices of this city. They are not condemned for not practicing hospitality. Rather, they are condemned for their “filthy conversation” (“lascivious life,” ASV; 2 Pet. 2:7) and going after “strange flesh” (Jude 7). Despite what the TV networks are trying to shape American thought to believe, those who are governed by divine revelation will condemn homosexuality as sin, not an alternate lifestyle!

God will punish the wicked. Modern man has lost belief in the justice of God. God will give a righteous judgment of all men (Acts 17:30-31). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). As a result, there is not much fear of God left. The prophet Ezekiel described the wicked of his day saying, “Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? For they say, *The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth*” (8:12). Modern Americans have lost the concept that God will punish the wicked.

One can attend the funerals of today and never reach the conclusion that anyone is going to hell. When a man known for his wickedness dies, some preacher will stand before an audience and leave the impression that the little good that is in his life gives him the hope of eternal life. The consequence is that we Americans have reached the conclusion that virtually no one is going to hell.

Some religions have fostered this idea by eliminating hell from their theology. Some churches blatantly advertise their church by telling those who attend that they will not hear “hell fire and brimstone” when they visit their services. Yet, Jesus spoke more about the torment of Gehenna than any other person mentioned in Scripture.

We must never forget that God has promised to punish the wicked with everlasting destruction away from his presence. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah stands as a memorial to the fact that God intends to destroy the wicked. Jude wrote, “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication and gone after strange flesh, *are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire*” (7).

The Lord himself described the punishment of Gehenna.

It is “hell fire” (Matt. 5:22), a place where both body and soul will be destroyed (Matt. 10:28), a place of torment so bad that one would be better off to lose one eye and miss hell than having both eyes to be cast into it (Matt. 18:9), a place where the fire is eternal, where the fire is not quenched and the worm does not die (Mark 9:43, 47-48), and a place of torment (Luke 16:23). Paul described the torment of hell as a place of total separation from God (2 Thess. 1:7-9), a place of wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish (Rom. 2:8-9). How can we not preach what God has revealed about the damnation of hell?

God can deliver the righteous from destruction. The Lord delivered righteous Lot from the destruction of the city of Sodom. Peter reassured the righteous saying,

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished (2 Pet. 2:4-9).

The same God who destroyed the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah was able to deliver righteous Lot from destruction. The deliverance of the righteous is the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. God sent his Son to die on the cross of Calvary so that those who turn from sin to serve God may be forgiven of their sins and have the hope of everlasting life. God is able to deliver such people from everlasting destruction and give to them eternal life.

Lot’s wife looked back. Jesus told his disciples to “remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:32). Jesus’ exhortation reminds us that God told Lot to flee the city and not to look back. As Lot, his wife, and two of their daughters fled the city, Lot’s wife looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt.

God was not punishing curiosity. What Lot’s wife was guilty of was more than mere curiosity. Rather, Lot’s wife was looking back to Sodom with longing eyes. In the city of Sodom were her home, her possessions, her lifestyle, some of her children, and her friends. Her looking back to Sodom was not that of one curious to see what God was doing; rather, it was the sinful glance of one wanting what he was leaving. Far too frequently, those who have left the world look back with longing eyes, soon to fall back into the very sins that they were departing.

Peter wrote, “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (2 Pet. 2:20-22). May we “remember Lot’s wife” lest we be guilty of making the same mistake as she made.

Let each of us guard himself from reverting to the ways of sin from which we escaped. Let us “remember Lot’s wife.”

One must get Sodom out of himself. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah would not be complete without thinking about the influence that wicked city had on Lot’s two daughters. After Lot’s family had escaped, Lot’s two daughters begin thinking that there is no mate to be found for them. Consequently, each daughter induces her father to get drunk and commits incest with him on successive nights. One can see that even though Lot and his daughters

had gotten out of Sodom, Sodom had not gotten out of the daughters.

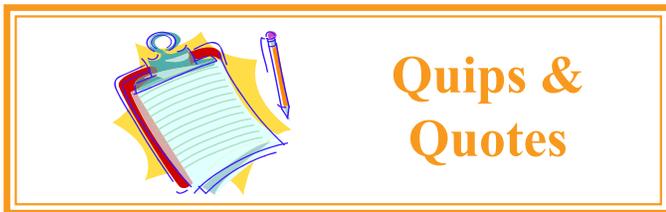
The influence of the world affects those who are God’s children. The influences that were in one’s life before he became a Christian are not magically removed when he is baptized. The language he learned to speak is still in his memory and the temptation to take God’s name in vain, tell filthy stories, and do other things unbecoming to a Christian are still present. He must eradicate the desire to do evil.

This process is called *sanctification*, becoming holy like the God who made us is holy. Jesus said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). As one puts the word of God in his heart, it drives out the desire to commit sin. By allowing God’s word free reign in his life, one drives Sodom out of his life.

CONCLUSION

There are many lessons to be learned from the Old Testament story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

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Catholic Churches Disclosing More After Sex Scandal

“Boston — Here in the nation’s Irish Catholic hub, where parishioners’ foreheads bore ashes 10 days ago as the church began its season of reflection, a widening clerical sex abuse scandal has flung the institution into its worst crisis in years.

“Mounting evidence that the Boston archdiocese knowingly allowed dozens of suspected priest pedophiles to work in parishes has led to calls for the resignation of Cardinal Bernard Law, the country’s senior Roman Catholic ecclesiastic.

“... The first ripples of scandal surfaced last month in a series of Boston Globe articles chronicling child-sex-abuse allegations against a defrocked priest and uncovering evidence that church officials transferred him from parish to parish despite a history of sexual misconduct. The paper, whose investigation forced the unsealing of thousands of internal church documents and depositions, also reported the archdiocese

secretly settled child molestation claims against at least 70 priests in the past 10 years. . . .” (The Indianapolis Star [February 24, 2002], D1.

The Cultural Subversion of Marriage

Cal Thomas: “As part of its welfare reform campaign the Bush administration wants to spend \$100 million annually to promote marriage among the poor, who account for the largest percentage of out-of-wedlock births and what we used to call ‘broken homes.’

“Numerous studies over the last 25 years have produced irrefutable statistics about divorce, its effects on women and children, as well as society. People who marry, stay married and have children within marriage are less likely to live in poverty, are more likely to provide their children a better education, income and social status, and are apt to live longer, especially if they are men.

“... There are some things government can do to undergird marriage. These include educational campaigns and premarital counseling, which the Bush administration plans to do, as well as tax breaks for stay-at-home mothers. But the primary enemy of marriage is contemporary culture. Government is incapable of changing that.

“... Professor James Wilson says the cultural subversion of

marriage has worked this way: '(W)hereas marriage was once thought to be about a social union, it is now about personal preferences. Formerly, law and opinion enforced the desirability of marriage without asking what went on in that union; today, law and opinion enforce the desirability of personal happiness without worrying much about maintaining a formal relationship. Marriage was once a sacrament, then it became a contract, and now it is an arrangement . . .'" (The Indianapolis Star [February 24, 2002], D2.

Priest Says John Paul II Performed Another Exorcism

"Vatican City — The Vatican said last week it would neither confirm nor deny a report that Pope John Paul II has now carried out three exorcisms during his papacy, the latest in September.

"The Rev. Gabriele Amorth, an exorcist for the Rome diocese, told La Stampa newspaper that the most recent exorcism involved a young woman who appeared to be possessed during the pope's general audience.

"A former papal aide, the late Cardinal Jacques Martin, wrote in his memoirs that John Paul performed an exorcism on an Italian woman in 1982. A second case occurred during John Paul's general audience two years ago. . . .

"In 1999, the Vatican issued guidelines for driving out devils, stressing the power of evil. John Paul has repeatedly sought to convince the skeptical that the devil is very much in the world.

"Amorth told La Stampa that the pope had carried out the exorcisms 'because he wanted to give an example' to his priests" (The Indianapolis Star [February 24, 2002], A23.

Catholic Paper Says Church Must Face Celibacy Question

"Boston — In an extraordinary editorial on the city's child-molestation scandal, the official newspaper of the Boston Archdiocese says the Roman Catholic Church must face the question of whether to drop its requirement that priests be celibate.

"The editorial published Thursday in a special issue of *The Pilot*, asks whether there would be fewer scandals if celibacy were optional for priests and whether the priesthood attracts an unusually high number of homosexual men.

"It offers no answers, but says: 'These scandals have raised serious questions in the minds of the laity that simply will not disappear.'

". . . As part of a new 'zero tolerance' policy on sex abuse, the archdiocese has given to prosecutors the names of more than

80 current and former priests suspected of child molestation in the past 50 years" (The Indianapolis Star [March 16, 2002], A8.

Pediatricians Back Adoption by Partners of Gay Parents

Erica Goode: "The American Academy of Pediatrics, which offers guidance to parents on child-rearing issues from spanking to nutrition, is announcing its support today for the right of gay men and lesbians to adopt their partners' children.

"Children who are born to or adopted by one member of a same-sex couple deserve the security of two legally recognized parents,' the academy says in a policy statement published in its scientific journal, *Pediatrics*.

"The organization issued its statement after a committee reviewed two decades of studies. Most, it said, found that the children of gay or lesbian parents were as well-adjusted socially and psychologically as the children of heterosexual parents.

"But Kenneth Connor, president of the Family Research Council, a group concerned with marriage and family issues, called it 'regrettable that the academy has succumbed to political correctness and has abandoned substantive research.'

"Connor said his organization opposes all gay adoption because 'it trivializes the contribution that each gender, male and female alike, make to the physical, emotional and psychosocial development of their children.'

". . . In its statement, the academy noted that 'a large body of professional literature provides evidence that children with parents who are homosexual can have the same advantages for health, adjustment and development as can children whose parents are heterosexual'" (The Indianapolis Star [February 4, 2002], A1, 9.

Report: Alcohol is Rising Problem for U.S. Youths

"Washington — Nearly a third of high school students say they binge drink at least once a month, according to a new report by an advocacy group. The government estimates that underage drinkers account for 11.4 percent of all alcohol consumed in the United States.

"Underage drinking has reached epidemic proportions in America,' said Joseph Califano Jr., president of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, which issued the report Tuesday.

"The report which analyzes two years' research, 'is a clarion call for national mobilization to curb underage drinking,' said Califano, a former U.S. secretary of health, education and welfare" (The Indianapolis Star [February 27, 2002], A7.