
FAITHFUL IS TRIED AT VANITY FAIR

JUDGE GEORGE JEFFRIES was appointed Lord Chief Justice of England in 1677 at the age of 33. As a servant of the State and a pawn of the Church of England, he was a foul, degenerate man and especially merciless toward dissenters and Nonconformists. It is said of him that he possessed a “certain barbarous joy and pleasure which grinned from his brutal soul through his bloody eyes, and a fiendish exultation in the way he pronounced sentence.” Jeffries and his scandalous malevolence at the bar of the Old Bailey in London may very well have been in Bunyan’s mind when he penned this part of *Vanity Fair* in the misapplication of justice toward Faithful.

We have seen that the way to the Celestial City goes right through *Vanity Fair*. Here is the world with all that it has to offer—the glitz and the glitter, the beautiful people living a beautiful life. Tolerance is on everyone’s lips, yet the law of *Vanity Fair* is “buy the goods or pay the price.” The presence of two pilgrims with a different dress, speech, destination and trade caused no small stir, and it is not long before Christian and Faithful are standing before the judge in court. With this, we can see how the world views those who have purposed in their hearts to “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.”

Here Bunyan is at his best. The name of the Judge is Lord Hate-good. The indictment is “that they had made commotions and divisions in the town, and had won a

party to their own most dangerous opinions, in contempt of the law of their prince.” The three witnesses are Envy, Superstition and Pickthank, and the jury includes Mr. Malice, Mr. Blindman, Mr. Cruelty, Mr. Hate-light, etc.

The words of Jesus ring true: “If the world hate you, you know it hated me before it hated you ... remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me they will also persecute you” (John 15:19–20).

Alexander Whyte reminds us,

The hatred that the Son of God met with when he was in this world is one of the most hateful pages of this hateful world’s hateful history. He knew his own heart towards His enemies, and thus he was able to say to the Searcher of Hearts with His dying breath, They hated me without a cause. Truly our hatred is hottest when it is most unjust.

Unfortunately he is referring to every one of us who dares read these words, for when we begin to track the corruption latent within our own breasts, we will discover a mounting opposition toward all that is righteous and holy. Only the regenerating grace of God operative in the heart, giving new dress, implanting new speech, charting a new destination and furnishing a new trade, can possibly change haters of God into lovers of the Truth and of His Son.
