
VANITY FAIR

THERE IS A WHOLE BOOK in the Bible devoted to “vanity”—those things in life that we are so frantic to have because we think they will bring us satisfaction, filling the “God-shaped void” within us. There is one, wiser than us all, who said many years ago, “I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit” (Ecclesiastes 1:14).

What does the word *vanity* mean? In our century we associate it with the title of a magazine, or a brand of underwear or even a kind of installation in our bathrooms. Actually, the word connotes a smug or egotistical complacency joined with emptiness, futility and a touch of frivolity. Added up, vanity amounts to one big zero.

The writer would want us to understand that the way to the Celestial City must pass through Vanity Fair. In terms of our definition, what is Vanity Fair? As one writer has put it, “It is Las Vegas at one o’clock in the morning.” It is the world in carnival dress. It is the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life” in full bloom. Vanity Fair is the “world” that the Apostle John tells us not to love. It is the spirit of the age that fills the hearts of

men with a multitude of temporary pleasures and satisfactions but always leaves a void demanding to be filled again and again.

As Christian and Faithful pass through Vanity Fair they are noticed. The things that identify them and mark them as different are dress, speech, destination and trade. They wear robes of righteousness, they speak the language of Canaan, their business is in Heaven and they traffic in the truth. Of course, there is no such thing as toleration in Vanity Fair. In all of its effervescence and jubilation, a sinister spirit lurks. There is a law, and the unspoken law is *you must become like us*—you either buy or burn.

Can we come to grips with this? The love of the world is irreconcilable with the love of the Father. These are two incompatible entities. As we see later on, our two brave pilgrims are brought before a kangaroo court, tried, and our friend Faithful is sent to burn at the stake.

It was the verdict of the world that condemned the spotless Son of God. True believers in Christ ought to expect no less than hatred, bias and false accusation as they make their way to the Celestial City.
