

OUR SACRED TRUST: Part 1

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Within the Church the denial of the Bible as the revealed Word of God is a comparatively recent phenomenon. For centuries after its completion no church writer denied that "what Scripture says, God says." All the early controversies over the Trinity, the Person of Christ, Human Depravity and Divine Grace never questioned the integrity of "the Word of God written." As late as 553 the second Council of Constantinople could justly claim that it held, preached and handed down to the churches the same faith that God had originally entrusted to His people. Even the superstition and scholastic philosophy of the Dark Ages and the turbulent conflicts of the Reformation could not undermine the Church's dependence on Holy Scripture. It was not until the 18th century Age of Reason, and then within the Protestant churches themselves, that this unique deposit of divine truth was denied on a large scale.

Having bled profusely for over two hundred years from the stab-wounds of its Rationalistic critics, the Word of God is now being quietly bandaged up in the linen of "man's universal religious experience." Here, it is plausibly claimed, the Bible takes its rightful place alongside other "authentic forms of spirituality." So, we are confidently told, God reveals Himself just as much in a flower or a sunset or in each member of the human race as in "Isaiah's wild measure" or "John's simple page." The Bible has been cunningly transformed from a unique supernatural revelation into just one of many naturalistic "windows onto God."

Such wretched and deceitful handling of the Word of God demands a spirited response from all who take seriously the sacred charge, "Keep that which is committed to thy trust," (1 Timothy 6:20); and "the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2) Comments Calvin on the first passage, equating the Gospel with the will of God revealed in His Word: "If God has committed His Gospel to us, it is an inestimable treasure, and we must take pains to keep it. And moreover, every one of us must consider and mark well what God has committed to his charge." He says much the same on the second text, adding only that "we must draw one another" and "labour to make God known throughout all the world."

How may we do this? What steps must we take to ensure that we both keep the sacred trust ourselves and commit it to others?

First, we must carefully consider just what it is that God has committed to our charge. Second, we must urge both ourselves and others to do our duty in the light of this. The first of these we will consider this time, and the second in the next issue of the Quarterly, God willing.

I What it is that God has committed to our charge.

1. God has committed to our charge a unique personal revelation of Himself. The Bible is the only book in which we come face to face with God. It is not without reason that our Reformed divines refer to Holy Scripture as "the face of God." Here in its pages the only true and living God draws near to us, enters into personal communion with us, and causes His voice to be heard in the depths of our hearts. "Hear, O my people, and I will speak... I am God, even thy God" (Psalm 50:7).

In this respect the Holy Bible is quite different from natural revelation. There God shows Himself as Creator, Sustainer and Disposer of the works of His hands. Here He addresses us in person. (See Psalm 19:1-6 compared with 7-11).

Scripture is also different in kind to all other books. The writings of such great men of God as Augustine, Calvin, Owen and Edwards may point us to God and speak well of Him, but in His own inspired Word God speaks to us Himself. "O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord." (Jeremiah 22:29). By it He actually reveals to us His mind and will concerning everything we need to know "for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life" (Westminster Confession of Faith. 1. vi).

Moreover, because the Biblical Revelation is personal on God's part it requires a personal response on ours. "Seek ye my face; ... Thy face, Lord, will I seek" (Psa 27:8); "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8); "And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Psalm 50:15); "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established" (2 Chronicles 20:20).

2. This revelation is verbal and propositional. He who made man's mouth and formed human language speaks to us in words we can understand. The light of nature and the works of creation and providence, however wonderful as mute messengers of the glory of God, leave us short of that knowledge of God and His will that is necessary to salvation. Therefore, that we might know Him so as to enjoy Him, He has been pleased to commit the saving revelation of Himself wholly to writing. Whoever runs may read. How heartening to discover that "those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them" (W.C. 1. vii).

So, Paul reminds us, Christ crucified has been evidently "set forth" before our very eyes (Galatians 3:1). This does not refer to some wretched crucifix that has to be gazed on in order to draw us into communion with God, but to "the whole doctrine of the Gospel respecting salvation through the sufferings and death of Christ" (John Brown: Commentary on Gal 3:1). The Greek verb used here is unique in Scripture, but not uncommon in the language of the day. It means "proclaimed" or "placarded," just as a magistrate would proclaim the execution of a criminal on a placard in a public place. The glorious truth that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures is verbally proposed to our spiritual perception as distinctly as if it were set up on a huge placard in the market-place of the world. What a message for our new mediaeval age of symbols, images and ikons! "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read" (Isaiah 34:16).

3. Thirdly, the sacred deposit of the Bible is a free gift from our most gracious God. It was neither in response to our need, nor at our request, nor according to our deserts, that God has inclined Himself towards us and revealed Himself to us, but according to His infinite loving-kindness. He took this merciful initiative according to His eternal loving purpose to restore His lost people to Himself. The Bible is therefore a wondrous expression of His free or sovereign grace. It is wholly gratuitous. Both the book in which our salvation is bound up and the salvation itself are a pure gift. Indeed, the very faith by which the revelation is received is a gift too.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book" (Exodus 17:14); "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God [God-breathed]" (2 Timothy 3:16); "I ... heard behind me a great voice ... saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book" (Revelation 1:10-11); "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:4,5.); "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

4. Then again, the record God has bequeathed to us in Holy Scripture is historical. The four world-affecting events recorded in the opening chapters of Genesis - the Creation, the Fall, the Flood and the Babel crisis - really took place. The four leading patriarchs whose lives occupy the rest of the Genesis narrative - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph - actually lived. The visions and prophecies given to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel (to name no others) really happened. The physical conception of God in our nature, His miraculous works, death, resurrection and ascension all took place. Christ's Second Coming, Judgment of both living and dead, and glorious reign throughout eternity, shall certainly come to pass, and all precisely as the Biblical testimony foretells. God has recorded in Holy Scripture what He has really done and will do in history to promote His glory and the salvation of His elect.

"And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain (Exodus 19:34; "The former treatise [i.e. Luke's Gospel] have I made O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up" (Acts 1:1,2); "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life ... declare we unto you" (1 John 1:1,3). The Bible is history.

The Bible is historical too in a further sense. Through its pages God speaks to us not merely as immortal spirits, capable of being translated into His presence in an instant, but also as sinners living out our lives within the limitations of time and space. As John "Rabbi" Duncan says: "The Gospel is needed equally by every man; it is adapted to every man; by God's appointment it is to be preached to every man under heaven." We have no right to tamper with the sacred record, in either its contents or its methods or its spirit, in order to adapt it to the needs of Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Humanists, New-Agers or anyone else. It is already perfectly suited to men as sinners exactly where they are. The "sophisticated modern man" about whom we hear so much today is just as guilty, depraved, lost and helpless as any ancient Egyptian idolater or Assyrian warrior. He stands as much in need of the only Saviour as did Manasseh and cruel Saul of Tarsus.

Furthermore, the Bible is as perfectly suited to modern life as it was to those of King David's day. Which government does not need to discover how to restrain and punish sin, and how to recognise and reward well-doing? Which nation does not need the help of God when beset by spiritual, moral, political, social and economic foes? Which church does not need to learn how to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God? And which individual does not need preparation to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ? There is no experience or circumstance in the history of individuals or nations to which the Word of God does not speak. King Jehoiakim suffered a terrible punishment for rejecting the Word of God as irrelevant to the ordering of his kingdom. (Jeremiah 36). So shall we if we refuse to make it "the men of our counsel," the "lamp to our feet" the "light to our path."

5. Fifthly, the Bible is deliberately doctrinal and moral. This divine revelation is not merely a record of God's activity in the affairs of men. It contains doctrinal truths to be believed and moral absolutes to be lived out by all people, in all places, at all times.

The doctrines of Scripture explain the facts of Scripture. Thus we are to believe not merely that in Bethlehem two thousand years ago Jesus was born, but also that the One so born is no less than God in our nature. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14); "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). Similarly we are to believe not merely that Christ died on a cross outside Jerusalem, but also that He died "for our sins;" "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 3:18).

This is why we must always speak of divine revelation as something objective, a body of teaching outside ourselves, a deposit of truth committed to the Church, and not as something originating within our religious consciousness or spiritual experience. It has real content, real substance. That content and substance is the object of our faith. We are to obey its commands, tremble at its threats and believe its promises.

The moral content of Scripture, especially as summarised in the Ten Commandments and their elaboration by our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles, is also a silver thread running all the way through Scripture. God is a holy God, and He will have us to be holy people. The means He has imposed on us to teach us this and make us holy is His moral law. All its precepts, statutes, commandments, testimonies, are right - holy, just and good. When God says that we are to love Him as the Lord our God, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, He presents us with moral absolutes by which our hearts and lives are to be regulated. Neither can it be otherwise when we consider that it is by the self-same Word that we shall all be judged at the Last Day. Thus Holy Scripture is the only and all-sufficient rule of faith and life for individuals, churches and nations till the end of time, "unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men" (Westminster Confession I. vi).

One can hardly avoid observing, too, how intimately the doctrines and the moral exhortations of Scripture are united. God is holy: that is a doctrine. Therefore be ye holy: that is a moral exhortation. In the same way the word "therefore" in Romans 12:1, Ephesians 4:1 and Philippians 4:1 provides the inward spiritual link between the doctrines preceding and moral exhortations following it. So it is with the Preface and the commandments of the Decalogue. "I am the Lord thy God" - that is a doctrinal truth. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" - that is a moral prohibition. Indeed, nowhere in Scripture are ethics separated from doctrine.

A further point needs to be emphasised. So spiritual is the divinely-wrought faith to which these doctrines and moral standards are addressed that it never terminates on the verbal statements of Scripture themselves, but actually leads us into the realities of the spiritual world itself: "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18). Remarks Charles Hodge: "As is usual with the apostle, he states both what

is not, and what is, the absorbing object of the believer's attention. Not the visible, but the invisible; i.e. not the world and the things of the world, but the things which pertain to that state which is to us now invisible." In the last analysis Paul was looking at God Himself, revealed in Christ and seen through the pages of "the books and the parchments" he loved so much. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:1). This is the ultimate purpose of all the doctrinal and moral values God has revealed to us in Scripture.

6. Furthermore, the Biblical revelation is redemptive. Eternal in origin and eternal in destiny, it unfolds a plan of redemption for the elect of God which is both inconceivable and inexpressible. At one time it is called "so great salvation" (Hebrews 2:1); at another "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 38.); at another still "the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Romans 11:31); at yet another "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). And in each case the subject is God in Christ, visiting and redeeming His people (Luke 1:68).

It tells us lovingly of One who redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (Galatians 3.11); who redeemed us, not with such corruptible things as silver or gold, (for the redemption of the soul is too precious to be paid for by such things), "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19.); who redeemed us "from among men" to God by His blood (Revelation 14:4; 5:9).

Well may we exult with Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another" (Job 19:25-27). No human philosophy or speculation has discovered these things; no profound religious experience has conjured them up from the depths of our being; no deception of Satan has devised them to give poor souls an imaginary prop on which to lean through life and in death. They are the fruit of divine wisdom, love, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth working together for the glory of God and the redemption of His people.

The Puritan John Flavel knew what he was doing when he exclaimed in so many of his sermons: "Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!" To know Him as the only Redeemer, and as our Redeemer, is the summit of happiness.

7. Seventhly, the Biblical revelation is communal. Those to whom God reveals Himself and His wondrous plan of salvation are not simply individuals, but are also members of a society called to uphold and bear witness to the truth. Just as the oracles of God were committed to Israel of old (Romans 3:2), so the truth as it is in Jesus has been committed to the Church of the new dispensation. In 1 Timothy 3:15, the Holy Spirit calls the Church of the living God "the pillar and ground of the truth." So, explains Vine, the Church "in a collective capacity" is "to maintain the doctrines of the faith by teaching and practice," and to prove itself a firm and steadfast support and bulwark to the truth (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, "Pillar" and "Ground").

While addressing each one of us as individuals, God in Scripture does not deal with us as isolated units, separate from each other, but as members of a world-wide community of faith. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith,

one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). It is therefore the task of the whole Church throughout all the world, as well as of each member in particular, to treasure and promote the sacred deposit committed to us.

The most casual survey of the professing Church of today, however, must conclude that this is the last thing it is concerned about. Unity without truth, peace without truth, good-will without truth, happiness without truth, social status without truth, financial security without truth, seem to be its driving forces. O when will the Church realise that it is charged to serve the God of truth, whose eyes are always on the truth, who requires truth in the inward parts, and who shall call us to account for how we have handled His truth?

8. Lastly, the Bible has been given us as the final court of appeal in all matters of controversy. Whether the case involves either subscription to a church's doctrinal standards or adherence to a godly way of life, it should be tried by no other standard. "The supreme Judge," states the Westminster Confession, "by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture" (W.C. I.x).

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20); "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures;" (Matthew 22:29); "And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed after that Paul had spoken one word: Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers" (Acts 28:25).

Because the Scriptures are complete, because everyone of us is commanded to search them for ourselves, because the Holy Spirit has been promised to guide us in understanding and obeying them, because no body of men has been divinely-authorized to bind its interpretation of them on others, and because the Scriptures themselves refer us to no standard or judge above themselves, they alone are to be our court of appeal. Even creeds and confessions, adopted as subordinate standards by the churches, are binding only on those who voluntarily profess them, and then only insofar as they agree with the Scriptures.

Perhaps no aspect of the divine testimony is so little regarded in the professing Church today. Whence came the thousands of splits, schisms, secessions, miscarriages of justice, pastor-less churches, church-less pastors, broken homes and broken hearts but by trampling on this very principle? Power-crazy synods, love-less ministers, wealthy elders, obstinate deacons, arrogant feminists, possessive "founders of a work" ['This is my baby'], partisan people, family factions, spiritual fanatics, traditionalist clerics, humanistic governments - all want to rule, rather than yield to the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture. My dear friends, there is no hope for the Church of God as long as we reject Holy Scripture as our court of appeal in all matters of faith and conduct.

Part II

What is our duty, then, in the present crisis? It is to urge both ourselves and others, whenever we have the opportunity, to live and act in accordance with the glorious treasure of God's Word that that has been entrusted to us.

What does this involve?

1. First of all, we must receive our sacred trust out of the hands of God. If only we realised what a privilege is ours: to have the very Word of God in our care! At the Reformation a certain poor English Christian gave a load of bay for one page of the Bible! So we must receive "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) with profound and humble gratitude for so great a gift.

This entails the work of faith, the kind of faith that corresponds to the revelation given.

(i) We must sincerely assent to its truths, without exception or reservation. There must be no picking and choosing. One modern scholar coolly tells us that we can discard the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy yet still worship our Lord Jesus Christ. This is impossible. The Christ of Holy Scripture - of Genesis 3 as well as of Revelation 22 - is the only Christ there is. Unless we believe the whole of God's testimony to His Son, we believe in the wrong Christ. One dear minister in Scotland once prayed: "Lord, give us a right grip of the right Christ." That Christ is the Christ of Holy Scripture, and no other. We are not free to accept or reject God's testimony as we please. Election and reprobation, law and Gospel, depravity and holiness, justification and sanctification, heaven and hell, are all part of our sacred trust.

(ii) We must cordially embrace the spiritual realities that its truths reveal to us. It is not enough to hold for true all that God has said in Scripture because He has said it. We must also lay hold by faith of the living and true God, revealed in Christ the only Redeemer of God's elect. We must ourselves be born again. We must ourselves be justified by grace and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. We must be infallibly convinced that we too must enter the eternal world of disembodied spirits and leave our bodies in their graves till the resurrection. True faith makes all these things substantial to us, so that they are more real to us than any earthly scene. See how Paul reminds the Thessalonian Christians of this: "our Gospel," he says, "came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (1 Thessalonians 1:5). That is, they were thoroughly convinced, absolutely sure, by the Holy Spirit working in conjunction with the preached Word, of the reality of the things they heard. Is it so with us?

2. The second duty of the Church is to faithfully preserve and safeguard the sacred deposit of truth that God has committed to her.

"Buy the truth, and sell it not" (Proverbs 23:23). "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 6:13-14). "These things teach and exhort" (1 Timothy 6:2). "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2) "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Colossians 3:16). "Watch ye; stand fast in the faith" (1 Corinthians

16:11). "Hold fast the form of sound words" (2 Timothy 1:11). @Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for He is faithful that promised)" (Hebrews 10:21). (See also Deuteronomy 4:2 and Revelation 22:18-19).

Thus we are to preserve our sacred trust entire and inviolate, in all its integrity, free from all innovation, contamination, addition or subtraction.

3. Thirdly, it is our solemn duty to identify, refute and expel every error that threatens these truths that God has so graciously revealed to us. This is the "apologetic" work of the Church - of every believer, but especially of every divinely-called and accredited teacher in the Church. Observe how Jude urges us to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The Puritan Thomas Manton's comments are even more relevant today than when he wrote them. Two motives, he claims, should drive us to obey this exhortation:

"(1) The preciousness of truth.... (2) The trust that is reposed in us for the next age." He continues: "Well then let us perform the faithful part of trustees ... We live in a frozen age, and cursed indifferency hath done a great deal of mischief. Christians! Is error grown less dangerous, or the truth of religion more doubtful? Is there nothing certain and worth contention, or are we afraid to meddle with such as shroud themselves under the glorious name of saints? [He is referring to the false teachers and hypocrites who have crept in unawares] ... Oh! my brethren, Paul withstood Peter to the face when truth was like(ly) to suffer, (Galatians 2:11). So should we withstand them to the face ... What is become of our zeal? "There is none valiant for the truth upon the earth" (Jeremiah 9:3) ... We have been railing at one another for lesser differences, and now we begin to be ashamed of it ... Ah! my brethren, it is time to awake out of sleep."

May we lay Manton's stirring remarks to heart, lest we are found sleeping on the mast in the storm that threatens to sink the Church of our day. [Perhaps it would be more appropriate to speak of the doldrums which threaten to lull us into the sleep of death, leaving the ship of the Church to drift aimlessly on the tide of time.)

4. Finally, the Church has the further duty of explaining Holy Scripture according to its true sense and educating its members and children in all its truths. What a wonderful picture we are shown in Nehemiah 8 of the covenant people of God requesting their religious teachers to read and explain the Word of their God to them! How attentive they were when the Holy Scriptures were opened to them! And how overwhelmed with grief they were when the full extent of their failure to keep God's standards was brought home to them! There in the great street before the Water Gate they were thoroughly instructed and cleansed by the refreshing power of God's Holy Word. "And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground" (Nehemiah 8:6). Little wonder that such a powerful application of the law of God by the Holy Spirit was accompanied by deeply-felt confession of sin, a renewal of their covenant with God, and the putting away of their idolatrous relationships and practices. "Reading, hearing, believing, obeying the Word always brings spiritual revival with humiliation, self-judgment, confession and true worship" (Merrill F Unger).

We hear much about "revival" today. Conference papers are devoted to it; prayer meetings concentrate on it; books are published describing it. But where do the people of God listen communally, reverently, believingly, obediently to the reading and interpreting of the Word of God? Indeed, when have the people of God shown such hunger for His Word, even to hear the worst about themselves, that they have requested their teachers to explain and apply its truths "from morning till mid-day" both "the men and the women, and those that could understand"? And when have the people of God been prepared to stand every day for seven days while "the book of the law of God" has been read to them? The old Scottish communion seasons were the nearest approach to such devotion to God and His demands. When shall we see their like again?

And where do we stand in relation to our duty to our children, who are not primarily ours, but are God's covenant children? [For proof of this, consider that when the Jews had sold themselves to paganism to such an extent that they sacrificed their own sons and daughters to pagan idols, God complains: "Thou hast slain my children." He calls them those "whom thou hast borne unto me" (Ezekiel 16:20-21)]. Also, everything that God has revealed to us, especially His holy law of love, must not only be laid up in our own heart, but must be spoken of in the home and taught to our children. "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deuteronomy 6:4-7).

Does not the apostle John single out the little children within the Church to teach and encourage as distinct from the young men and fathers? (1 John 2:12-13). Does not the apostle Paul address them particularly concerning their duty to parents as members of the household of faith? (Ephesians 6.1-3). Does he not remind Timothy of his great privilege in having known the Holy Scriptures since childhood? (2 Timothy 3:15). And are we not enjoined to hand down our priceless heritage to our children, trusting God's promise to make them true heirs with us? (Psalm 90:16; 103:17; 102:18). There is a precious promise to praying believers in Psalm 102. It is particularly beautiful in the Scottish metrical version:

God in His glory shall appear,
When Zion He builds and repairs.
He shall regard and lend His ear
Unto the needy's humble prayers.
Th'afflicted's prayer He will not scorn.
All times this shall be on record:
And generations yet unborn
Shall praise and magnify the Lord.

May we take heart from its light and comfort, and press on in endeavouring to fulfil our sacred trust.

(Concluded)