

1 ¶ *O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.*
33 ¶ *He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground;*
34 *A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.*
35 *He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings.*
36 *And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation;*
37 *And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase. (Psalm 107)*

The laws governing prosperity or poverty in this world are skewed to the wisest and strongest. The race is to the swift, the battle to the strong, the prize to the wise. The best of everything is quickly taken up by those whose advantage fits them to beat out everyone else. The weaker, the disadvantaged or disenfranchised, must then make do with the dregs of the cup. That is the way the script reads; and the fool, and the unobservant, may think that to be the way things actually are.

The feudal lords in the Old World, according to their relative powers and cunning, acquired and held the best, most productive and most strategic of lands. The common people were left with the barren wastelands, the undesirable and unproductive, or else they were reduced to serfdom. Having no assets by which to improve their lot, their prospects were nil. Meanwhile, the lords, with their advantaged holdings, grew in power and riches.

The native tribes in the New World lived by the same rule. They were at constant war to gain and hold the best and most productive hunting grounds, territories that had abundant water and produced fuel for their fires. The more powerful and aggressive warriors held the best land, while the more docile, weaker and less skilled tribes had to get by in poorer territory. With the advent of the European invaders with their superior tools of warfare, advanced technologies and political expertise, they soon confiscated all the arable, watered, and productive land for themselves, and pushed the Indians into the barren, arid wastelands of the continent.

Then, as white men settled the country, even with the most liberal of democratic laws and legal process, still the most wily and powerful gobbled up the best and most productive of every site in the country. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, every developing industrial and commercial property fell into the hands of the elite, while the proletariat was largely left with decaying, declining and depreciating holdings. A privileged few cashed in on the gold rushes, the oil booms, the stocks and bonds bonanzas, and the computer mania. The rest of us provide the market, the labor, pick up the scraps and pay the bills.

But we are concerned with higher, more spiritual and more substantial realities than these fleeting, perishing trinkets that will all soon be gone. We look not on temporal things that are seen, but the eternal unseen. Have these laws and principles invaded even the spiritual realm of Christendom? It would seem so.

Even though the scriptures tell us that not many wise, noble, or mighty according to the flesh are called, those very features have become the criteria for credibility, usefulness, recognition and status in Christendom. Only those with such credentials are published, heard and elevated to leadership. Even though the scriptures tell us that God has chosen "*the poor of this world [to be] rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom (James 2:5)*, and that the early church, full of great power, great grace and great faith, said, "*Silver and gold have I none,*" (*Acts 3:6*); yet silver and gold have become the absolute commodity to get the job done in Christendom. It is the rich and powerful church or denomination that acquires the most strategic and advantageous sites for churches, that can put up the most beautiful, attractive and prestigious of buildings, can mount the most ambitious and widespread "missionary" enterprises. This rich and powerful Impostor controls all the publishing houses, the literature and the music. It sits on the boards and in all the Department Chairs of the schools and seminaries. It lobbies in the State Houses, and walks and in hand with the kings and merchants of the earth.

This is no modern development. It began with the ascendance of Constantine, who married the "church" to the state, made society and the church one, and imposed the principles of this world upon the monstrous hybrid that came to be known as Christendom. The Reformers did not touch this sacral system, but perpetuated it in Episcopal, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches. The Puritans never renounced it, but employed it with vigor. Its corrupt leaven still pollutes the waters of Christianity today, even among the most conservative and Biblical of Christian denominations.

Once again, that is how the world's script reads; but the Bible, and actual eventualities in the drama of life, will reveal a different outcome. The Almighty is the One Who determines the fruitfulness or barrenness of a region or enterprise, not its geographical features, its climate or demographics. He can, *and does*, quickly make a barren wasteland of apostate churches, pours contempt upon their princes and causes them to wander in a confusion of mind and soul. He will also prosper His true people and churches in their poor, scattered, forgotten, and out of the way places, turn their wilderness into oases of refreshing springs of living waters. The hungry will settle there, establish a "city of God," and yield a fruitful harvest to God's glory.

The righteous will notice this and rejoice (vs. 42). "*Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.*" (vs. 43).

-C.M.