

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION: *What is the meaning of Mt. VII.14 "Narrow is the gate . . . and few are they that find it" ? Surely it does not mean that most of mankind will be lost ?*

ANSWER: We must always distinguish carefully between Our Lord's enunciation of principles and His statements of fact. Even when He is stating principles, it does not follow that He intends them to hold good for all time; they may refer merely to the immediate circumstances. Thus it is evident that in Mt. XXIII.3 He is not exhorting His followers to obey for all time the scribes and Pharisees. In the same way, in Mt. VII.14, we must not be in a hurry to conclude that His words hold good for all time. At the period when He spoke the Jews had already begun to reject Him (*cf.* Mt. IX.3, XII.2, etc.), and the Gentile mission had not even begun; the time of Our Lord's active ministry was thus perhaps the worst in the world's history.

None the less we should take a lesson from His words even today. This is not the place in which to dilate upon the subject, but I may mention that in the *Catholic Herald* for 4 March 1953 it is reported that Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, speaking at a London conference, said that the four most important causes of crime were: (1) broken and unsatisfactory homes; (2) lack of parental control; (3) constant picturing of brutal violence in (e.g.) "comics", and the presentation of false values in certain films; (4) cessation in a large section of the population of religion having the sanction in practical and daily affairs that it had even in the early part of this century.

Surely this leaves the way leading to damnation fairly wide? The child (as Sir David realises) is father to the man.

QUESTION: *What kind of beds were described by St Luke as κλινάριον, κλίνη, κλινίδιον? These words seem to illustrate St Luke's meticulous care in writing, and indicate the social status of the occupants.*

ANSWER: The regular word for "bed" ("pallet" seems a rather better word) in the New Testament is κλίνη, used 9 times. κλινάριον (Acts, V.15) and κλινίδιον (Lk. V.19 and 24) are diminutive forms, but there can hardly be any distinction of meaning intended in the latter case, for the κλίνη of Lk. V.18 is the same "bed" as the κλινίδιον of Lk. V.19, 24. This leaves only κλινάριον, used in such a general sense in Acts V.15 that it is unlikely that it has there any special sense, distinct from the other two words. St Luke's on the whole seems the

best Greek in the New Testament, and he seems to have drawn freely upon his own large vocabulary here without intending any such distinction. The word itself is rare (so Moulton-Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, etc., on the word), diminutives in general are not common in the New Testament,¹ and it seems very likely, as already said, that here also the diminutive sense was not intended.

QUESTION : *In Our Lord's eschatological discourse (Mt., Mk., Lk.) are we to suppose that He speaks of two facts—the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the world ; or only one fact—the end of the world ?*

ANSWER : With all due deference to certain modern theorists, it seems clear that two facts are involved, as above suggested : the end of the world begins at Mt. xxiv.29, Mk. xiii.24, Lk. xxi.25 ; the destruction of Jerusalem is symbolic of the destruction of the world. In such cases we sometimes find what I have called "compensation", a term which seems to have had a fairly good reception. The principle at work is clearly enunciated by St Thomas, in the preface to his commentary on the Psalms :

"Prophecies are sometimes uttered about things which existed at the time in question, but are not uttered primarily with reference to them, but in so far as they are a figure of things to come ; and therefore the Holy Ghost has provided that when such prophecies are uttered, some details should be inserted which go beyond the actual thing done, in order that the mind may be raised to the thing signified".

He then instances Antiochus in the book of Daniel as a type of Antichrist, and also Ps. lxxii (Vulg. lxxi) setting forth Solomon as a type of Christ. His treatment of the subject is based on St Jerome's commentary on Dan. xi.21 ff., though he does not mention the fact. Cardinal Billot in a series of articles begun in the *Etudes* for 5 June 1917, and Father Pesch in his great work *De inspiratione* (p. 506), expound this view. I can lend some English work on the subject to any who wish to examine it more closely.

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¹ See Blass, *Grammar of New Testament Greek*, English trans., 2nd edn. 1911, 63-4.