

torches in Nero's gardens, or thrown to the lions, glorifying God in the midst of adversity. We think of the heroes of the Reformation, of the victims of the Inquisition, of the Scotch Covenanters. We see a little band of Pilgrims leaving their beloved homeland and crossing the seas to found a country in the wilderness, where they might worship God in accordance with the demands of His Word. We see Christians behind the iron curtain today, bravely giving their lives for their loyalty to God's Truth. Surely the long history since the exile has been a time when God's people praised Him in the fires.

Our present group of verses is characterized by joyful praise of God. Verse 16 tells us that the very ends of the earth resound with songs, "even glory to the righteous." The adjective "righteous" here is in the singular, and must refer to God.

In verse 16 we have another transition -- in this case a very sudden one. After its first phrase we are plunged into deep misery, and the note of unhappiness persists for several verses. This is an added evidence that in verse 15 the word "fires" refers to persecution and suffering. After the wonderful declaration of praise to God with which the verse begins, it continues: "But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously."

The exact meaning of the uncommon word rendered "leanness" is not certain. Other words from the same root are translated "lean." The rendering of the King James Version rests on fairly early tradition. If it is correct, and if the word does not merely signify calamity in general, it carries the idea of disappointment at failing to produce the expected amount of fruit. This idea is quite in line with developments during the present phase of God's economy.

Christ commanded us to bear fruit wherever we go. As the gospel has gone out, many have thought that soon the whole world would be converted to Christ. A few decades ago the watchword was, "the evangelization of the world in this generation." Yet today we find that there are more people in the world who do not know Christ than there were when the great missionary movement started. The great increase of population is partly responsible for the growth of heathenism