

# On the Road to the City



## A reflection on the spiritual journey

By Peter McArthur

In a dream I was walking along a road called “Straight Ahead”. I could see in the distance, a very clear sight of the Eternal City, with a glimmering not overstated, but undeniably there. It was positioned a little above the natural horizon, not floating yet it did seem to be so. Yes, on a hill, raised up, but not as so high that it seemed at all out of reach.

The road on which I travelled was wide, yet its pavement was ancient and rugged, but all the while it was somehow fresh, but not new – at least not newly made. It was ancient, with a firm foundation well worn but not as much as it might’ve been. It could still take plenty of more travellers. Plenty more feet to tread the way ahead.

What made the roadway seem to be wider were the verges on each side flanking the road. These were as wide again as the road, if not more so! The verges on either side were grassed, and seemingly recently mowed, but natural enough to give it that comfortable look of a welcome, come-rest-here-awhile kind of beckoning. Beyond the verges on each side stood the tangled forest, with mature ancient trees and thick handsome looking bushes of verdant green as the undergrowth; enticing, and even desirable, yet somehow dangerous in

their siren-like luring. The forest stood high and slightly overshadowed the verges, but interestingly did not overshadow the road at all. No shadows of any sort obscured or touched that roadway.

The forest, ancient as it were with a distracting tempting that seemed pleasant, was nevertheless a dangerous place. What however were comfortable were the verges. Places of rest on the journey, places of pleasant comfort with no hint of danger whatsoever. So long as you stayed on the verge and did not approach the forest you could feel (and were) safe.

Here and there on the sunny verges stood wonderfully large oak trees with grand branches and leaves that seemed so enticing with a hint of some ancient times about them. The delicate grasses stretched from the road right up to these trees and then on again until the very edge of the forest. The road itself was no more than the width of a common suburban street, perhaps smaller. Cobbled, but not unpleasant to walk on, and straight as a die.

The verges either side were at least double that width. The forest – well, who would know how large that was – not unless you were foolish or at least unwise to enter and see. But who could come back to report on what they found? No one ever did! Better to stay on the verges if the road became wearisome.

Beneath some of these grand trees on the verge were seats, some of logs, a few of stone, and now and then even a swing dangling from the enormous overhead branches. All this, coupled with the pleasant warmth of a sun-drenched spring's day was indeed enticing. A chance to stop and rest from the hardness of the road under foot. Interestingly the further you walked upon the road, the same distance the City seemed to be! It did not seem to get closer, but yet this didn't quite seem to matter – at least not while you were on the road. It still beckoned on, still stood there waiting – even watching you!

If you found yourself weary of the journey, strangely you never felt thirsty or overheated, only a little tired, a kind of weariness, not from the walking - but of the progress. So the verdant grass on the welcoming verges enticed you to stop a while, rest under the shady trees, even sit on a swing and enjoy. The trouble it seemed was that the longer you sat and enjoyed the pleasantries of the verges, the longer you wanted to enjoy them more. You could so easily convince yourself to stay just that little longer. A voice, or voices, quietly murmured to my soul "Rest up, become refreshed, for the journey will still be there for the taking another day. And another. And another after that."

The journey somehow seemed to displace the actual road. The cart was now in front of the horse, as it were. The lure of the welcoming grass verges began to ensnare, entrap and engage one's thoughts and even one's values. A change of ideals and direction began to take root, ever so slowly, so subtly, but so devastatingly dangerous for any traveller on that road.

Should you linger too long, even a little too long, a complacency began to waft over you like the scent of a lovely flower, a drowsiness of spirit and purpose that sang to your soul and spirit, enticing you to remain there on the pleasant verge and to forego the hardness of the road – which by now was beginning to be out-of-mind; almost.

A shudder passed through me, a shaking that threw off the cloak of slumber and contentment. I found myself walking again on that road, gazing at the City in the distance,

just a little nearer now. Not out of reach at all, but still there like a beacon soaking up the sunlight and emitting its inherit gloriousness. It drew me on, not with the enticement of a persuasion but of a sure Promise.

Then as I walked on, foregoing the lure of the pleasant resting places, I said to myself: "Whether I arrive alive at the City or not, when others come after me, they shall see my body unmoving laying there on that road, and they will know, I kept my face toward the Eternal City and did not leave the road Straight Ahead."

Whatever the outcome after that, I care not, because it will no longer be in my hands. It will be His work to finish my travel and He will take me into my Home, my longed-for Destination, into the City, the Heavenly Jerusalem!