John Bunyan

The Pilgrim's Progress

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THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

JOHN BUNYAN (1628–88) was born at Elstow, near Bedford, the eldest son of a brazier. He learned to read and write at the village school, and prepared to follow his father's trade. In 1644, however, he was swept up in the Civil War, and served as a soldier in the Parliamentary army. After leaving the army in 1647, he underwent a prolonged and agonizing spiritual crisis. Following his religious conversion he joined an Independent church in Bedford, and before long began to preach. This led, in 1656, to the beginning of a literary career in the course of which he would publish some sixty works of controversial, expository, and practical divinity, marked by an uncompromising zeal and trenchant directness of style. In 1660, following the Restoration of Charles II, he was imprisoned for twelve years in Bedford gaol because of his refusal to stop preaching. While in prison he published several books, among them *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), now recognized as one of the classics of Puritan spiritual autobiography. It was not, however, until the publication in 1678 of *The Pilgrim's Progress* that his genius fully declared itself. The imaginative intensity and authenticity of his allegory of the Christian life made the book an extraordinary best-seller, and has earned Bunyan a unique place in literary history. It was followed in 1680 by its sequel, *The Life and Death of Mr Badman*, by the elaborate multi-level allegory *The Holy War* in 1682, and by Part Two of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in 1684, works which substantiate Bunyan's claim to be among the founders of the English novel.

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JOHN BUNYAN

The Pilgrim's Progress

Edited with an Introduction and Notes by
W. R. OWENS

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To my parents
Thomas and Maria Owens
and
in memory of my grandparents
Robert and Rachel Owens

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EVERY student of Bunyan owes an enormous debt to the late Roger Sharrock. In my own case the debt is a very personal one: he guided my early postgraduate studies with unfailing kindness and encouragement, and generously invited me to edit two volumes in his edition of Bunyan's *Miscellaneous Works* while I was still very much an apprentice scholar. I owe him a more particular debt in the preparation of the present edition. The text here is based upon his Oxford English Texts edition of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and the index is the one he prepared for that edition. In preparing my own explanatory notes I have drawn with profit and gratitude upon his extensive scholarly commentary on the text, as well as upon his many other publications on Bunyan.

I am also greatly indebted to Professor N. H. Keeble, who edited the previous Oxford World's Classics edition of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and from whose scholarship I have learned much. The glossary included here is a somewhat revised and enlarged version of one he prepared for his edition. I am grateful to him for allowing me to make use of it, and for many other kindnesses.

The chronology here is an adapted and revised version of one I prepared for a collection of essays, *John Bunyan and his England, 1628–88* (London, 1990), co-edited with Anne Laurence and Stuart Sim. It is a pleasure to acknowledge here my gratitude to them both for friendship and support over many years.

The Open University W. R. OWENS

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations xi

Introduction xiii

Note on the Text xxxix

Select Bibliography xliv

Chronology of Bunyan's Life and Times l

THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS: THE FIRST PART 1

THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS: THE SECOND PART 157

Explanatory Notes 291

Glossary 320

Index 325

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Frontispiece to the first edition, Part One	lviii
Title page of the first edition, Part One	1
Christian meeting Evangelist	12
Christian meeting Mr Worldly-Wiseman	21
Christian at the Wicket Gate	26
Christian losing his burden	38
Christian in the arbour	43
Christian passing the lions	46
Christian in his armour	56
Christian's fight with Apollyon	60
Christian in the Valley of the Shadow of Death	64
Christian and Faithful chained in Vanity Fair	89
Faithful appearing before Lord Hategood	93
The martyrdom of Faithful	96
Giant Despair before his castle	111
The pilgrims with the shepherds at the Delectable Mountains	116
The pilgrims riding the clouds	150
Frontispiece to the first edition, Part Two	156
Title page of the first edition, Part Two	157
Great-heart leading the pilgrims	201
The pilgrims dancing round the head of Giant Despair	263

INTRODUCTION

FROM the moment of its publication, *The Pilgrim's Progress* has appealed to an extraordinarily large and varied readership. No other work in English, except the Bible, has been so widely read over such a long period. First published in 1678, with a second part added in 1684, the book has never been out of print. It has been published in innumerable editions, and has been translated into over 200 languages. Such was its success that imitations, adaptations, abridgements, and translations began to appear almost immediately, a publishing phenomenon that has continued to this day. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it became established as a classic book for children. So widespread was its influence in the nineteenth century that it has been described as one of the 'foundation texts of the English working-class movement'.[1] British soldiers in the First World War drew upon memories of reading *The Pilgrim's Progress* in trying to understand and express what was happening to them.[2] Images, names, and phrases from it are part of the common currency of the English language. Even those who have not read the book recognize 'the wilderness of this world', 'Vanity Fair', 'the Slough of Despond', 'Doubting Castle', 'the Delectable Mountains', 'Great-heart', 'Valiant-for-Truth', 'So he passed over, and the trumpets sounded for him on the other side'. A set of verses included in Part Two, 'Who would true valour see, | Let him come hither', is among the best-known hymns in English. If ever a book deserved to be described as one of the 'world's classics', it is *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Bunyan's Life and Times

John Bunyan, the author of this famous book, lived from 1628 to 1688—a period witnessing some of the most turbulent and momentous events in English history. In 1642, while he was a boy of 14,

[1] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963; Harmondsworth, 1968), 34. See also Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven, 2001), 93–6, 104–6.

[2] See Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford, 1975; repr. 2000), 137–44.

tensions between King Charles I and Parliament erupted into a bloody civil war, which ended with the defeat and execution of the king. The institution of monarchy was abolished, together with the House of Lords, and England became a republic governed by Oliver Cromwell with the support of the army. The whole structure of the Church of England was dismantled: bishops, the Prayer Book, the Thirty-Nine Articles, and ecclesiastical courts were all swept away. The wearing of surplices, the playing of organs, and the use of baptismal fonts were prohibited, and the church festivals of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide were abolished. These radical changes horrified many traditional Anglicans, but were supported by Puritan clergy and laity favouring a Presbyterian form of church government instead of episcopacy (rule by bishops). Most Puritans, however, believed in the concept of a state church, and were dismayed when the formal disestablishment of the Church of England allowed the emergence of independent congregations and new religious groups who declared themselves separate from any established church.

Bunyan had grown up in the village of Elstow, near Bedford, the son of a brazier, or tinker. Despite being relatively poor, his parents were able to send him to a local school, where he received a rudimentary education. In November 1644, shortly after his sixteenth birthday, he left home to become a foot soldier in the Parliamentary army, stationed at the nearby garrison town of Newport Pagnell in Buckinghamshire. Little is known about his military service, but though it seems unlikely that he was involved in much actual fighting, the experience of being a soldier must have made a considerable impression on him. In the army the young country boy was mixing with men who were vigorously propounding revolutionary new political and religious ideas. During these years, groups like the Levellers were putting forward detailed and far-reaching proposals for political and constitutional reform, and radical religious sects like Baptists and Quakers were demanding the right to worship freely.

On leaving the army in 1647, Bunyan returned to Elstow to take up his father's trade as a tinker. The next few years were ones of intense spiritual crisis for him, later described in harrowing detail in his spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666). Ever since childhood he had suffered from nightmares about devils trying to draw him down into Hell, and was terrified at the prospect that he might be marked out for damnation. As a youth he

became, in his own estimation, a ringleader in wickedness, one who 'delighted in transgression against the Law of God'. Attempts to reform his life seemed hopeless, but a moment of revelation came when he heard 'three or four poor women' in Bedford talking about their experience of religion, and how 'God had visited their souls with his love in the Lord Jesus'. To Bunyan, 'they spake as if joy did make them speak . . . as if they had found a new world'. He was 'greatly affected with their words', and began to read the Bible in the hope of finding there 'the way to heaven and glory'.[3] In *Grace Abounding* he charts the slow and agonizing progress of his spiritual quest, his prolonged struggle with doubt and despair, and his eventual conviction of God's mercy towards him. An important stage in his conversion came when he made contact with the Independent (or congregational) church in Bedford that had been formed in 1650 under the leadership of an ex-Royalist convert, John Gifford. Bunyan joined this congregation in 1653, and within a few years began to preach in public. His sermons drew on his own spiritual experiences: 'I preached what I felt, what I smartingly did feel.'[4] The right of unlearned and unordained men to preach was a matter of fierce controversy in the seventeenth century. To many conservatives, Presbyterian as well as Anglican, the activities of 'mechanick preachers', as they were scornfully termed, posed a real threat to the whole social and ecclesiastical order. Cromwell, however, believed that 'liberty of conscience is a natural right',[5] and under his tolerant rule in the 1650s sects which were law-abiding were permitted to worship freely under the ministry of their own pastors.

Bunyan's most important intellectual development took place in the context of the radical preaching and pamphleteering, the dramatic political changes, and the extraordinary ideological struggles that characterized the English Revolution.[6] In the atmosphere of religious toleration during the 1650s, he began to write. His early

[3] John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding with Other Spiritual Autobiographies*, ed. John Stachniewski with Anita Pacheco (Oxford World's Classics, 1998), 7, 14, 17. Future references will be cited as *GA*.

[4] Ibid. 78.

[5] Cited in Roger Howell, Jr., 'Cromwell and English Liberty', in R. C. Richardson and G. M. Ridden (eds.), *Freedom and the English Revolution* (Manchester, 1986), 25–44 (31).

[6] The classic account of these years is Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (1972; Harmondsworth, 1975).

publications—sermons, theological treatises, and controversial works—reveal that he shared many of the ideas and attitudes that had become widespread during the revolutionary decades. For example, he was a millenarian, who thought that the return of Christ to rule for a thousand years with his saints on earth was imminent.[7] He also shared some of the social attitudes of radical thinkers. In a work published in 1658, *A Few Sighs from Hell*, he vigorously castigated the rich for their pride and covetousness, and for their oppression of the poor.[8]

Oliver Cromwell died in 1658, and was succeeded as Lord Protector by his son Richard. However his Protectorate quickly collapsed, and in 1660 Charles II was restored to the throne. Bunyan was still a comparatively young man. His greatest works were yet to be written, and to a large extent these works, including *The Pilgrim's Progress*, can be seen as products of the aftermath of revolution, when gains in religious freedom enjoyed by people like Bunyan were abruptly reversed. The Restoration brought back not just the monarchy, but the whole traditional ruling establishment. The Church of England was re-established with the full apparatus of episcopacy, and the House of Lords restored, with seats for bishops. At first it seemed as if there might continue to be some limited form of religious toleration. Charles, in a Declaration issued from Breda in Holland in April 1660, promised 'a liberty to tender consciences . . . no man shall be disquieted or called in question, for differences of opinion in matters of religion which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom'.[9] But when a new House of Commons was elected early in 1661 its members proved to be stridently Anglican, and in no mood to bring in a bill for religious toleration as the king wished. Instead, one of their first actions was to pass an Act of Uniformity, enforcing the use of the Book of Common Prayer in all places of worship. As a result of their refusal to conform, over 1,000 Puritan clergymen were ejected from the Church of England and deprived of their livings.

[7] See W. R. Owens, 'John Bunyan and English Millenarianism', in David Gay, James G. Randall, and Arlette Zinck (eds.), *Awakening Words: John Bunyan and the Language of Community* (Newark, Del., 2000), 81–96.

[8] *A Few Sighs from Hell* (1658), in *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*, gen. ed. Roger Sharrock, 13 vols. (Oxford, 1976–94), i. 230–382. Future references to this edition will be cited as *Misc. Works*.

[9] Cited in Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1978), 221.

Having purged nonconformity from the Church of England, Parliament set about suppressing every trace of religious dissent in England. There was already a body of legislation under which nonconformists could be punished, notably the Elizabethan Act against Conventicles, whose penalties extended to banishment and death. To this was now added the savage series of statutes that came to be known collectively as the 'Clarendon Code', forbidding all religious meetings not conducted according to the liturgy of the Church of England, and punishing offenders with fines, imprisonment, and transportation. For the next thirty years Dissenters in England endured what came to be known as the 'Great Persecution'. The duration and severity of persecution fluctuated: it was fierce, though patchy, in the 1660s; restrained for most of the 1670s, following a royal Declaration of Indulgence in 1672 which allowed for nonconformist worship in licensed meeting-houses; ferocious again during the first half of the 1680s. In general Dissenters had more freedom in towns, where the corporation often turned a blind eye, than in country areas, where the magistrates were local gentry appointed by the crown. Many Dissenters adopted ingenious stratagems to avoid arrest, and often received help from sympathetic neighbours. When all this is said, however, the fact remains that the human cost of the state repression of Dissent that followed the collapse of the revolution was enormous. Hundreds died, and many more had their health broken in the foul, overcrowded conditions of Restoration prisons.[10]

Bunyan's fate was particularly hard, and indeed in some ways his punishment was an exemplary one. He was to spend over twelve years in prison, one of the longest sentences served by any Dissenter. In November 1660 he had gone to preach at a meeting in Lower Samsell in Bedfordshire. He had been warned that a warrant was out for him, and could have evaded arrest if he had wished. Instead, he chose to offer himself as an example, believing that he had been singled out by God to suffer persecution for the faith. He was duly arrested and brought before the local magistrate.

By good fortune, Bunyan's own account of his arrest and subsequent trial has survived in a series of letters written to his friends in the Bedford congregation. These were not published until long

[10] See Gerald R. Cragg, *Puritanism in the Period of the Great Persecution, 1660–1688* (Cambridge, 1957), 1–127.

after his death, no doubt because they are full of reported speech and vivid detail about the personalities involved. He was charged under the old Elizabethan Conventicle Act with non-attendance at the established church, and with preaching to unlawful assemblies, or 'conventicles'. The five judges before whom he appeared had themselves suffered fines, sequestration of property, and even imprisonment under Cromwell. As became clear in the course of the trial, their object was not so much to 'try' Bunyan in a legal sense, as to beat down his religious arguments and force him to return to his lawful calling as a tinker. The trial developed into a heated debate over the scriptural authority for the use of the Book of Common Prayer, with Bunyan repeatedly getting the better of the argument. When one of the judges thought to clinch the case, declaring that 'we know the Common Prayer-Book hath been ever since the Apostles time', Bunyan swiftly invited him to point out where in the New Testament the Prayer Book is mentioned.[11] In the end they lost patience, and sentenced Bunyan to remain in prison for three months. After that time, if he had not agreed to attend the established church and cease preaching, he would be banished from the realm. If he dared to return thereafter, he would, in the words of the judge, 'stretch by the neck for it'.[12]

In the event Bunyan was not banished, but remained in Bedford gaol. He was no blind fanatic, careless of his own safety, and he writes most movingly in *Grace Abounding* of the distress his imprisonment would bring to his family. 'The parting with my Wife and poor Children hath oft been to me in this place, as the pulling the flesh from my bones . . . O I saw in this condition I was as a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his Wife and Children; yet thought I, I must do it, I must do it.'[13] He spent his time in prison making shoelaces and writing books, among them *The Pilgrim's Progress*. His release came as a result of a royal pardon granted in May 1672, following a second royal Declaration of Indulgence. Shortly before this he had been appointed pastor of the Bedford congregation. He obtained a licence to preach under the terms of the Indulgence, and became an active leader of the Dissenters, travelling throughout Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, and Bedfordshire, and earning for himself the nickname 'Bishop

[11] *GA*, 108–9. [12] Ibid. 110. [13] Ibid. 89–90.

Bunyan'. He was never free of the threat of further imprisonment. A warrant was issued for his arrest in 1675, but seemingly not put into effect. He was gaoled again for six months in 1677, and it was almost certainly during this second period of imprisonment that he put the finishing touches to *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He went on to publish a sequel to his allegory of the Christian life, under the title *The Life and Death of Mr Badman* (1680), an unsparing critique of what Bunyan regarded as the vices of Restoration society. Two years later he published *The Holy War*, a complex and ambitious allegory, weaving together the conversion of Mansoul, the history of the world, and the divine plan for humanity. In 1684, following the appearance of spurious 'continuations', he published his own 'Second Part' of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Bunyan's fame as the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress* brought him many invitations to preach at Dissenting meeting-houses in London and elsewhere. He also continued to write and publish. The list of his works runs to nearly sixty titles, of which fourteen were published posthumously. The latter years of Charles II's reign saw renewed persecution of Dissenters, and Bunyan's fears for his safety may be indicated by the deed of gift he had drawn up in 1685, making over all his possessions to his wife. In 1687 the political situation was abruptly reversed, when James II offered toleration to both Protestant and Roman Catholic Dissenters. Bunyan, however, did not live to see the 'Glorious Revolution', when James II was overthrown and replaced by William III, and religious toleration was at last granted to Protestant Dissenters. His death in August 1688 was brought about by a fever contracted while riding from Reading to London in heavy rain. He was buried in the famous Dissenting burial ground at Bunhill Fields, Finsbury.

Allegory

> There was some books too . . . One was 'Pilgrim's Progress', about a man that left his family it didn't say why. I read considerable in it now and then. The statements was interesting, but tough.[14]

Like Huck Finn, modern readers of *The Pilgrim's Progress* are liable

[14] Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, ed. Emory Elliott (Oxford, 1999), 99.

to find it interesting, but also tough to come to terms with as a literary text. One reason for this may be that it is presented as an allegory, a literary form very popular in the Middle Ages and down to the end of the seventeenth century, but which is much less commonly used now. Characters and places are given names indicating that they are not actual individuals but personify or represent abstract qualities or ideas. *The Pilgrim's Progress* may seem to be about a journey from one city to another, but is 'really' about the Christian experience of conversion leading to salvation.

The story is presented as a dream in which the dreamer sees a man (later called Christian) with a book in his hand and a heavy burden on his back, in great distress because the book tells him he lives in the City of Destruction, and is condemned to death and judgment. Advised by Evangelist to flee towards a Wicket Gate, he sets out forthwith, leaving behind his wife and children who refuse to accompany him. The course of his subsequent pilgrimage is full of danger and adventure. It takes him through the Slough of Despond, past the Burning Mount, thence to the Wicket Gate, the Interpreter's House, the Cross (where his burden rolls away), the Hill Difficulty, the House Beautiful, the Valley of Humiliation, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, Vanity Fair, Lucre Hill, By-Path Meadow, Doubting Castle, the Delectable Mountains, the Enchanted Ground, and the country of Beulah. On the way he is helped by trusty companions, first Faithful, who is put to death at Vanity Fair, and then Hopeful, who accompanies him to the end. They have to face enemies, such as the foul fiend Apollyon who is slain by Christian, Lord Hategood who presides over the trial of Faithful in Vanity Fair, and Giant Despair, who imprisons Christian and Hopeful in Doubting Castle. They also encounter false friends like Mr Worldly-Wiseman, Talkative, By-ends, and Ignorance, who give them dangerous advice. At length their pilgrimage ends when they pass over the River and enter the Celestial City. In Part Two, Christian's wife Christiana sets out on pilgrimage, together with her children and their neighbour Mercy. Escorted by Great-heart, who slays various giants and monsters, they follow in Christian's footsteps, witnessing the scenes of his trials and victories. Their pilgrimage is a leisurely one, and on the way they are joined by a great number of fellow-pilgrims, such as Mr Feeble-mind, Mr Ready-to-halt, Mr Honest, Mr Valiant-for-Truth, Mr Stand-fast, Mr Despondency,

and his daughter Much-afraid. At the end they too pass safely over the River one by one.

In the verse 'Apology' which prefaces the book, Bunyan explains and defends his use of allegory, noting that the Bible offers a precedent for the use of metaphor and parable for religious ends: 'I find that holy Writ in many places, | Hath semblance with this method, where the cases | Doth call for one thing to set forth another' (p. 7).[15] But Bunyan certainly does not think of the literary form of his work as a worthless husk, to be discarded for its kernel. On the contrary, he speaks of his own pleasure in writing the book:

> I only thought to make
> I knew not what: nor did I undertake
> Thereby to please my Neighbour; no not I,
> I did it mine own self to gratifie.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Thus I set Pen to Paper with delight,
> And quickly had my thoughts in black and white.
> For having now my Method by the end,
> Still as I pull'd, it came . . . (p. 3)

In this description of the creative process, Bunyan expresses his sense of writing as a form of experiment or exploration in which, like many artists, he only discovers in the course of his practice what it is he is trying to say. Throughout these prefatory verses, he stresses that writing communicates through a shared enjoyment, and is of value for its own sake. Indeed he ends by highlighting the pleasure his readers can expect:

> Would'st thou divert thy self from Melancholly?
> Would'st thou be pleasant, yet be far from folly?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Would'st thou be in a Dream, and yet not sleep?
> Or would'st thou in a moment Laugh and Weep?
> Wouldest thou loose thy self, and catch no harm?
> And find thy self again without a charm?
> Would'st read thy self, and read thou know'st not what
> And yet know whether thou are blest or not,
> By reading the same lines? O then come hither,
> And lay my Book, thy Head and Heart together. (pp. 8–9)

[15] Page references in parentheses are to the present edition of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

These jauntily confident lines show that Bunyan is alive to the affective power of his language and imaginative creation, and recognizes that the literal 'surface' of the story he is telling is itself of value. C. S. Lewis has rightly emphasized that allegory should not be regarded as a cryptogram, existing only to be decoded and then cast aside. 'We ought not to be thinking "This green valley, where the shepherd boy is singing, represents humility"; we ought to be discovering, as we read, that humility is like that green valley. That way, moving always into the book, not out of it, from the concept to the image, enriches the concept.'[16]

The opening paragraph of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, one of the most famous in all literature, is a good example of Bunyan's narrative method.

> As I walk'd through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a Denn; And I laid me down in that place to sleep: And as I slept I dreamed a Dream. I dreamed, and behold *I saw a Man cloathed with Raggs, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own House, a Book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back*. I looked, and saw him open the Book, and Read therein; and as he Read, he wept and trembled: and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry; saying, *what shall I do?* (p. 10)

What most strikes us here is the simple but powerful portrayal of a man in great distress of mind, not knowing what to do or where to turn. The rhythms of the prose, its subtle use of alliteration and repetition of key words, strike an intensely urgent and personal note. It is no abstract theological dogma that lays hold of our attention and makes us want to read on: we are taken immediately into a very particular human situation.

At the same time, however, we know from the title of Bunyan's book that this man in distress is also 'representative' in some larger sense: the pilgrim's progress is 'from this world, to that which is to come'. And if we are alert to the language we begin to sense wider resonances. The phrase 'the wilderness of this world', for example, evokes the whole Christian concept of the fallen world inhabited by humankind after Adam and Eve are driven from Eden, and more specifically the biblical account of the 'great and terrible wilderness'

[16] C. S. Lewis, 'The Vision of John Bunyan', in Roger Sharrock (ed.), *The Pilgrim's Progress: A Casebook* (London, 1976), 198.

that the Children of Israel had to pass through before they could enter the Promised Land.[17]

There is, in fact, a tension—a creative tension—in *The Pilgrim's Progress* and in Bunyan's attitude to his book. On the one hand it is an allegory designed to assert the prime reality of a religious view based on a supreme confidence in a world that is to come. On the other hand (and at the same time) it is a very specific and concretely realized product of *this* world at a particular moment in its history. The episode where Christian passes through the Valley of the Shadow of Death provides an excellent example of this. It would be hard to think of a more completely allegorical and non-realist passage. Much of its power and effect depends on the sense it evokes of the danger and closeness of Hell. The two men Christian meets running away from it use traditional imagery to describe it for him. It is full of hobgoblins, satyrs, and dragons: 'we heard also . . . a continual howling and yelling, as of a People under unutterable misery' (p. 62). And yet the passage is also full of effects that can be called 'realist'. The dialogue between Christian and the two men comes across as actual, colloquial speech. 'But what have you seen?' said Christian. 'Seen! Why the Valley it self, which is as dark as pitch' (p. 62). We have a strong sense of the physical effort of Christian's walk along the pathway in the dark: 'oft times when he lift up his foot to set forward, he knew not where, or upon what he should set it next' (p. 63). But what most of all strikes us about the passage is its portrayal of a psychological experience of great force and realism. As he goes through the Valley, Christian is terrified by flames and smoke, and hears dreadful noises. What Bunyan conveys is the effort of mental will that enables him to continue:

> coming to a place, where he thought he heard a company of *Fiends* coming forward to meet him, he stopt; and began to muse what he had best to do. Sometimes he had half a thought to go back. Then again he thought he might be half way through the Valley; he remembred also how he had already vanquished many a danger: and that the danger of going back might be much more, then [than] for to go forward; so he resolved to go on. Yet the *Fiends* seemed to come nearer and nearer, but when they were come even almost at him, he cried out with a most vehement voice, *I will walk in the strength of the Lord God*; so they gave back, and came no further.
>
> (p. 63)

[17] See Deut. 1: 19.

Part of what Christian learns is how to conquer the deadly fears conjured up in his imagination. In the next paragraph, a marginal note tells us that Satan had all the time been trying to make Christian speak blasphemies. But when we read that poor Christian 'did not know his own voice', we recognize an experience we can all share: of hearing oneself say things that one does not fully understand or even want to say.

The Bible

One of the more unusual features of *The Pilgrim's Progress* for modern readers is that the margins of the text are filled with a series of notes, some of them commenting on what is happening, but often also referring to biblical texts. These notes have several functions, but one is to offer us interpretative keys to the deeper meaning of the narrative.[18] So, for example, if we look again at the opening paragraph, we see in the margin a whole series of references to the Bible. If we look up these texts in the Authorized Version, we discover the sources of the images of the rags and the great burden. In Isaiah 64: 6 we find that 'we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags'. Again, in Psalm 38: 4 we read, 'mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.' Thus the rags represent worthless claims to righteousness, and the great burden represents the weight of human sinfulness.

The importance of the Bible in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and in Bunyan's thought more generally, cannot be overemphasized. He frequently quotes from it explicitly, but often we find that he has absorbed biblical phrasing into his own prose.[19] The Bible was absolutely central to religious thought and practice in the seventeenth century, and to artistic, scientific, and political thought as well. For the learned John Milton as much as for the unlearned Bunyan, it was 'that book within whose sacred context all wisdom is enfolded'.[20] 'Thou must give more credit to one syllable of the written Word of the Gospel', Bunyan asserts, 'then [than] thou must give to all the

[18] See Maxine Hancock, *The Key in the Window: Marginal Notes in Bunyan's Narratives* (Vancouver, 2000).

[19] Many examples of this are given in the Explanatory Notes to the present edition.

[20] Cited in Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (1993; Harmondsworth, 1994), 21.

Saints and Angels in Heaven and Earth.'[21] In *Grace Abounding*, he gives a fascinating account of the development of his Bible reading, and of the effect this had on him during the period of his conversion. Sometimes he was terrified by texts that seemed to offer him no hope of salvation; at other times he would be comforted by texts such as 'that blessed sixth of *John, And him that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out!* [John 6: 37]'.[22]

One of the themes of *Grace Abounding* is how Bunyan learned to interpret the Bible, and this is a point of some significance in understanding *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In his 'Apology' he speaks of how, in the Old Testament, the gospel is 'held forth | By Types, Shadows and Metaphors' (p. 5). What he is referring to is a method of interpretation of the Bible by which persons, events, and things in the Old Testament are regarded as 'types' or 'shadows' of persons, events, and things in the Christian dispensation, the latter being referred to as 'antitypes' or 'fulfilments' of the types. The authority for this goes back to the New Testament. So, for example, we read in the Gospels and the Pauline epistles that Adam is a type of Christ; the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites is a type of Christian baptism; and the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness is a type of Christ's crucifixion.[23] In the seventeenth century typology was the standard method of interpreting Scripture, and of applying it to the lives and experiences of the church and individual believers. As the Puritan preacher Herbert Palmer put it, 'the Records of Holy Scripture . . . are not only Stories of things done in that Age, but Prophecies also of future events in succeeding Generations'.[24] For another Puritan, Thomas Taylor, the Bible was 'a notable guide through this pilgrimage of our life'. In reading it the Christian 'shall be able to parallel his Estate in some of the Saints, he shall see his own case in some of them, and so shall obtain instruction, direction, and consolation by them'.[25] George Herbert is saying the same in his typological poem 'The Bunch of Grapes':

[21] *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded* (1659), in *Misc. Works*, ii. 191.
[22] *GA*, 70.
[23] See Rom. 5: 14; 1 Cor. 10: 1–4, 11; John 3: 14–15.
[24] Herbert Palmer, *The Glasse of Gods Providence Towards His Faithfull Ones* (1644), 'The Epistle Dedicatorie'.
[25] Thomas Taylor, *The Works* (1659), 89, 93.

> For as the Jews of old by Gods command
> Travell'd, and saw no town:
> So now each Christian hath his journeys spann'd:
> Their storie pennes and sets us down.[26]

For Bunyan, as for others in the seventeenth century, his own spiritual experiences could be intimately paralleled by and patterned on the experiences of the stories of the Jews in the Old Testament, and the prophetic books of the Old and New Testaments. We can see examples of this application of Bible stories in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. When Christian loses his Roll and has to go back for it, his experience is explicitly compared to the Exodus narrative: 'Thus it happened to *Israel* for their sin, they were sent back again by the way of the Red-Sea' (p. 44). In his journey through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, Christian passes 'that Quagg', into which '*King* David *once did fall*' (p. 63). Judge Hategood in Vanity Fair refers to acts passed by Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and Darius, thus linking himself to these persecutors and their eventual fates, and associating Christian and Faithful with Moses, who led his people out of Egypt; with the three young Hebrews who faced the fiery furnace and were delivered; and with Daniel who survived the lion's den (p. 94).

Even the basic metaphor of the Christian life as a pilgrimage, or journey, would have come to Bunyan from the Bible. In Hebrews 11: 13–16, for example, the Old Testament patriarchs are described as 'strangers and pilgrims on the earth' who desired 'a better country, that is, an heavenly'. He had often employed the metaphor in his earlier writings. The life of the church, he says, is a 'journying from *Egypt* to *Canaan*, from *Babylon* to this *Jerusalem-state*'.[27] The path trodden by believers is '*the way for the wayfaring men, even the way of holiness* . . . in which every one walks that entereth in by the Gates of New *Jerusalem*'.[28] Closest of all to *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a passage from a work which may indeed have given Bunyan the idea for his allegory, a sermon-treatise entitled *The Heavenly Footman*:

> Because the *way is long* . . . and there is many a dirty step, many a high Hill, much Work to do, a wicked Heart, World and Devil to overcome . . . thou must Run a long and tedious Journey, thorow the wast howling

[26] *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. C. A. Patrides (London, 1974), 139.
[27] *The Holy City* (1665), in *Misc. Works*, iii. 97.
[28] Ibid. 150–1.

Wilderness, before thou come to the Land of Promise . . . Beware of by-paths . . . There are crooked Paths, Paths in which Men go astray, Paths that lead to Death and Damnation: But take heed of all those . . .[29]

As these examples suggest, Bunyan's purpose in writing *The Pilgrim's Progress* was no different from his purpose in more straightforwardly homiletic works. He was no art-for-art's-sake aesthete, but was writing with an urgent message: 'This Book will make a Travailer [traveller] of thee, | If by its Counsel thou wilt ruled be' (p. 8). In an important sense all of Bunyan's works are about the same single theme: the experience of religious conversion. The idea of conversion—a turning away from sin and towards God—is of course central to the message of the New Testament. Only by forgiveness of sin can eternal life be gained. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Protestant theologians developed an elaborate account of the process by which conversion was supposed to take place. According to these theologians, humankind since the Fall of Adam and Eve is under bondage to sin, and unable to enter into a proper relationship with God. Salvation cannot be merited by any amount of 'good works' on the part of sinners, but is a free gift of God alone. This offer of salvation is not open to all, but operates within a framework of predestination whereby some are 'elected' by God to be saved and brought to Heaven, while others will be left in their sinful state and will end up in Hell for ever. Those elected to salvation would be enabled by God's grace to live holy lives on earth, doing God's will and bearing witness to the gospel. Conversion would proceed through a series of defined steps. The first of these would be 'effectual calling', by which the Holy Spirit would 'call' the sinner to repentance, and bring about conversion, or new birth. This would lead on to 'justification', by which the newly converted sinner would be made just before God, and forgiven and acquitted of the punishment due to sin, through the merits of Christ. Then would follow 'sanctification', the continuing supply of divine grace which would enable the convert to 'persevere' in faith, struggling against sin and endeavouring to lead a life of holiness acceptable to God. Finally would come 'glorification', the reward of eternal life in heaven.

This is the scheme of salvation that Christian's experiences exemplify in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It is represented allegorically,

[29] *The Heavenly Footman* (1698), in *Misc. Works*, v. 150, 155.

but is also discussed openly at various points in the text. Hopeful, for example, gives a straightforward account of his conversion, one resembling closely the account of Bunyan's own conversion given in *Grace Abounding*. Like Bunyan, Hopeful describes how he had been awakened to a sense of his guilt as a sinner, and at first tried to reform his life, but soon realized that he could never by his own efforts become truly righteous in the sight of a wrathful God. After being told by Faithful about the work of Jesus on the cross, he came to see that only through believing in Christ would he be saved: 'I must look for righteousness in his person, and for satisfaction for my sins by his blood' (p. 136). Similarly, in Part Two, Great-heart offers a detailed exposition of the doctrine of justification, and how this is accomplished by the 'imputation' of Christ's righteousness to the sinner (pp. 197–9).[30]

Literature and Theology

The theology underlying *The Pilgrim's Progress* is perhaps the 'toughest' aspect of the work for some readers. Their problem is in accepting what was for Bunyan an absolutely crucial point about salvation: that attempts to earn it by 'good works', or living a morally upright life, are doomed. George Bernard Shaw indeed remarked admiringly that 'the whole allegory is a consistent attack on morality and respectability, without a word that one can remember against vice and crime'.[31] Many of the characters the pilgrims meet are not, on the face of it, wicked people deserving damnation: indeed most of them think they are on the path to Heaven. But what Bunyan insists upon, again and again, is that there is only *one* way to Heaven and only those justified by faith will get there. Those who trust in 'morality', like Mr Worldly-Wiseman, or who are downright hypocrites, like By-ends and his friends, or who only have a 'head' knowledge of religion, like Talkative, are not going to get to the Celestial City. Even ignorance of the truth will be no excuse. The character of that name, Ignorance, is quite convinced that he is not a bad man: 'I have

[30] For accounts of Bunyan's theological views, see Richard L. Greaves, *John Bunyan* (Abingdon, 1969), and Pieter de Vries, *John Bunyan on the Order of Salvation*, trans. C. van Haaften (New York, 1994).

[31] Shaw, 'Epistle Dedicatory' to *Man and Superman* (1907), in Sharrock (ed.), *The Pilgrim's Progress: A Casebook*, 118.

been a good Liver . . . I Pray, Fast, pay Tithes, and give Alms' (p. 120). But when he gets to the gates of the City, he is not admitted, but is bound and carried off to Hell.

Coleridge praised *The Pilgrim's Progress* as 'teaching and enforcing the whole saving truth according to the mind that was in Christ Jesus'. In his view it was 'incomparably the best *Summa Theologiae Evangelicae* ever produced by a writer not miraculously inspired'. However he also introduced what would become a vastly influential distinction between Bunyan the literary artist and Bunyan the theologian:

> In that admirable Allegory, the first Part of the Pilgrim's Progress, which delights everyone, the interest is so great that in spite of all the writer's attempts to force the allegoric purpose on the Reader's mind by his strange names . . . his piety was baffled by his genius, and the Bunyan of Parnassus had the better of the Bunyan of the Conventicle—and with the same illusion as we read any tale known to be fictitious, as a novel,—we go on with the characters as real persons.[32]

Critics less sympathetic to Bunyan's theology than Coleridge have seized on the distinction between 'Parnassus' and 'Conventicle' to explain how a believer in what they regard as a narrow and abhorrent set of beliefs could nevertheless have produced such a masterpiece of literary art. F. R. Leavis, for example, found it hard to imagine how Bunyan's 'polemical and damnation-dispensing theology' could ever have been conducive to the 'generous creative power' which is 'beyond question there in *The Pilgrim's Progress*'. He admitted that he read the book 'without any thought of its theological intention'.[33] Others have taken the line that the 'redeeming literary quality of *The Pilgrim's Progress* resides in the fact that Bunyan's imagination transcends his theological convictions'.[34]

More recent critics have argued that what they see as Bunyan's harsh and inhumane theology cannot be set aside so easily, and have dwelt at some length on the tortuous paradoxes and 'persecutory fears' that they find dramatized in the allegory. Thomas Luxon, for

[32] Cited in Sharrock (ed.), *The Pilgrim's Progress: A Casebook*, 52–3.

[33] F. R. Leavis, 'Bunyan's Resoluteness', ibid., 204–20.

[34] Gordon Campbell, 'Fishing in Other Men's Waters: Bunyan and the Theologians', in N. H. Keeble (ed.), *John Bunyan: Conventicle and Parnassus* (Oxford, 1988), 137–51 (150). The same argument is put at greater length in an earlier essay by Campbell, 'The Theology of *The Pilgrim's Progress*', in Vincent Newey (ed.), *The Pilgrim's Progress: Critical and Historical Views* (Liverpool, 1980), 251–62.

example, speaks of Bunyan's Christianity as 'more a religion of brutality than of love, of metaphysics than of mercy'.[35] John Stachniewski, for his part, lays great emphasis on the doctrine of predestination, seeing this as central to *The Pilgrim's Progress*: 'Christian devotes most of his energy to sizing up the meaning, in the light of the decrees of election and reprobation, of each step in his journey.'[36] In the most extensive discussion of the whole issue to date, Michael Davies has argued that such critics are mistaken in seeing Bunyan as obsessed with predestination and morose introspection. 'Far from dismissing the sinner's role in his or her own salvation', Davies says, 'Bunyan's doctrine of salvation accords the human will a particularly positive role in its spiritual wayfaring.' He finds *The Pilgrim's Progress* to be 'more testing than terrifying, more accommodating than accusatory'.[37]

There is no doubt that Bunyan's theological system included the doctrine of predestination. He was very far from being alone in believing this: it was the agreed doctrine of the Church of England up to the middle of the seventeenth century (and even today remains in the Thirty-Nine Articles). But in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, as opposed to his non-fictional works, Bunyan is not so much concerned with theological doctrine itself (though there is plenty of discussion of that), as with the consequences of that doctrine for the ways in which his characters live their lives. Christian and his pilgrim companions may in theory have been predestined by God to be saved. In practice, they doubt their salvation all the way and never achieve certainty, and at every point they seem to be freely choosing how to act.

What *The Pilgrim's Progress* shows us, it may be argued, is how characters holding what may seem a remote and in some ways unappealing set of beliefs may nevertheless display a whole range of human virtues and frailties: courage, solidarity, friendship, presumption, fear, and so on. Bunyan's achievement, we might say, is to contrive to make his vision of the Christian life seem attractive, and his characters ones with whom we can sympathize. He shows us how

[35] Thomas H. Luxon, *Literal Figures: Puritan Allegory and the Reformation Crisis in Representation* (Chicago, 1995), 200.

[36] John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford, 1991), 169.

[37] Michael Davies, *Graceful Reading: Theology and Narrative in the Works of John Bunyan* (Oxford, 2002), 5 and *passim*.

what seems, at first sight, to be a totally selfish and egocentric decision—ruthlessly to pursue one's *own* salvation at the expense of all one's human ties (to family, friends, and community)—bears fruit in a quite unexpected way. Christian discovers that pilgrims like himself are actually able to help one another; indeed (though never taking their eyes off their own personal salvation), they absolutely need one another.

This emphasis on human companionship and mutual support is the dominant theme of Part Two. The plot here, in which the itinerary of Christian's earlier progress is repeated in a calmer and much more protected atmosphere, has often been criticized as inferior to Part One.[38] In some ways, however, it can be regarded as a very fine invention on Bunyan's part. What he shows is how Christian's struggles and defeats and heroic persistence have blazed a trail and made the way altogether easier for Christiana and their children, and for all the weaker pilgrims who follow: Mr Fearing, Mr Feeble-mind, Mr Ready-to-halt, Mr Despondency and his daughter Much-afraid, and the rest. We might indeed think that this makes great psychological sense; at any rate it brings home to us the great gulf between *Grace Abounding* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan's own agonizing solitary battles with despair, as described in *Grace Abounding*, turn out, when recreated in allegorical romance, to bring benefit to weaker mortals. He makes things easier for all the many readers who have suffered from similar dark nights of the soul.

There may indeed be an element of self-portrait in Great-heart, as the pastor of the little flock of pilgrims in Part Two, who guides and protects them from harm. Not surprisingly, modern readers have reacted against what they see as the patriarchal aspects of Bunyan's presentation of his female pilgrims, as weak, timid, and in need of instruction suited to their lowly capacities. Margaret Olofson Thickstun has argued forcefully that 'Bunyan's belief in the spiritual inferiority of women makes it impossible for him to assign positive allegorical significance to a female character'.[39] N. H. Keeble has also stressed the extent to which Bunyan's discourse 'habitually construes and images the spiritual life in terms of masculine

[38] See N. H. Keeble, 'Christiana's Key: The Unity of *The Pilgrim's Progress*', in Newey (ed.), *The Pilgrim's Progress: Critical and Historical Views*, 1–20.

[39] Margaret Olofson Thickstun, *Fictions of the Feminine: Puritan Doctrine and the Representation of Women* (Ithaca, NY, 1988), 88.

achievement . . . and so fails to offer a positive view of femininity to set beside the dynamic image of masculinity. His imaginative sympathy for women is never so intense as to jeopardise patriarchy.'[40] Other critics have argued that the gender politics of *The Pilgrim's Progress* are more complicated than these readings suggest. Tamsin Spargo sees Bunyan's female characters as 'disrupting to varying degrees the discursive framework in which they are contained', and stresses the process of 'identification and self-recognition within the text' that occurs for female readers.[41] Similarly, Stuart Sim and David Walker have pointed to what they see as a contradiction between Bunyan's conventional patriarchal views of women, and his nonconformist stress on spiritual liberation. 'His beliefs are pulling him in different directions: trying to keep women subordinate, while also having to acknowledge that "God is no respecter of persons".'[42] Kathleen Swaim, in a notably sympathetic reading of Part Two, argues that Mercy, in particular, 'goes well beyond what is usually defined as the female role'. 'By the end she has translated the theoretical theology of part I into a full program of works and thereby subsumed the mode of masculine achievement within a fully realized, empowered, comprehensive, and multiplying feminine heroism.'[43]

Social Satire and Psychological Realism

The Pilgrim's Progress is a book strongly marked by the context within which it was produced, and by Bunyan's own experiences as a prisoner of conscience. In *Grace Abounding*, he described the crisis with which he was faced as he contemplated prolonged imprisonment, and even the gallows. Why was he doing it? What if, after all, his conversion was not secure? What if he should bring dishonour to the cause by displaying fear as he was about to be hanged?

[40] N. H. Keeble, ' "Here is her Glory, even to be under Him": The Feminine in the Thought and Work of John Bunyan', in Anne Laurence, W. R. Owens, and Stuart Sim (eds.), *John Bunyan and his England, 1628–88* (London, 1990), 131–47 (147).

[41] Tamsin Spargo, *The Writing of John Bunyan* (Aldershot, 1997), 95, 125.

[42] Stuart Sim and David Walker, *Bunyan and Authority: The Rhetoric of Dissent and the Legitimation Crisis in Seventeenth-Century England* (Bern, 2000), 170.

[43] Kathleen Swaim, *Pilgrim's Progress, Puritan Progress: Discourses and Contexts* (Urbana, Ill., 1993), 191.

Wherefore I prayed to God that he would comfort me, and give me strength to do and suffer what he should call me to; yet no comfort appear'd . . . I was also at this time so possessed with the thought of death, that oft I was as if I was on the Ladder, with the Rope about my neck . . . I thought also, that God might chuse whether he would give me comfort now, or at the hour of death . . . 'twas my dutie to stand to his Word, whether he would ever look upon me or no, or save me at the last: Wherefore, thought I, the point being thus, I am for going on, and venturing my eternal state with Christ, whether I have comfort here or no; if God doth not come in, thought I, I will leap off the Ladder even blindfold into Eternitie, sink or swim, come heaven, come hell; Lord Jesus, if thou wilt catch me, do; if not, I will venture for thy Name.[44]

This passage brings home vividly—even a touch melodramatically—the seriousness of the decision that faced Dissenters: to conform, and lead a quiet life; or not to conform, and face constant persecution, with fines, imprisonment, and even death. The failure of the revolution brought not just political defeat, but a determined effort by the state to secure the total extermination of that feature of the revolutionary decades that had meant most to Bunyan and his kind, the freedom to worship as their conscience dictated.

The experience of state repression lies at the very heart of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In the first sentence of the book, the world is described as a 'wilderness', and the narrator is in 'a Denn', or gaol as the margin glosses it. Christian, setting out on his pilgrimage, is warned by Mr Worldly-Wiseman of the dangers ahead: '*thou art like to meet with . . . Wearisomness, Painfulness, Hunger, Perils, Nakedness, Sword, Lions, Dragons, Darkness; and in a word, death*' (p. 19). Evangelist likewise warns of the 'many tribulations' Christian and Faithful will have to endure: 'you will be hardly beset with enemies, who will strain hard but they will kill you . . . one or both of you must seal the testimony which you hold, with blood' (p. 85). When they get to Vanity Fair, it happens as Evangelist has predicted. The pilgrims are set upon, beaten, thrown into a cage, and finally brought to trial before Lord Hategood. One of the witnesses, Envy, testifies that Faithful 'neither regardeth Prince nor People, Law nor Custom; but doth all that he can to possess all men with certain of his disloyal notions' (p. 91). Another witness, Pickthank, alleges that the pilgrims have 'railed on our noble Prince *Beelzebub*, and hath spoke

[44] *GA*, 91–2.

contemptibly of his honourable Friends, whose names are the Lord *Old man*, the Lord *Carnal delight*, the Lord *Luxurious*, the *Lord Desire of Vain-glory*, my old Lord *Lechery*, Sir *Having Greedy*, with all the rest of our Nobility' (p. 92).

The allegation that the pilgrims have 'bespattered most of the Gentry of our town' enrages Lord Hategood, and indeed it has often been noted that the ungodly in *The Pilgrim's Progress* are of the gentry or nobility, while pilgrims are among the poor and despised in society.[45] What is remarkable about the whole episode, indeed, is the toughness and defiance of Bunyan's social satire. He relates the deliberations of the jury with wonderful comic zest:

> And first Mr. *Blind-man*, the foreman, said, *I see clearly that this man is an Heretick*. Then said Mr. *No-good, Away with such a fellow from the Earth. Ay*, said Mr. *Malice, for I hate the very looks of him*. Then said Mr. *Love-lust, I could never indure him. Nor I*, said Mr. *Live-loose, for he would alwayes be condemning my way. Hang him, hang him*, said Mr. *Heady. A sorry Scrub*, said Mr. *High-mind. My heart riseth against him*, said Mr. *Enmity. He is a Rogue*, said Mr. *Lyar. Hanging is too good for him*, said Mr. *Cruelty. Lets dispatch him out of the way*, said Mr. *Hate-light*. Then said Mr. *Implacable, Might I have all the World given me, I could not be reconciled to him, therefore let us forthwith bring him in guilty of death*. (p. 95)

The trial of Faithful at Vanity Fair dramatizes, in part, the experience of persecution in Restoration England. The concept of justice is simply not relevant here: indeed Faithful admits the truth of the charges brought against him and Christian. The pilgrims and the people of Vanity Fair speak a different language and have totally opposing values. What this brief passage also brings out is the brilliance of Bunyan's handling of names and speech. The characters in *The Pilgrim's Progress* are presented not so much as allegorical embodiments of a single abstract quality, but as types associated with particular characteristics and activities and who are brought to life in the way they speak.

How did the oppressed Dissenters survive the successive waves of persecution? Here again, *The Pilgrim's Progress* gives us some of the answers. One of the most important sources of strength was the

[45] See Christopher Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious, and Factious People: John Bunyan and his Church* (Oxford, 1988), 214–15.

sense of fellowship, of belonging to a community of believers. In Bunyan's allegory, the 'gathered church' is represented as the Palace Beautiful, to which Christian is admitted after his burden has rolled off his back. It is not easy to enter this church—there are lions of persecution outside, which Mistrust and Timorous have been too afraid to pass—but it has been built by the Lord of the Hill 'for the relief and security of Pilgrims' (p. 47). Christian arrives 'weary, and benighted', having just ascended the Hill Difficulty and suffered the distress of losing his Roll, and is in need of rest and comfort. He is greeted by the 'Grave and Beautiful Damsel, named *Discretion*', who fetches others of 'the Family', Prudence, Piety, and Charity. They bring him in and converse graciously with him, before setting him down to supper at a table 'furnished with fat things, and with Wine that was well refined' (p. 52). Afterwards he is put to bed in 'a large upper Chamber, whose window opened towards the Sun rising; the name of the Chamber was *Peace*' (p. 53).

This picture of the church as a *family* was central to the way in which Dissenters of all denominations conceived of the bonds between members. It was, moreover, a family that had come together by free choice, not by custom or compulsion. They were a society of friends, as the Quakers later came to call themselves. Through the loving support of these 'good Companions' (p. 55) Christian is provided with the clothing and equipment to continue on his way to the Celestial City. Much of Bunyan's writing, including *Grace Abounding* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, was designed, in part, to help bind Dissenters together in the face of efforts to fragment and annihilate them. Despite the imposition of censorship, writing was one of the most powerful weapons of resistance of Dissenters. The authorities tried to stamp out illegal printing—two of Bunyan's publishers were tried for seditious libel—but their efforts were never very effective. Dissenters were able to publish books and pamphlets defending themselves, challenging the government's representation of them as seditious rebels, and exhorting their supporters to remain steadfast.[46]

Much of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is given over to a portrayal and examination of the doubts, fears, temptations, and enemies—both external and internal—that Dissenters would have to face. The

[46] See N. H. Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Leicester, 1987), ch. 3, 'Nonconformity and the Press'.

temptation to give way to doubt and despair is one Bunyan himself was especially prone to. *Grace Abounding* is unique among spiritual autobiographies in the seventeenth century in the amount of space it devotes to descriptions of repeated waves of despair. The problem is dramatized most memorably in *The Pilgrim's Progress* when Christian and Hopeful are imprisoned by Giant Despair in Doubting Castle. The pilgrims leave the narrow pathway they are travelling to take a short-cut through By-Path Meadow. Discovering their mistake, they try to find their way back, but night falls and they cannot retrace their steps, so they decide to wait for daybreak.

> Now there was not far from the place where they lay, a *Castle*, called *Doubting-Castle*, the owner whereof was *Giant Despair*, and it was in his grounds they now were sleeping; wherefore he getting up in the morning early, and walking up and down in his Fields, caught *Christian* and *Hopeful* asleep in his grounds. Then with a *grim* and *surly* voice he bid them awake, and asked them whence they were? and what they did in his grounds? They told him, they were Pilgrims, and that they had lost their way. Then said the *Giant*, You have this night trespassed on me, by trampling in, and lying on my grounds, and therefore you must go along with me. So they were forced to go, because he was stronger than they. They also had but little to say, for they knew themselves in a fault. The *Giant* therefore drove them before him, and put them into his Castle, into a very dark Dungeon, nasty and stinking to the spirit of these two men. (pp. 109–10)

The whole episode is a wonderful example of Bunyan's literary method, with its vividly naturalistic language, strong narrative drive, and easy incorporation of elements from folk-tale and popular romance. It is noteworthy, also, that Giant Despair 'walking up and down in his fields' suggests the power of the landowning gentry. His country estate is marked out by the stile and fence, and is defended by the laws of trespass. He is perfectly within his legal rights in arresting the pilgrims.[47]

We can also see in this episode some of the qualities of psychological realism that we noticed earlier in the Valley of the Shadow of Death episode. Although Giant Despair is an externalized figure he is also, in a sense, a manifestation of the pilgrims' own feelings of guilt and fear at having left the true pathway. Bunyan here

[47] On this see James Turner, 'Bunyan's Sense of Place', in Newey (ed.), *The Pilgrim's Progress: Critical and Historical Views*, 91–110.

dramatizes very powerfully and acutely the ways in which states of psychological torment are not so much fallen into as created in the mind.[48] What happens during their period of imprisonment and self-doubt is that the pilgrims manage to control their anxieties. Giant Despair, urged on by his wife, tells them that they may as well kill themselves, and Christian is at first ready to take this advice. Hopeful, however, in keeping with his name, counsels patience and courage:

> *My Brother . . . remembrest thou not how valiant thou has been heretofore;* Apollyon *could not crush thee, nor could all that thou didst hear, or see, or feel in the Valley of the shadow of Death; what hardship, terror, and amazement hast thou already gone through, and art thou now nothing but fear? . . . let's exercise a little more patience. Remember how thou playedst the man at* Vanity-Fair, *and wast neither afraid of the Chain nor Cage; nor yet of bloody Death: wherefore let us . . . bear up with patience as well as we can.* (p. 113)

Through a process of rational deliberation and a consideration of the lessons learned from experiences in the past, the pilgrims manage to control their fears and prevent themselves giving way to abject terror. It is worth noting, too, that their eventual release from captivity comes not by the intervention of any supernatural agency, but from resources found within Christian's own breast: '*What a fool, quoth he, am I, thus to lie in a stinking Dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty?* I have a *Key* in my bosom, called *Promise*, that will, (I am perswaded) open any Lock in *Doubting-Castle*' (p. 114).

In the end, what kept Dissenters like Bunyan battling on during the long years of persecution was the conviction that their suffering and constancy would be rewarded in the next world, if not in this, and that ultimately good would win out over evil. Both parts of *The Pilgrim's Progress* end with descriptions of the entry of the pilgrims into the Celestial City. What is most impressive about Bunyan's handling of this is the way he manages to render the City and its inhabitants conceivable in human terms. When Christian and Hopeful have crossed the River, he arranges for the 'shining ones' to come and escort them up to the city, answering their questions about what they can expect. It is impossible not to feel the joy, the mounting

[48] This point is explored in Vincent Newey, 'Bunyan and the Confines of the Mind', ibid. 21–48.

excitement, the triumph of this consummation of the pilgrims' struggle, and the equivalent passage in Part Two is one of the great set pieces of the book. Bunyan's poetic vision of eternal felicity is not a morbid rejection of life here and now. His characters are certainly travelling through this earthly life towards an eternal life in Heaven, and in Bunyan's view there was no doubt that then the wicked would be punished and the righteous exalted. But the central, enduring quality of his book lies in its portrayal of the pilgrims' lives in this world.

As we know, *The Pilgrim's Progress* has had a most amazing world-wide impact. The reasons for its extraordinary success are many and complex. Much of its attraction lies in the beauty and simplicity of Bunyan's prose, and in the vividness with which he brings his allegorical characters to life, acutely catching the rhythms of colloquial speech. Its wide readership in languages other than English may be explained by the folk-tale elements in its structure—the story of a man in search for the truth is one that crosses cultural boundaries. It may also, no doubt, be attributed to the activities of Christian missionaries and imperialists. As Christopher Hill has put it, 'translations of *The Pilgrim's Progress* followed trade, the flag, and missionaries'. But as he has also noted, 'books create their own audiences, and readers transform what they read'.[49] The heroes of *The Pilgrim's Progress* are ordinary people striving to hold on to their beliefs in a hostile and uncomprehending world. Their story might offer consolation and inspiration to oppressed people in any society.

[49] Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious, and Factious People: John Bunyan and his Church*, 376.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

THE text of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in this new Oxford World's Classics edition is based upon that established by the late Roger Sharrock, in his revision of the Oxford English Texts (OET) edition edited by James Blanton Wharey in 1928. Sharrock's edition was published in 1960, and reprinted with corrections in 1967 and 1975. His introduction provides a full discussion of the circumstances and date of composition of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and a detailed analysis of all the editions published in Bunyan's lifetime. The text here has been set from the 1975 corrected reprint, omitting the textual apparatus, and altering the marginal page references to Part One in Part Two to correspond with the new pagination. In a few cases, noted below, I have ventured to restore first edition readings that had been emended by Sharrock. The only other departure from his text is the insertion here of illustrations, with accompanying verses, that were included in early editions. There seems little doubt that Bunyan himself was the author of the verses, and the illustrations they were written to accompany were an important part of the experience of the book for contemporary readers. Further details are given below.

Asterisks in the text are those used in the first edition to refer the reader to some of the scriptural references in the margins. Daggers (†) are used to indicate the presence of Explanatory Notes provided at the end of the text.

The Pilgrim's Progress was first published in 1678. The publisher, Nathaniel Ponder, was frequently in trouble with the authorities for publishing nonconformist writings. Among his authors were the celebrated nonconformist theologian John Owen, and the poet Andrew Marvell. *The Pilgrim's Progress* was the first work of Bunyan's that he published, and he evidently sensed that it was likely to be a popular book, for he went to the trouble of having it licensed, thus establishing his copyright in it. Eleven further editions had appeared before Bunyan's death in August 1688.

For the second edition, which appeared before the end of 1678, Bunyan added many new passages. The most important of these are:

NEW EDITION

'As I walk'd through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a Denn; And I laid me down in that place to sleep: And as I slept I dreamed a Dream.'

So begins one of the best-loved and most widely read books in English literature. An acknowledged classic of the heroic Puritan tradition, and a founding text in the development of the English novel, *The Pilgrim's Progress* has inspired readers for over three centuries. The story of Christian, whose pilgrimage takes him through the Slough of Despond, Vanity Fair, and the Delectable Mountains, is full of danger and adventure. Together with his trusty companions, Faithful and Hopeful, he encounters many enemies before finally arriving at the Celestial City.

Bunyan's own experience of religious persecution informs his story, but its qualities of psychological realism, and the beauty and simplicity of his prose, give the book universal appeal. This edition includes the illustrations that appeared with the book in Bunyan's lifetime, giving a sense of its impact on contemporary readers.

THIS EDITION INCLUDES

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