

# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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Issue 11: John Bunyan & Pilgrim's Progress

## John Bunyan and the Pilgrim's Progress: From the Publisher

The response to our recent letter and survey to subscribers drew the largest response we have ever received. Your suggestions for topics to cover and special issues to publish make our job both easier and more difficult.

Easier in that we have an array of vital subject areas requested that is diverse and stimulating. More difficult in that collectively you have set before us a task that would take dozens of years to fulfill.

This present issue emerged from strong reader interest in monumental figures from the history of the church such as John Bunyan. His *Pilgrim's Progress* is the first place bestseller (apart from the Bible) in all publishing history, an astounding achievement for a common working class person whose life was confined to a rather small area in the seventeenth century.

In this issue you will see why and how Bunyan's life and work made such an enduring impact.

We were surprised to discover that Bunyan and *Pilgrim's Progress* were not included in Encyclopedia Britannica's *Great Books of the Western World*. If these words should come to Mortimer Adler's attention, perhaps he will write us and tell us why.

We have also noted in an informal and by no means scientific sampling of churches and lay people that Bunyan and *Pilgrim's Progress* are largely unknown today. I have always vividly remembered a series of sermons preached by our pastor when I was about 12 based on the book. The images he effectively and dramatically recounted were burned into my largely unretentive mind for keeps.

A quarter year for Sunday School or a summer vacation school could feature a series on *Pilgrim's Progress* to great benefit for the children in any local church.

The late Dr. Frank Gacbelein in his lecture-essay "Encounter with Greatness" relates a comment made to him by Dr. Emile Caillet of Princeton University. Caillet said:

In my own estimation, next to the Bible which is in a class by itself, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* rates highest among all classics ... the reason I have to put *The Pilgrim's Progress* next only to the Bible is that as I proceed along the appointed course, I need not only an authoritative book of inspiration and instruction; I need a map. We all do. My considered judgment ... is that Bunyan's masterpiece has provided us with the most excellent map to be found anywhere. Why, having read and reread the book some fifty times, I see that map most vividly unfold under my gaze, in whatever place or situation I find myself. What clearer answer could one find to his basic questions, "What kind of place is this?" and "What should I do in the situation?" What more adequate climax to the human quest for truth?

Is the "most excellent map to be found anywhere" still useful? Surely we need other more detailed maps for questions raised in our age, and Bunyan's cartography concentrates on the individual soul and does not go into depth on the corporate nature and responsibility of the faith. But beyond doubt great personal enrichment will still be found by taking another look at the skillfully conceived map and its author; to that end we commend to you this current issue.



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## John Bunyan and Pilgrim's Progress: Did You Know?

With the cooperation of his jailer, Bunyan occasionally was **permitted to leave his prison cell to go and preach** to "unlawful assemblies" gathered in secret, after which he voluntarily returned to his jail cell.

Bunyan **made shoelaces while imprisoned** to support his family, "many hundred gross" by his own accounting.

In terms of numbers, **Pilgrim's Progress** would have been a runaway best seller had it appeared in our day. **100,000 copies were in print** in English alone in 1692!

In January 1672 the Bedford congregation called John Bunyan to be its **pastor while he was still in prison**.

While some Baptists proudly claim Bunyan, other Baptists today still disown him because of his tolerant position in his work **Differences in Judgment About Water Baptism, No Bar to Communion**.

When local magistrates sentenced Bunyan to imprisonment unless he promised them he would not preach, **he refused**, declaring that he would remain in prison till the moss grew on his eyelids rather than fail to do what God had commanded him to do.

In Bunyan's day **great preachers swayed public opinion** as much as the mass media do today, which is one reason his unlicensed activities were perceived as a threat.

A **stained-glass window** is devoted to John Bunyan in Westminster Abbey, London.

Bunyan combined his skill as a tinker and his love of music to create an **iron violin**; later, during his imprisonment, he carved a **flute from the leg of a stool** that was part of his furniture.

When China's Communist government printed **Pilgrim's Progress** as an example of Western cultural heritage, an initial printing of **200,000 copies was sold out in three days!**

Bunyan would have been released from prison if he would agree not to preach in "unlawful" or unlicensed assemblies. His own writings attest that he was **given every opportunity** to "conform." It was a compromise he would not make.

The church Bunyan pastored still continues in the heart of Bedford, England. Now called "Bunyan Meeting," it is **affiliated** with both the **Baptists and Congregationalists**.

Between the ages of 16 and 19, Bunyan served in the Parliamentary army.

The position for which Bunyan contended, and for which he went to jail, finally prevailed with the **Act of Toleration** of 1689, which recognized in England the religious rights of Dissenters and Non-conformists.

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## John Bunyan: The Man, Preacher and Author

E. BEATRICE BATSON E. Beatrice Batson, Ph.D., is Professor of English at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois

John Bunyan (1628–1688) was born at Elstow, near Bedford, England, the oldest son of a tinker. His education was undoubtedly slight. He acknowledged—in fact, he emphasized—his humble birth: “my father’s house being of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families in the land.” This was hardly inverted snobbery; it was a way of attributing solely to God credit for what he had become.

When he was sixteen, Bunyan was summoned in a county levy for the Parliamentary army. What active service he knew is uncertain; no significant battles were fought near Newport Pagnell, where he was stationed, and Bunyan makes no reference to any specific military engagements. After approximately three years, his company disbanded and he returned to Elstow and continued to work as a tinker.

Bunyan was a lover of music but had little money for buying instruments. This lack failed to deter him: he hammered a violin out of iron and later carved a flute from one of the legs of a four-legged stool, which was among his sparse furnishings in his prison room.

He was married twice. His first wife, a person as poor as he, brought him a simple dowry of two well-known Puritan works, Arthur Dent’s *The Plain Mans Pathway to Heaven* and Lewis Bayly’s *The Practice of Piety*. What the name of his first wife was, history failed to record. Four children were born to this marriage, including a blind daughter Mary. His second wife, Elizabeth, was a magnificently brave woman who stood in the face of hostility from the powerful and pleaded the cause of John Bunyan, especially when she feared he would be jailed for his preaching. Elizabeth and John Bunyan had two children.

Bunyan etches his spiritual progress in a series of imperishable vignettes. His first discovery of what Christian fellowship might mean comes when he overhears “three or four poor women sitting at a door in the room, and talking about the things of God.” Later he said: “I thought they spoke as if joy did make them speak; they spoke with such pleasantness of Scripture language and with such appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me as if they had found a new world....” Step by step, Bunyan found himself drawn into the fellowship of which these poor women were a part.

A few years prior to 1654, he meets, and is counselled by, John Gifford, minister of the open communion Baptist Church at Bedford. He moves from Elstow to Bedford and begins to preach in villages near Bedford. His ministry coincided with the Stuart Restoration of 1660 which meant that unauthorized preaching would lead to a punishable offense. Arrested in November 1660 for holding a conventicle (an illegal religious meeting), Bunyan was sentenced in January 1661, initially for three months, to imprisonment in Bedford jail. His continued refusal to assure authorities that he would refrain from preaching if released prolongs his imprisonment until 1672. During the imprisonment, authorities granted him occasional time out of prison, and church records show that he attended several meetings at the Bedford Church. In prison, he made shoe laces (to support his family), preached to prisoners, and wrote various works.

Bunyan’s first prison book was *Profitable Meditations*, followed by *Christian Behavior*, *The Holy*

**City**, and **Grace Abounding To the Chief of Sinners**. From 1667 to 1672, he probably spent most of his time writing **The Pilgrim's Progress**. This book, published in 1678, was for generations the work, next to the Bible, most deeply cherished in devout English-speaking homes. When the great missionary surge began, Protestants translated into various dialects first the Bible, then **The Pilgrim's Progress**.

On January 21, 1672, the Bedford congregation called John Bunyan as its pastor. In March, he was released from prison—even though he spent six additional months in prison in 1677—and on May 9, he was licensed to preach under Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence. During the same year, the Bedford church became licensed as a Congregational meeting place.

Bunyan's dedication, diligence, and zeal as preacher, evangelist, and pastor earned him the nickname of "Bishop Bunyan." Although he frequently preached in villages near Bedford, and at times in London churches, Bunyan always refused to move from Bedford.

Combined with his preaching and pastoral responsibilities was a heavy schedule of writing. Following the publication of **The Pilgrim's Progress** (Part One), there appeared **The Life and Death of Mr. Badman**, **The Holy War**, an allegory less popular but perhaps more complex than **The Pilgrim's Progress**. His last book—and he wrote more than sixty—was called **A Book for Boys and Girls**, published in 1686.

After riding on horseback in a heavy rain from Reading to London, Bunyan contracted a fever and died on August 31, 1688, at the home of his London friend, John Strudwick. He is buried in Bunhill Fields, London.

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## A Tinker's Dissent, A Pilgrim's Conscience

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The great trilogy of early modern English writers—Shakespeare, Milton, and Bunyan—would be unthinkable without the educational and religious reforms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The late fifteenth-century printing revolution and the rise of Protestantism, with its shift of emphasis from the liturgy to the spoken and written word, made this the age of the book in England. Literacy rates jumped dramatically and opportunities for schooling mushroomed. The extent of the educational revolution is mirrored in the lives of the three authors: Milton, son of a prosperous London scribe, was educated at Cambridge University, whereas Shakespeare, son of a Stratford-on-Avon glover, almost certainly attended a grammar school, roughly the equivalent of a modern college-preparatory school. Bunyan, however, came from a much humbler social background and probably never attended a grammar school, for he expressly denied studying Plato or Aristotle. Far from letting his modest formal education hinder his career, Bunyan capitalized on his lack of academic credentials, thereby winning a following among commoners that Milton never enjoyed.

In truth, Bunyan was largely a self-educated man who was far more learned than he would admit. When he first espoused millenarian views in 1663, he disarmingly informed his readers that he was “empty of the language of the learned,” whose books he had not read. The Bible, he insisted, was the source of his knowledge—a rather extreme extension of the Protestant tenet that Scripture alone is authoritative in religious matters. At the end of his career he was still insisting that his Bible and his concordance were the “only library in my writings.” In the strictest literal sense he was perhaps telling the truth, though he was in fact an avid learner, both from books and undoubtedly from conversations with such prominent Nonconformist ministers as John Owen, George Cokayne, and William Dell. Such men were, after all, highly educated: Owen had been Vice-Chancellor of Oxford in the 1650s, Dell was Master of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, when he allowed the young Bunyan to share a pulpit at Yelden, and Cokayne was a Cambridge graduate. Bunyan may never have set foot in a college classroom, but he obviously learned from men who had. Moreover, he was intimately acquainted with John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*—“The Book of Martyrs”—a work which, in a sense, was the early modern Protestant’s introduction to the history of western civilization. Bunyan’s long years in prison also brought him some education in the law, knowledge he used to great effect in depicting Christ as an attorney: *The Work of Jesus Christ as an Advocate*.

Within a short time after Bunyan joined John Gifford’s church in Bedford, which was then part of the Cromwellian state church, he began reading—and attacking—Quaker pamphlets. His first two books set out to refute the Quaker views of Edward Burrough, who subsequently died in prison for his beliefs. Later in his career Bunyan repudiated works by the Latitudinarian Edward Fowler and the Quaker William Penn. If Bunyan was reading Anglican and Quaker works, he certainly read books by fellow Nonconformists. Why, then, profess an intellectual naiveté of which he was surely innocent? Nonconformist leaders such as Richard Baxter and John Owen made no efforts to conceal their learning. On the contrary, Baxter gloried in education as “God’s ordinary way for the conveyance of his grace.” Bunyan, however, was a product of that sectarian tradition which juxtaposed the spiritual and the rational. As the sectaries insisted, the dictates of carnal reason did not govern spiritual considerations. For Bunyan the inner workings of the Holy Spirit were fully sufficient to plumb the deepest mysteries of God, secrets which were hidden from even the greatest intellects unless their minds were enlightened by the Spirit. Bunyan, then, was in no sense an “uneducated tinker,” but one who deliberately underplayed his learning so that his audience would credit his insights to the Holy Spirit rather than human wit.

Viewed in this context, Bunyan's clashes with the Quakers were virtually inevitable. Both were exponents of the internal workings of the Spirit, both were staunch opponents of the parish church, and both repudiated traditional Protestant sacramental theory. Both, in other words, shared far more than they would admit, and for that reason their differences were correspondingly magnified. When Burrough pointed out some of their shared convictions, Bunyan tried to put as much distance as possible between himself and the Friends by associating them with the Ranters, a sect notorious for its toleration of sexual promiscuity and blasphemy. Bunyan could not accept the Quaker belief that in some sense the Spirit resides in all persons rather than in believers alone.

For Bunyan the proper understanding of the Spirit was of crucial importance. It was on the basis of the Spirit's work within him and the church's recognition of his calling that he claimed the right to preach, despite the fact that he had neither theological training nor formal ordination. The collapse of episcopal authority in the 1640's led to a substantial increase in lay preachers, so that Bunyan was hardly unique when he preached his first sermon at the invitation of the Bedford church about 1655. Ratification of his right to preach came from his audience as they judged his sermons edifying.

Like other lay preachers, Bunyan drew upon his personal experience for the substance of those early sermons: "I preached what I felt, what I smartingly did feel." If, as has been argued, Bunyan had recently gone through a manic-depressive period, these sermons, rooted in his trials and ultimately his spiritual triumph, must have been powerful orations. There is, in fact, strong evidence to suggest that Bunyan's understanding of the Christian life as a perpetual, sometimes terrifying struggle dominated his outlook until he was finally released from prison in 1672. The sense of powerful inner struggle dominates both his spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding To the Chief of Sinners*, and the first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It was only when he could fully participate in the life of the Bedford congregation after 1672 that his view of the Christian life began to focus on the comforting nature of shared fellowship. The more serene pilgrimage of Christiana in part two of *The Pilgrim's Progress* reflects the inner calm that Bunyan finally found as minister of the Bedford church.

In Bedfordshire, Bunyan was a marked man at the Restoration in 1660—a testimony to his early success as a lay preacher, but perhaps also an indication that the authorities were aware of his contact with the Fifth Monarchists, a group of radical millenarians generally willing to embrace military force as a means of instituting the Kingdom of God. One of Bunyan's earliest associates in the Bedford church, the silk-weaver John Child, was a Fifth Monarchist, and near the end of his life Bunyan acknowledged that he himself had at one time been sympathetic to those who emphasized Jesus as King—presumably the Fifth Monarchists. Whatever inclinations toward this group Bunyan may have had in the late 1650's, after he was imprisoned in 1660 he seems to have had no serious interest in radical political ideology. When a group of Fifth Monarchists led by Thomas Venner rebelled in London in January 1661, Bunyan proclaimed his willingness to behave peacefully. Bedford in any event was not a hotbed of radical political activity in the 1660's. Elsewhere, however, radical dissidents, many of whom were Nonconformists, repeatedly plotted to overthrow the government in this period. Although their network extended throughout much of England and into Scotland, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, Bedfordshire was never a center of their activity. Bunyan's repudiation of violent political activity after the restoration was thus in keeping with the views of Nonconformists in his county.

Although many Dissenters suffered during the period between the restoration and the Toleration Act in 1689, the severity of Bunyan's imprisonment—twelve years in the county jail—was unusual. Owen, who had the protection of powerful friends, and Dell were not imprisoned, while Cokayne, despite retaining his Fifth Monarchist tenets, was jailed only briefly. Even the Baptist preacher Paul Hobson, who was implicated in the 1663 rebellion in northern England, spent less than two years in prison. The unusual treatment accorded to Bunyan must have stemmed from his adamant refusal to relinquish preaching, his success in the pulpit, and suspicion on the part of the Bedford authorities of his links to Fifth Monarchists such as Child and Cokayne. Bunyan's exposition of millenarian themes in *The Holy City* (1663) probably did nothing to quiet such concerns, though in this book he did not call for the saints to take up arms and

topple the monarchy. On the contrary, he held out hope that eventually all sovereigns would embrace the gospel. Instead of attributing his suffering to the government of Charles II, he laid it directly at the feet of the Antichrist, the "mistress of iniquity." Persecuting rulers were no more than agents of divine providence, and the suffering of the saints a divinely-sanctioned preparation for their entry into God's presence.

Politically, then, Bunyan was not a proponent of radical ideas, although by 1682 he had become severely disillusioned with Charles II. Attempts to exclude the Catholic heir, James, Duke of York, from the line of succession had failed in the Parliaments of 1679–81, and the Whigs were clearly alarmed. Against this background Bunyan wrote a new allegory, *The Holy War*, in which Diabolus, after seizing the town of Mansoul and making himself king, made havoc of its laws, dealt contemptuously with the godly clergy, and fostered an atmosphere of licentiousness. In such fashion did Bunyan castigate the government of Charles II, but neither in this allegory nor in his subsequent works did he urge the godly to act on their own. Antichrist would be overthrown—of that he was certain—but in the interim it was the saints' responsibility to suffer patiently. Despite his antipathy to absolute monarchy, Catholicism, and the persecution of Protestant Nonconformists, Bunyan refused to embrace violent political action. To the end, his was a philosophy of passive resistance, even to the point of calling on his readers to fear God and "honor the king."

Bunyan's radicalism was religious, not political. His embracing of the gathered church—the congregation of visible saints alone—was of course shared by all Baptists and Congregationalists, though the very concept was anathema to supporters of the Restoration Church of England. Unlike most Baptists and Congregationalists, however, Bunyan was daringly tolerant on the subject of baptism, refusing to exclude any Christian from either church membership or the Lord's supper because of differences in judgment about baptism. For Bunyan what really mattered was the baptism of the Spirit, not baptism by water. The doors of his church were open to all professing Christians regardless of how or when they were baptized. For this stand he was heartily condemned by the Baptists in the 1670's during yet another pamphlet war. Bunyan's last contribution to this debate—*Peaceable Principles and True*—reflects his irenic motives, but his ecumenical stance won few adherents.

Despite—or perhaps because of—his deprecatory remarks about his lack of erudition, Bunyan became an increasingly popular preacher in the 1670's and 1680's, especially on his visits to London. Echoes of his early, traumatic spiritual experience continued to enliven his works to the very end. By then, of course, he was a celebrity, well-known for his *Pilgrim's Progress*, which reached its "eleventh" (actually the thirteenth) edition before he died. His religious experience clearly struck a responsive chord. So too did his evangelical message, so aptly expressed in his greatest sermon, *Come, and Welcome, to Jesus Christ*, which was already in its sixth edition when he died in August 1688.



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## The Quakers

Bunyan challenged the Quakers in a number of his works. His first book, in fact, was an attack on Quaker beliefs. Who were these "deceivers," as he called them, that he wrote so vehemently against?

The movement had its beginnings in 1647 when George Fox began to preach in Nottinghamshire. When he spoke, people sensed the presence and power of God.

Unsatisfied by formal religion, Fox had spent several years as a young man wandering and seeking, questioning clergymen and separatists, but finding no help for his spiritual emptiness. Finally he heard a voice say, "There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition:" Christ was revealed to him in immediate experience.

Fox soon became the leader of a group of believers, taking the names "Children of Light" or "Friends." They soon acquired the name "Quakers," first used derisively by a judge Fox had told to "tremble at the Word of the Lord."

The Quakers emphasized the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, the "inner light," and their meetings were marked by charismatic excitement. The age of the Spirit had come, so they saw no need to continue the sacraments of baptism and communion. Christian qualities were more important to them than doctrines. It was more important that a minister practice what he preached than that he be a scholar. Meetings were kept simple to allow worshippers to commune with the Spirit of God.

Quakers met in homes rather than church buildings, and shunned the hypocrisy of fine clothing, most normal amusements, and the use of titles in addressing others. In obedience to Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount, they refused to swear oaths or participate in violence. The movement crossed cultural boundaries, bringing servants and aristocrats to worship together.

Fox's organizing abilities resulted in a nationwide system of unified meetings and preachers. Quaker missionaries were sent out to the Continent, the New World, and the East, to "walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one."

Bunyan could not agree with the Quakers that the Spirit is present in some sense in all persons, not believers only. Calling them "hypocrites" and "enemies to truth," Bunyan attacked the many errors he saw in Quaker belief and explained his own understanding of the truth. Bunyan's first anti-Quaker publication (*Some Gospel-truths Opened*, 1656) was followed the next year by *A Vindication of Some Gospel-truths Opened*, in which he argued against a Quaker, Edward Burrough, who had responded to his first work. An excerpt from this book demonstrates his attitude:

Some in all former ages have been on foot in the world, ready to oppose the truth: So it is now, there are certain men newly started up in our days, called Quakers, who have set themselves against the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and do in very deed deny, that salvation was then obtained by him, when he did hang on the cross without Jerusalem's gate. Now these men do pretend, that they do verily and truly profess the Lord Jesus Christ; but when it comes to the trial, and their principles be thoroughly weighed, the best that they do, is to take one truth, and corrupt it, that they may thereby fight more stoutly against another. As for instance: They will own that salvation was obtained by Christ. This is truth, that salvation was obtained

by Christ, but come close to the thing, and you will find, that they corrupt the word, and only mean thus much, That salvation is wrought out by Christ as he is within; and by it (though not warranted by the scripture) they will fight against the truth: Namely, that salvation was obtained for sinners, by the man that did hang on the cross on Mount Calvary, between two thieves, called Jesus Christ. I say, by what he did then for sinners in his own person or body, which he took from the Virgin Mary, according to the word of God.

Secondly, They will own the doctrine of Christ within. This is truth, that Christ is within his saints: But this doctrine they will take to fight against the doctrine of Christ without, ascended from his disciples into heaven, by whom salvation was obtained, neither is there salvation in any other, Acts 4.12.

Bunyan saw the Quakers not as fellow believers with whom he had some differences of opinion, however serious, but as dangerous enemies to the gospel of Christ.

The following account of one of Bunyan's many interchanges with Quakers shows more wit than sharpness, yet his disapproval is still evident:

It is recorded that a Quaker once visited Bunyan while he was in jail, saying that he had been through half of the prisons of England, and that he had a message for him from the Lord. "If the Lord had sent you," retorted Bunyan, "you would not have needed to take such trouble to find me out. for He knows that I have been in Bedford jail these seven years past."

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## The Fifth Monarchy Movement

Early in his Christian life Bunyan had contact with, and perhaps sympathies for, the Fifth Monarchy Movement. This was a millenarian religious group which had its greatest influence in the mid-seventeenth century. The Fifth Monarchists were convinced of Christ's imminent return to establish his Kingdom (the Fifth Monarchy), and were sure that it would be to England that he came. Discussions raged around the prophecies of Daniel 2. The execution of Charles I in 1649 was seen as the end of the fourth monarchy spoken of in the book of Daniel. It was only, some believed, a matter of months, a year or two at most, before Christ came to reign.

The summoning of the Parliament of the Saints in 1653 bode well for the venture. The nation was to be governed by the godly alone. Imagine the reaction when Cromwell dismissed this group, and eventually agreed to receive the title Lord Protector. It was flying in the face of Christ's return: clearly it was the act of Antichrist. Until this point Cromwell (who was a committed Puritan) had seemed to be on the side of King Jesus. No wonder that Vavasor Powell sent his congregation home to pray over whether they would have the Protector or Jesus to reign over them. What action should believers take? Many called for intervention and the overthrow of Cromwell to help bring in the Millennium.

The Fifth Monarchists spread their millenarian views in sermons and pamphlets, and planned insurrections against the established rulers. In January 1661 an attempt to overthrow Charles II, under the leadership of Thomas Venner, caused a riot in London, resulting in a number of deaths. Magistrate Paul Cobb appealed to that insurrection in his argument against Bunyan when he was imprisoned.

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## **Bunyan's Understanding of the Christian Life...**

Bunyan's understanding of the Christian life as a perpetual, sometimes terrifying struggle dominated his outlook until he was finally released from prison.

*Bunyan's sense of powerful inner struggle finds eloquent expression in **The Pilgrim's Progress during Christian's encounter with the Valley of the Shadow of Death.***

Now at the end of this valley was another, called the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and Christian must needs go through it, because the way to the Celestial City lay through the midst of it....

I saw then in my dream, so far as this valley reached, there was on the right hand a very deep ditch; that ditch is it into which the blind have led the blind in all ages, and have both there miserably perished. Again, behold, on the left hand, there was a very dangerous quag, into which, if even a good man falls, he can find no bottom for his foot to stand on. Into that quay King David once did fall, and had no doubt therein been smothered, had not he that is able plucked him out.

The pathway was here also exceeding narrow, and therefore good Christian was the more put to it; for when he sought in the dark to shun the ditch on the one hand, he was ready to tip over into the mire on the other; also when he sought to escape the mire, without great carefulness he would be ready to fall into the ditch. Thus he went on, and I heard him here sigh bitterly; for, besides the dangers mentioned above, the pathway was here so dark that oftentimes, when he lift up his foot to set forward, he knew not where or upon what he should set it next.

About the midst of this valley I perceived the mouth of hell to be, and it stood also hard by the wayside. Now, thought Christian, what shall I do? And ever and anon the name and smoke would come out in such abundance, with sparks and hideous noises (things that cared not for Christian's sword, as did Apollyon before), that he was forced to put up his sword, and betake himself to another weapon, called all-prayer. So he cried in my hearing, "O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul!" Thus he went on a great while, yet still the flames would be reaching towards him. Also he heard doleful voices, and rushings to and fro, so that sometimes he thought he should be torn in pieces, or trodden down like mire in the streets. This frightful sight was seen and these dreadful noises were heard by him for several miles together; and coming to a place where he thought he heard a company of fiends coming forward to meet him, he stopped, and began to muse what he had best to do.... 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.

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## Pulling the Flesh From My Bones

Bunyan in Prison—Ministry in Suffering

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John Bunyan was arrested because of his conviction that God had called him to preach—an especially dangerous calling at a time when Nonconformists were “dreaded as potential revolutionaries only waiting for a chance to murder Charles II as they had murdered Charles I.” (Robert M. Adams, *Land and Literature of England*, p. 242). Nonconformists faced prison and even banishment for gathering in groups of five or more, and ministers and teachers, the leaders in the separatist movements, came under special suspicion. Bunyan’s first arrest and sentence demonstrate the political climate: the constables who came to arrest Bunyan acted, as he later recalled, “as if we that was to meet together in that place did intend to do some fearful business, to the destruction of the country,” and, after indicting him as “an Upholder and Maintainer of unlawful Assemblies and Conventicles, and for not conforming to the National Worship of the Church of *England*,” the justices sentenced Bunyan to “perpetual banishment.” (*Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, Section 319.)

The sentence was never carried out, but Bunyan spent the greater part of the next fourteen years in prison. His imprisonment exacted a real price in suffering, one which his family shared: his second wife, Elizabeth, lost her first child after a premature labor precipitated by the arrest. She was left to care for Bunyan’s four children from his earlier marriage “with nothing to live on but the charity of good people,” as she told one of her husband’s judges (*A Relation of the Imprisonment of Mr. John Bunyan*, p. 128). Bunyan never mentioned this loss in his writing, but fear for his family led to acute psychological suffering:

The parting with my Wife and poor Children hath oft been to me in this place as the pulling the flesh from my bones; and that not only because I am somewhat too fond of these great mercies, but also because I should have often brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries, and wants that my poor family was like to meet with, should I be taken from them, especially my poor blind Child, who lay nearer my heart than all I had besides.

(*Grace Abounding*, Section 327.)

His suffering seems to have been most acute when he contemplated the probable fate of his most helpless child, his blind daughter Mary, destitute of parental shelter: he visualized her suffering all the woes of an orphan at the time: beatings, hunger, cold, and other calamities. “O the thoughts of the hardship I thought my blind one might go under, would break my heart to pieces” (*Grace Abounding*, Section 327). While alive, he could help support his family by making “many hundred gross of long tagg’d laces,” but even this support would be lost to them should he die or be transported.

The authorities’ promises to release him if he would refrain from preaching played on his fears for his family, so that even his love for them became part of the temptation to deny his calling. Other fears also eroded his strength and tempted him to quit: fear that he might fail to persevere in his calling; fear that he might die without the conviction of his salvation: “Satan laid hard at me to beat me

out of heart, by suggesting thus unto me: But how if when you come indeed to die, you should be in this condition; that is as not ... to have any evidence upon your soul for a better state hereafter?" (*Grace Abounding*, Section 333).

Yet Bunyan persevered. If temptation and fear were great, his consolation was greater still, and depended in large part on the promises he found in Scripture: "Leave thy fatherless children," he read in Jeremiah, "and I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me" (Jer. 49:11). Scripture convinced him that he could trust his family with God. As for his other fears, he could face them in God's company. When he was most fearful, he found most comfort: "when I have started, even as it were at nothing else but my shadow, yet God, as being very tender of me, hath not suffered me to be molested, but would with one Scripture and another strengthen me against all" (*Grace Abounding*, Section 323).

In prison, Bunyan gained a new awareness of the truth of Scripture and of the presence of Christ: "Jesus Christ also was never more real and apparent then now; here I have seen him and felt him indeed" (*Grace Abounding*, Section 321). Here, he was given a deepened prayer life as he faced temptations and fears, and thus found comfort and insight. In prison, where sin did abound, Bunyan found God's abundant grace, and was better enabled to pursue the calling for which he found himself in chains.

From the beginning Bunyan saw his suffering as part of his ministry. His experience was an example by which other believers could measure their own tribulations, a pattern from which they could receive consolation. At Stamhill, before his first arrest, when a friend suggested that he escape by disbanding the assembled meeting, he refused, believing that such a course of action would reflect badly on his ministry: "thought I, if I should now run, and make an escape, it will be of a very ill savor in the country. For what will my weak and newly converted brethren think of it? But that I was not so strong in deed, as I was in word" (*A Relation*, 106). A refusal to retreat, by contrast, would prove his sincerity; further, it would demonstrate God's mercy, which had made him an example to believers in deed as well as word: "Besides I thought, that seeing God of his mercy should choose me to go upon the forlorn hope in this country; that is, to be the first, that should be opposed, for the Gospel; if I should fly, it might be a discouragement to the whole body that might follow after" (*A Relation*, 106). He suffered for the sake of the church, and, like Paul before him, encouraged other believers from the cell.

And indeed, despite the intentions of civil authorities to suppress the "tinker of Bedford," prison gave Bunyan new opportunities to preach. For a while, a jailer allowed him some freedom to leave his cell and preach. Even when that liberty was restricted, he carried on his ministry of writing, producing at least nine books in the period of imprisonment between 1660 and 1672. To his congregation, and to a wider audience than would ever meet him, Bunyan wrote sermons, an autobiography of the caliber of St. Augustine's *Confessions*, and part of his greatest work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Like the Apostle Paul, whom he took as his own model, he expounded the theme of God's abounding grace as it was revealed in his own life.

Bunyan's understanding of his suffering, his sense of himself "as the first to be opposed for the Gospel" followed seventeenth-century Protestant ideas of the way in which the preacher's function followed Paul in its incorporation of experience with word. The English translation of Luther's *Commentary on the Galatians*, which Bunyan described as a major influence upon his thought, saw Paul's life as a pattern for Luther's and for Luther's reader: "Here ... thou mayest see the spirite and veine of St. Paule more liuely represented to thee ... In which, as in a myrrour or glasse, or rather as S. Stephen in the heauens being opened, thou mayst see and behold the admirable glory of the Lord ... that either thy hearte must be heuier than lead or the reading thereof will lift thee aboue thy self and gide thee to know that of Jesus Christ." The vision of Christ is transmitted in the life as well

as the words of the preacher. Thus Paul, who saw the risen Lord in the face of the preaching Stephen, in his turn conveyed that vision through epistles containing autobiographical material showing Christ's work in his life. Luther repeated the pattern, finding and showing Christ through his commentary on Paul, and Bunyan came to understand the working of grace in his own life through the life of Luther, presented in his commentary on Paul: "I found my condition in his experience, so largely and profoundly handled, as if his Book had been written out of my heart" (*Grace Abounding*, Section 129).

Bunyan's life, like Stephen's, Paul's, and Luther's, served a pastoral function that witnessed the truth of the doctrine he taught. His writing, like Paul's or Luther's, integrated his own experiences with Scripture. Bunyan too quoted Paul to show how the truth of the Apostle's words were perpetuated in the life of a seventeenth century tinker suffering for the Gospel:

2 Corinthians 1.9 was of great use to me, ***But we had the sentence of death in our selves, that we might not trust ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead:*** by this Scripture I was made to see that if ever I would suffer rightly I must first pass a sentence of death upon everything which can properly be called a thing of this life, even to reckon myself, my Wife, my Children, my Health, my enjoyments, and all, as dead to me and myself as dead to them. And second to live upon God that is invisible. I see the best way to go through suffering is to trust in God through Christ as touching the world to come; and as touching this world to count the grave my House, and to make my Bed in darkness. That is, to familiarize these things to me. (*Grace Abounding*, Section 324.)

Bunyan's experience taught him the radical nature of this Pauline death sentence: devoted father and husband though he was, he had to learn to see life and even his loved ones differently in the context of his suffering. Further, Bunyan transformed his own suffering into a study of Scripture: his conclusions about his suffering not only resound with scriptural echoes, but show how he incarnated an attitude, "passing a sentence of death," learned from Paul's life: "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God, who raiseth the dead" (v. 9). Bunyan's scripturally literate readers would have known the larger context on which this passage rests, a longer discussion of suffering as part of the Christian life, a state in which the believer experiences God's consolation, and is thus empowered to comfort others in trouble (II Cor. 1:3-5). In suffering the believer identifies with Christ, and thus receives "abounding" consolation. The apostle stressed the participation of his readers in his suffering, and their share in his consolation.

Like Paul comforting the Corinthian believers, Bunyan wrote to his Bedford believers about his own suffering, its value for their faith and ministry, and showed how the Pauline paradigm was revealed again in his own life. Bunyan's congregation must have understood the value of Bunyan's experience in the context of Paul's. Like Paul's Corinthian readers, these participated in their teacher's suffering, and also in his blessings.

The final sentence of the passage cited, expressing Bunyan's response to this world, is recounted in the words of Job: "If I wait, the grave is mine house; I have made my bed in the darkness" (16:13), an experience paralleling Bunyan's own when seen in context of the previous verse, in which Job notes the perversion of the world: "They turn night into day." But whereas Job's speech climaxes with the question, "As for my hope, who shall see it" (verse 15), Bunyan has already declared the basis of his hope—Christ. Bunyan comforted and taught by turning his own circumstances into an echo of and a commentary on Scripture. As scenes from *The Pilgrim's Progress* show, his "fiction" accomplished the same end.

Bunyan's intimate understanding of the fears Christians faced in their sufferings, and Scripture's role in combatting such temptations, is presented allegorically in *Pilgrim's Progress*. The scene at

the Doubting Castle where Christian and Hopeful spend three days and nights in a dungeon, while the castle's lord, Giant Despair, tempts them to commit suicide, presents an analysis of the psychological process of a soul toward despair, and reflects Bunyan's own opinion of doubt: "Of all the Temptations that ever I met with in my life, to question the being of God, and the truth of his Gospel, is the worst, and worst to be born." Doubt leads, without God's intervention, to despair, and despair to suicide. Christian's survival in Doubting Castle derives from comfort provided by his fellowship with Hopeful and their prayer, but escape only comes when Christian discovers and uses the "key of Promise"—the promises of Scripture. The three days and three nights in the castle with the victorious exit on Sunday morning presents the larger context of victory over doubt and despair in the redemptive work and resurrection of Christ.

Bunyan's own fear of dying without assurance of salvation is recapitulated graphically when Hopeful and Christian must cross the river (Death) before they can enter "the Heavenly Jerusalem." The river is deep, and Christian almost drowns: "Christian began to sink, and crying out to his good Hopeful, he said, I sink in deep waters; the billows go over my head."

Christian despairs of reaching the other side: "horror fell upon Christian, so that he could not see before him. Also here he in a great measure lost his senses, so that he could neither remember nor orderly talk of any of those sweet refreshments that he had met with in the way of his Pilgrimage." Christian's fear is based on his memory of old sins, and on the troubling of demons, "Hobgoblins and Evil Spirits." Hopeful's description of the gate and of the men waiting to receive him is brushed aside, as Christian cries, "Tis you, 'tis you they wait for"; not until Hopeful brings Scripture to bear does Christian regain some confidence. Verses taken from the Old Testament describing the wicked "There are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm" (Psalm 73:4)—reveal to Christian that his difficulty in passing the river is not a sign of his failure, as he fears. Rather, as Hopeful says, "these troubles and distresses ... are no sign that God has forsaken you; but are sent to try you, whether you will call to mind that which heretofore you have received of his goodness, and live upon him in your distress." Then Hopeful tells Christian, "Be of good cheer, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole," and remembrance of the source of his salvation heals Christian's distress. As Bunyan wrote to his congregation, "Remember also the Word, the Word, I say, upon which the Lord hath caused you to hope" (*Grace Abounding*, Preface, p.3).

Earlier in the century the poet and Anglican divine George Herbert asked "how can man preach thy eternal word," in the poem "Windows." His answer summarizes Bunyan's own ministry in suffering:

Doctrine and life, colors and light, in one  
When they combine and mingle, bring  
A strong regard and awe; but speech alone  
Doth vanish like a flaring thing,  
And in the ear, not conscience, ring.

Bunyan, whose experience and doctrine become inseparable from the word he preached, and whose prison years produced words which ring ever in consciences and in hearts, still attracts our admiration for his transformation of suffering into the revelation of the working of grace in his life.



# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 11: John Bunyan & Pilgrim's Progress

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## John Bunyan and Pilgrim's Progress: A Gallery of People Around John Bunyan

### "Mary" Bunyan

Upon release from his tour of duty as a soldier in the Parliamentary ranks, John Bunyan married his first wife. Her name is speculated to be "Mary:" as it was customary to name one's first daughter after the mother, and this was the name of the Bunyan's blind daughter.

Although Mary was monetarily poor, her dowry was of priceless value to John's future. Mary brought a practical faith to her marriage, as well as stories of her Godly father. Bunyan writes, "She would be often telling me of what a Godly man her Father was, and how he would reprove and correct Vice, both in his house, and amongst his neighbours; what a strict and holy life he lived in his day, both in word and deed."

The Bunyans were so poor that John once wrote that they did not have "so much household stuff as a dish or a spoon betwixt us both." But Mary did bring two books that would influence John's life and ministry. The books were, *The Plaine Man's Path-way to Heaven, Wherein every man may clearly see, whether he shall be saved or damned*, written by Arthur Dent; and Lewis Bayly's book, *The Practice of Pietie, directing a Christian how to walke that he may please God*.

Their two daughters, Mary and Elizabeth, were born in Elstow, where they were baptized before the family moved to Bedford in 1544 to be closer to Gifford's Church. This is significant because it was the Anglican, or State, Church that upheld infant baptism. This meant that although John joined the Bedford Congregation, Mary seems to have stayed loyal to the state church.

At the time of her death in 1658, Mrs. Bunyan left her husband with two daughters and two sons—Mary, Elizabeth, John, and Thomas.

### Elizabeth Bunyan (c. 1641–1692)

After the death of his first wife, Bunyan married Elizabeth in 1659. Elizabeth, around the age of 17 or 18, was much younger than the 31-year-old father of four children, John Bunyan.

Her groom was imprisoned shortly after their marriage, yet her loyalty and love for her husband shone brightly as she went before the judges of Bedford to plead Bunyan's case in August of 1661. Earlier Elizabeth travelled to London to present a petition to the Earl of Bedford requesting her husband's release, probably her first trip to London. But the petition was denied. In August she went before Judges Hale and Twysden who sat in the Swan Inn in Bedford in the Swan Chamber. Justice Chester and many other members of the local gentry were present to witness the bravery and tenacity of this young bride. Yet Bunyan remained imprisoned for unlicensed preaching. Even though his time in prison could have been as short as three months if he would relinquish his desire to preach the gospel, to Bunyan it was not only his responsibility to preach but his right and privilege as well. Thus, he moved his ministry to the prison—Elizabeth and the children would visit him, while he continued to write, counsel, and preach. Elizabeth continued to encourage her husband in his ministry even after the miscarriage of their first child due to the stress and strain of his imprisonment.

During the year of 1666, Elizabeth and John's daughter Sarah was conceived. Soon after Bunyan was released in 1672 under the "Quaker pardon," Elizabeth gave birth to their son, Joseph.

In 1676 and 1677, Elizabeth and John were separated by his second imprisonment. On August 31, 1688, John Bunyan died of a severe cold due to overexposure. And in 1692 Elizabeth died, but only after releasing more of her husband's writings to be published.

### "Blind Mary" Bunyan (1650–1663)

Mary, the eldest of John Bunyan's six children from his two marriages, was born in July, 1650. Her joyful parents asked Christopher Hall, the Vicar of Elstow Church, to christen the child. Not long after, however, their hearts were filled with sorrow when they learned that Mary was born blind. She became known as "Blind Mary:"

The deep relationship between Bunyan and his first daughter is clearly seen in his writings about her. While in prison, he was allowed limited visitation privileges with friends and family, and Mary knew the way by heart. As months of imprisonment turned into years, his daughter would faithfully bring Bunyan soup for his supper, carried from home in a little jug.

Bunyan explains in ***Grace Abounding*** that these visits were bittersweet for both his daughter and himself. "The parting with my wife and poor children hath oft been to me in [prison] as the pulling the flesh from my bones... especially my poor blind child, who lay nearer my heart than all I had besides; O the thoughts of the hardships I thought my blind one might go under, would break my heart to pieces. Poor child, thought I, what sorrow must thou have for thy portion in this world? Thou must Blind Mary's soup jug be beaten, must beg, suffer hunger, cold, nakedness, and a thousand calamities, though I cannot now endure the wind should blow upon thee."

In the spring of 1663 Mary fell sick, and died soon after. She was the only one of the Bunyan children that did not outlive their father. From the news of her passing within the confines of his cell, Bunyan began the outline of ***The Resurrection from The Dead***—a book of inspiration for many years to come.

### **John Gifford**

John Gifford was a changed man in 1650. He was changed from the Major in the Royalist Army who surrendered to General Fairfax of the Parliamentary forces. He was changed from the repulsive man of bad habits—the gambler, drunkard, and blasphemer. In that year Gifford was changed into the man that John Bunyan refers to as "Holy Mr. Gifford."

His life began to change as he read ***Mr. Bolton's Last and Learned Works of the Four Last Things—Death, Judgment, Hell and Heaven***. The simple truths held within became clear to Gifford, particularly that he was a sinner and that God's grace through Jesus Christ was sufficient for all his sin. Within a month's time his life was transformed, and the Bedford physician became the pastor of the newly formed congregation of Nonconformists.

It was this same man who had just made his own spiritual pilgrimage that spoke to John Bunyan in the rectory of St. John's. They talked about salvation and the true message of Jesus Christ.

Yet John Bunyan continued to battle this spiritual war for another year after his conversation with Mr. Gifford. It was at this period in Bunyan's life that he came across Martin Luther's ***Commentary of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians***. It became his most valued book, with the exception of the Holy Bible. Bunyan was under Gifford's ministry from 1651, but it was not until 1653 that he became part of the Bedford Congregation.

John Gifford remained the pastor in Bedford for five years until his death in 1655. He was mourned by many members of the town and surrounding communities. The "Holy Mr. Gifford" was buried in the churchyard of St. John's.

### **John Owen (1616–1683)**

Bunyan's preaching and writings found ready acceptance among England's poorer classes, but appreciation for his work was not limited to those of humble condition. Among the educated and prominent men with whom Bunyan shared ideas and pulpits was Dr. John Owen.

The son of a Puritan Minister in Stadhampton near Oxford, Owen graduated from Queen's College, Oxford, at 16 years of age, and was ordained a few years later. He served as chaplain to two Puritan

families, then was appointed by Parliament to the Fordham parish in Essex. Owen became increasingly Congregational in his views on church government, expounding Congregational principles in his writings, and modelling them in his church. He worked closely with Oliver Cromwell, and served as his chaplain in 1650. The next year Owen was appointed Dean of Christ Church, Oxford. From 1652 to 1657 he served as Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University.

With the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Owen was dismissed from Christ Church. He turned down an invitation to pastor First Church of Boston, Massachusetts. Moving to London, Owen led a Non-conformist congregation and continued his writing. Owen's London congregation, where Bunyan sometimes preached, included such well-known people as General Charles Fleetwood, Cromwell's son-in-law; Sir John Hartop; Sir Thomas Overbury; and the Countess of Anglesey.

John Owen's works are still in print today (in 16 volumes by the Banner of Truth Trust, and in other editions), and he has been called perhaps the greatest of all English theologians.

It is recorded that King Charles II once asked John Owen how such an educated man as he could sit and listen to the illiterate tinker Bunyan, to which Owen replied, "May it please your majesty, could I possess that tinker's abilities for preaching, I would most gladly relinquish all my learning."

### **William Kiffin (1616–1701)**

Kiffin was one of the most esteemed among the first generation of English Baptists in the seventeenth century. He was a "particular" or Calvinist Baptist, as was Bunyan, but was disturbed that Bunyan had become too liberal on the issue of Baptism itself. Kiffin was one of the wealthiest of the earliest Baptists from his income earned in the woolen trade. He loaned King Charles II the sum of 10,000 pounds thereby securing some influence for his Baptist interests. He organized the first Particular Baptist Church at Devonshire Square and served as pastor there for over 60 years. He was one of the signers of the classic Baptist document: The First London Confession.

Kiffin struggled to keep Bunyan within the strict interpretation of baptism held by the "Particular" Baptists. Their divergence is set forth in Bunyan's work which is a mediating position ***Differences in Judgment About Water Baptism, No Bar to Communion***. Bunyan refused to exclude any Christians from either church membership or the Lord's supper because of how or when they were baptized. Bunyan's church ended up affiliating with both the Baptists and the Congregationalists.

### **Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658)**

Under Cromwell's leadership, Puritanism and separatist groups became firmly established in England. It was during these years that Bunyan experienced a conversion, was baptized by John Gifford, and began to preach publicly.

Cambridge educated, Oliver Cromwell was first elected to Parliament from his home town of Huntingdon in 1628. His political and military leadership brought him to the fore during the English Civil War, and he served as general of the victorious Parliamentary army. After the war, when it became clear that Parliament was unable to rule and the only effective authority rested in the army, Cromwell acquired greater control and was installed as Lord Protector of the Commonwealth, essentially a military dictatorship (1653–1658).

Cromwell had been a champion of religious liberty during his years in Parliament, arguing for the rights of the Non-conformists who were being silenced by Charles I. Cromwell himself was a committed Puritan, and the troops of his army carried Bibles, prayed, and sang psalms. During the Protectorate, Cromwell achieved a great degree of religious toleration, attempting to organize the church so that all true believers could worship according to conscience.

Through Cromwell's direct influence and flexible ecclesiastical policies came the appointment of John Gifford as parish minister at St. John's, the same "Holy Mr. Gifford" that profoundly shaped John Bunyan's ministry. When Gifford died in 1655, Cromwell's own nominee became rector of St. John's and minister of the Independent congregation, the man was John Burton. (Sixteen years hence the congregation would choose John Bunyan to pastor the Bedford church. )

On his deathbed in 1658, Cromwell made a belated decision to appoint his son Richard as Protector. A

lackluster leader, Richard abdicated the next year.

### **King Charles II (1630–1685)**

It was during the reign of King Charles II that Bunyan suffered long years of imprisonment for his faith.

In 1660 Charles II returned from exile in France and Holland to take the throne, restoring the English monarchy. In the Declaration of Breda (1660), Charles promised that “none of you shall suffer for your opinions or religious beliefs so long as you live peaceably.” His concern for liberty of conscience, however, was not shared by the less tolerant Parliament and the restored Anglican bishops and clergymen. Before long, conformity to the Anglican church was a matter of law, and a series of acts oppressing religious dissent was enacted.

Charles II was crowned on April 23, 1661. His coronation was accompanied by a general release of prisoners who were awaiting trial and by a postponing of sentences while convicted prisoners sued for pardon. Bunyan was already imprisoned at this time. Charles’s coronation brought hope of a release which, because of a technicality, never came to fruition.

In 1672 Charles signed the Declaration of Indulgence, suspending the laws which had oppressed Catholics and Nonconformists. It was under this that Bunyan was finally able to petition successfully for his freedom.

There is evidence that Charles was aware of Bunyan and his work. He is quoted as asking John Owen about Bunyan’s preaching. In later years, the King owned copies of some parodies of Bunyan’s writings.

### **Judge Sir Matthew Hale**

Sir Matthew Hale first appeared to the public eye as a member of Parliament under Oliver Cromwell. After the Restoration of the monarchy Hale was made Chief Baron of the Exchequer. In 1671 he became Lord Chief Justice. In addition, Hale authored *History of the Common Law of England* and other legal works.

Having been educated among Dissidents, Hale was reputed to be sympathetic toward them and to try to mediate the harshness of the law in their favor. This reputation led Elizabeth Bunyan to approach the judge in 1661 in several attempts to free John. Hale was one of the judges who eventually heard her formal plea at the Assizes in Bedford.

By all accounts a kindly man, Judge Hale seemed inclined to favor Elizabeth’s request and to be deeply touched by her story. The other judges sitting with him on the case convinced him to rule that Bunyan had been fairly convicted.

Hale did give Elizabeth further legal advice, suggesting that she should apply directly to the King, “sue out” a pardon, or obtain a writ of error, which would imply that injustice had been done.

### **Paul Cobb**

Paul Cobb was a clerk of the peace during the time of Bunyan’s imprisonment.

Bunyan had been convicted under the Statute 35 Elizabeth, which mandated that every citizen of the Commonwealth should attend the parish church regularly. The punishments for breaking this law included first, imprisonment, second, transportation, and, third, hanging.

Cobb was sent by the magistrates to visit Bunyan and plead that he submit himself again to the church and refrain from preaching. Apparently these issues were discussed many times, and Cobb seems to have become genuinely concerned for Bunyan.

Cobb tried to convince Bunyan to cease preaching temporarily, until the political climate improved. Bunyan refused and Cobb was forced to give him formal warning that he might be transported or worse after the next sessions.

Cobb later had Bunyan's name removed from the "Kalendar" of cases to be tried in what may have been an effort to save Bunyan from himself.

Bunyan always felt that Cobb had been used of the enemy to lengthen his imprisonment.

### **Justice Twysden (also Twisden)**

Justice Twysden sat with Justices Hale and Chester when Elizabeth Bunyan made her plea at the Assizes in Bedford.

Twysden was quite prejudiced against the case. This was partially from his natural aversion to Dissidents and partially because of an unfortunate incident in 1661.

When Elizabeth travelled to London to try to obtain a pardon for her husband, she went first to Justice Hale. After being turned away by him, in desperation she stopped Twysden's coach and quite literally threw her petition in his lap. He was so angered by this that he told her Bunyan would never be set free unless he would stop preaching.

When Elizabeth pled her case before him in Bedford, Twysden went into an angry tirade, claiming that John did the Devil's work. Twysden effectively resisted any softening toward the Bunyans asked by Justice Hale.

# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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Issue 11: John Bunyan & Pilgrim's Progress

## John Bunyan and Pilgrim's Progress: Christian History Timeline

### John Bunyan

- 1628** Bunyan born
- 1644** Drafted into the Parliamentary army
- 1649** Marries first wife
- 1651** Bunyan comes under ministry of John Gifford
- 1653** Bunyan baptized
- 1656** First preaches in public
- 1656** Publishes *Some Gospel Truths Opened*
- 1658** First wife dies; left with four children
- 1659** Marries Elizabeth
- 1660** Imprisoned until 1672 for unlicensed preaching
- 1666** *Grace Abounding* published
- 1672** Called as pastor of Bedford church (Jan. 21)
- 1672** Released from prison
- 1672** Licensed as Congregational preacher (May 9)
- 1675** Warrant issued for Bunyan's arrest
- 1677** Imprisoned for six months for not attending parish church
- 1678** *Pilgrim's Progress*, Part 1, published
- 1682** *Holy War* published
- 1684** *Pilgrim's Progress*, Part 2, published
- 1688** Bunyan dies

**1692** Elizabeth dies

## **English Monarchy**

Elizabeth I (1558–1603)

James I (1603–1625)

Charles I (1625–1649)

Civil War (1642–1646)

Cromwell's Protectorate (1649–1660)

Charles II (1660–1685)

James II (1685–1689)

William & Mary (1689–1702)

## **World Events**

**1603** Scotland and England united

**1605** Gunpowder plot stirs hatred of Roman Catholics

**1606** Plague in London

**1608** John Milton born (1608–1674)

**1611** King James Bible completed

**1616** William Shakespeare dies

**1617** Calvin's completed works published in Geneva (posth.)

**1618–1648** Thirty Years War in Europe

**1620** Mayflower leaves Plymouth, England

**1622** James I dissolves Parliament

**1628** Parliament makes Petition of Rights

**1628** William Harvey publishes work on blood circulation

**1633** Galileo forced to renounce heretical ideas

**1633** William Laud becomes Archbishop of Canterbury

**1642** Sir Isaac Newton born (1642–1727)

**1644** William Penn born (1644–1718)

**1648** George Fox founds Society of Friends

**1650** Bishop James Ussher calculates beginning of world as 4004 b.c.

**1653** Rump Parliament dissolved

**1655** Jews readmitted to England

**(1656–1659)** England at war with Spain

**1660** Declaration of Breda

**1662** Act of Uniformity

**1664** Conventicle Act

**1665** Five-Mile Act

**1665** England at war with Holland (1665–1667)

**1665** Great plague devastates London

**1666** Great London fire

**1667** Milton's *Paradise Lost* published

**1672** Declaration of Indulgence (revoked following year)

**1672** England at war with Holland (1672–1674)

**1675** Sir Christopher Wren begins rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral

**1678** Popish Plot

**1682** Halley predicts comet

**1685** Declaration of Indulgence

**1688** Glorious Revolution (1688–1689)

**1689** Bill of Rights

**1689** Toleration Act



**1697** Respected sea captain William Kidd turns to piracy

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 11: John Bunyan & Pilgrim's Progress

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## Principalities and Powers: Authorities in Conflict

The events of Bunyan's life were played out in 17th century England. It was a time when politics and religion were inextricably intertwined, and both state and church were facing major conflicts.

### King and Parliament in Conflict

King James I (who ruled 1603–1625) alienated Parliament with his high-handed methods and declarations of the divine right of kings, seeing no reason why his royal power should be questioned. Under his rule the opposition groups in Parliament united against him, merging lawyers concerned for the traditional common law, and the Puritans desiring to reform the Church of England.

When James's son Charles I took the throne (1625–1649), the opposition between Parliament and crown was well developed. The issues were debated throughout England in a heated war of pamphlets, with its share of treasonous statements and resulting imprisonments. Parliament enacted the Petition of Right, bringing a number of specific limitations to the king's power. In opposition, Charles attempted to rule without Parliament—none was called into session from 1629–1640.

Charles I repeatedly offended the religious sensibilities of the Puritans. Though Charles was Anglican, he allowed strong Catholic influences in his court—particularly evident in the priests at his Catholic wife's chapels, and in artists and artwork from Italy and France. Protestants also resented Charles's indifference to the Catholic Hapsburg rulers, who were battling Protestantism throughout Europe during the Thirty Years War (1618–1648). Charles's archbishop of Canterbury, Archbishop Laud, angered Puritans with his insistence on the Anglo-Catholic liturgy of his Prayer Book and his continual attempts to reform church ritual.

The dispute between King and Parliament, between divine right and common law, between high-churchmen and Puritans escalated. Faced with rebellion in Scotland, and in desperate need of money, Charles was forced to summon Parliament. Parliament asserted its authority, then raised an army against the king.

### The English Civil War

The English Civil War lasted from 1642 to 1646, pitting the king's army (known as Cavaliers) against the Parliamentary forces (known as Roundheads). The Parliamentary army included Puritans and other religious dissenters as well as political opponents of the monarchy. (Bunyan served in the Parliamentary army from 1644–1647, though he may have seen no action. This experience exposed him to Puritans and Separatists who took their religious profession seriously.)

Parliament continued to sit during the war, but as its numbers and strength dwindled, control shifted to the Parliamentary army. The Puritan Oliver Cromwell arose as the most capable military and political leader of the Parliamentary cause.

The Parliamentary forces defeated Charles I, who was tried and executed in 1649. Faced with a divided

and ineffective Parliament, Cromwell assumed greater power, establishing an efficient military dictatorship as Lord Protector of the Commonwealth.

### **The Protectorate**

Cromwell reformed the courts and the system of taxation, and established a new system of church government. A minister could choose any Puritan system, as long as his congregation would follow, organizing his church along Presbyterian, Independent, or Baptist lines. Any who objected to the system in their parish were free to form separate congregations. Even Jews, who had been banished from England for more than three centuries, were allowed to return. This freedom of worship did not extend, however, to Catholics or high-church Anglicans, whose forms of worship were forbidden. The Puritan concern for godly living became a matter of law, modeled on Calvin's Geneva—theaters were closed, Sabbath observance was enforced, and moderation in dress and manners was legislated.

Cromwell's policies allowed Puritanism and other non-Anglican forms of Protestantism to gain a strong foothold in England. It was during this period that Bunyan came under Gifford's ministry, was baptised, and began to preach and write.

Cromwell was not able to solve the constitutional problems of the Commonwealth, or to provide all the liberties the Parliamentarians had fought for: a free Parliament and freedom of speech and press. The middle and lower classes did not receive the political rights they had fought for—such rights were still tied to class origins and ownership of property. After Cromwell's death, the Protectorate survived only two years.

### **The Restoration**

In 1660 Charles II (son of King Charles I) returned from exile in France and Holland to a willing reception by a nation eager for the stability of monarchy. King Charles II was a popular and capable ruler, who used his astute political skills to restore the power of the monarchy and forge a workable relationship with Parliament.

The restoration of the monarchy brought with it the restoration of the Established Anglican Church. Charles had promised liberty of conscience, but it was not long before Puritan and Non-conformist worship was systematically repressed through a series of laws known as the Clarendon Code. In 1662, Parliament passed the Act of Uniformity, requiring episcopal ordination for all ministers and reimposing the Book of Common Prayer. In 1664 the Conventicles Act forbade religious meetings which did not follow the forms of the Established Church. Thousands of clergymen who could not comply with a clear conscience were cut off from their ministries and livelihoods, and jails filled with Non-conformists who refused to be silenced. So it was during this period that Bunyan spent twelve years in prison, from 1660–1672.

The two opponents of the Anglican church, Non-conformists and Roman Catholics, both faced suspicion and persecution. Anglicans associated Non-conformity with the Puritan revolution against the monarchy, and thus considered it subversive and dangerous. English Catholics were viewed as potential traitors by most of the population. In contrast to his kingdom, Charles II himself had Catholic sympathies, though he concealed this until the end of his life.

A desire to favor Catholics was a likely motivation behind the Declaration of Indulgence Charles issued in 1672, suspending all laws against both Catholics and Non-conformists. It was under this provision that Bunyan was finally released from his long imprisonment. Opposition in Parliament led to its revocation the next year. (Bunyan was able to remain free, except for a six-month imprisonment in 1677.)

Out of the religious and political , turmoil of this period emerged the beginnings of the two political parties that would later dominate English politics. The conservative party (Tories), supported primarily by the landed gentry and country clergy, supported the king and Anglican church, and opposed religious Non-conformity and the newer wealth of the middle class. The opposition party (Whigs) found its leadership among powerful nobles, but also included merchants and financiers, low-church clergymen, and Non-conformists.

The greatest crisis of Charles's reign was the Popish Plot in 1678, when it was announced that secret information had been obtained concerning a Catholic plot to murder Charles and establish Roman Catholicism in England. This was a fabrication, an attempt to stir up panic and exclude Charles's Catholic brother and heir, James, from succeeding him. It failed to exclude James, but brought the Whigs and Tories into sharp conflict.

Upon the death of Charles II in 1685, the Catholic James II came to the throne. His policies brought increasing opposition as he declared his right to overrule Parliament, issued the Declaration of Indulgence (which gave freedom of worship to Catholics and Non-conformists), and began appointing Catholics to positions in the government, army, and universities.

### **The Glorious Revolution**

With both Anglicanism and the rights of Parliament in jeopardy, secret negotiations were made to bring the Protestant leader William of Orange of the Netherlands to England. James fled, and William III and his wife Mary, a Protestant daughter of James II, were established as co-rulers.

William's reign (1689–1702) showed the influence of the Whigs, who were largely responsible for the Bloodless Revolution which put him in power, and was the beginning of a more tolerant period. The Bill of Rights (1689) limited the king's power, established the authority of Parliament, and guaranteed important individual rights. The Toleration Act (1689) assured freedom of worship for religious dissenters. Bunyan had died the year before, in 1688.

# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 11: John Bunyan & Pilgrim's Progress

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## The Pilgrim's Progress: A Dream That Endures

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As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a den; and I layed me down in the place to sleep: and as I slept, I dreamed a dream.

This great and simple opening of *The Pilgrim's Progress* may remind us that in 1678 Bunyan's dream was delivered to a reading public ready to receive it. For not only the British but Europeans generally had become all too familiar with the moral complexity of the natural world and the hardness of its going; their every path was a perplexity, their wandering footsteps stumbled in a maze, a labyrinth, a wilderness. Already John Amos Comenius, that great educational reformer of international renown, had published his *Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* (1631), in which he hoped to show "both the vanity of the world and the glory, happiness and pleasure of the chosen hearts that are united with God," while a host of other hortatory works in English with titles suggestive of Bunyan's were in widespread circulation during the first half of the seventeenth century.

It is consequently hardly surprising that *The Pilgrim's Progress* should have met so early with "good acceptance among the people," as publisher Nathaniel Ponder happily observed in an appendix to the fourth edition of 1680. Furnishing as it did much counsel, caution and consolation amid the toilsome traffic of daily life, it bore a message that was at once both useful and agreeable. What is more remarkable is the degree of its success as a best-seller. Bunyan's first editor, Charles Doe, noted in 1692 that about one hundred thousand copies were at that time in print in England alone and that the book had already appeared "in France, Holland, New England and in Welch", a phenomenon suggesting to Doe how Bunyan's fame might yet "be the cause of spreading his other Gospel-Books over the European and American world, and in process of time may be so to the whole Universe." So overwhelming indeed was the continuing popularity of the book that even learned critics of the eighteenth century, like Samuel Johnson and Jonathan Swift, could not forbear to cheer.

Nevertheless, the Age of Reason generally found Bunyan lacking in finesse, and it was left to the Romantics to uphold this very absence of refinement as a peculiar virtue. If Bunyan was an unlettered tinker out of Bedford, his allegory must be the untutored work of one who was truly a "natural" genius; his pilgrim, after all, had power enough to affect the businesses and bosoms of all sorts and conditions of men. William Blake was sufficiently moved by Christian's adventures to create his twenty-nine incomparable water-color illustrations, while Samuel Taylor Coleridge thought the allegory "the best *Summa Theologiae Evangelicae* ever produced by a writer not miraculously inspired." Adulation continued unabated throughout the nineteenth century and reached a peak in the evangelical fervor of the Victorian era.

American interest in *The Pilgrim's Progress* was initially fostered and later sustained by the prevalence of an apocalyptic view which anticipated the establishment of the New Jerusalem in the new world as the climactic event of history. The parallel between the vision of Christian's journey through a harsh and hostile world to a shining city on a hill and their own utopian dream and millenarian hope was too sharp for most Americans to miss. Accordingly, the influence of Bunyan's allegory in America was pervasive; it is indicated not only by the astonishing number of American adaptations produced in

the nineteenth century, of which Hawthorne's *The Celestial Railroad* is no doubt the best known, but also by the inspiration the allegory provided for authors as disparate as Hawthorne, Louisa May Alcott, Mark Twain, and E. E. Cummings.

Despite the current status of *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a world's classic, there is no question that in the twentieth century, with the general decline in piety, popular interest in the book on both sides of the Atlantic has waned enormously. Interestingly enough, however, there has been a compensatory attachment to the work at the academic level, for within the last twenty-five years Bunyan has been taken up by the universities. In what is surely a major irony *The Pilgrim's Progress* is now subjected to the most rigorous critical analysis by such leading scholars as Stanley Fish and Wolfgang Iser, who regard the allegory as an object of sophisticated art from which we can learn much about the capacity of literature to engage the reader's mind; it is likewise appreciated by other students who have mined its resources for numerous doctoral dissertations. Today, the appearance of the allegory in the fine collected edition being published by the Oxford University Press bears eloquent testimony both to its durability and to the permanent validity of what it has to say.

Given these vagaries of the book's cultural history, can we explain why the dream has lasted? The main reasons are the nature of its message and the archetypal imagery which conveys it. While the image of life as a journey actually pre-dated the Christian era, it was from the start adopted to become one of the most potent metaphors in Christian thought, especially when wayfaring is combined, as here, with its cognate image of warfaring. For its use Bunyan was actually indebted to the popular culture of his time, because many English Puritan preachers had given precedent and sanction to the "similitude" in writing their own accounts of the spiritual life. It is, then, to the interplay of tradition and the individual talent that we owe the metaphoric structure of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a heterocosm of romance and adventure in which the Calvinist scheme of salvation is set forth as a progress from one discernible city to another and a process which has a definable beginning, a middle, and an end.

The initial scene is magnificent in its evocation of the solitariness of the long-distance runner. The picture of a man reading his Bible and experiencing a conviction of sin is the first indication of conversion: his anguished cry, "What shall I do to be saved?" opens the story with a query about individual responsibility, and the episodes that follow are so arranged as to demonstrate divine initiative and intervention in the course of salvation. As a general rule it may be said that the events that happen (such as the capture of Christian and Hopeful by Giant Despair) and the places visited (for instance, the Delectable Mountains) represent states of mind experienced during the progress. To read the book is thus to observe the elected soul negotiating the tricky and treacherous currents between the Scylla of over-confidence and the Charybdis of despair. Or it is to recognize that Christian's world is the world of Humpty Dumpty, but with this significant difference, that whereas not all the king's men could put Humpty Dumpty together again, Christian falls to rise, is baffled only to fight better. From this perspective *The Pilgrim's Progress* is largely a pictorial representation of the doctrine of sanctification, a fact which helps us to understand why the crucial scene at the Cross comes so early in the book after less than one third of the story has been told. It also goes a long way towards explaining why this beautiful scene, in which Christian loses his burden of sin in the imputed righteousness of Christ and receives a token of his election from the Three Shining Ones, is so economically if deftly sketched. Bunyan's especial allegorical interest in sanctification is no more than the artistic correlative of that development of Calvinist theology which seventeenth-century English Puritans had made specifically their own and for which they had become famous throughout Europe.

Yet the concentration on sanctification is by no means exclusive; all other steps in the plan of salvation find their place in the design of the whole. Following the scene at the outset comes the masterly episode of Mr. Worldy Wiseman which describes the period of formal or legal Christianity preceding effectual calling. The pilgrim is thereafter pressed onward to the Cross where his justification is made

plain by his change of raiment, the mark on his forehead and the receipt of his roll. Now that the bargain has been sealed, the sequel deals with the pilgrim's growth in grace; but every in his vicissitudes we are made to feel the binding nature of the covenant entered into at the Cross. That is why, for example, the debate with Apollyon concerns its contractual basis, the argument turning on the relationship between master and servant. And since the pilgrim does continue to follow his Master, the bond is ultimately ratified when sanctified Christian passes to the glory of the New Jerusalem.

Election, vocation, justification, sanctification, glorification: such are the stages Bunyan maps out as the progress of the elect soul. Christian is therefore not Everyman, but he is every man's paradigm, and his application is universal. Nowhere, it seems, has the scheme of salvation been set forth more attractively and with such force and clarity. In its lack of moral ambiguity the allegory highlights a peculiar beauty of Calvinist theology as Bunyan represents "the Way" with a definitiveness one would have to go back to the first-century *Didache* to match. It is this concrete quality of the work, founded as it is upon the bedrock of human need and aspiration, that grounds our experience of it in reality and accounts in large measure for its permanence.

The same unabashed moral frankness, the same refusal to shrink from the disagreeable aspects of life, so reminiscent of the Shakespeare of *King Lear* or the Milton of *Lycidas*, are apparent also in the memorable characters that inhabit the allegory. Since *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a drama of predestination, all the characters met with are either doomed and damned or enskied or sainted. This sharp demarcation is evident throughout the allegory, so that Bunyan, in writing his Apology about how he quickly had his thoughts "in the black and white," speaks no less than the figurative truth. It is not that he is insensitive to nuances of character or subtleties of behavior, but rather that he consistently expresses a moral position based on assurance; and such an attitude determines his character delineation. If Faithful be truly the type of Christian martyr, he must stand fixed in a self-denying humility as constant as the Northern Star. If Lord Hate-good condemn him, he must display peacock pomposity and bluster in braggadocio. There is nothing crude about such character-drawing; indeed, it is motivated by a desire for artistic integrity.

Within these limits Bunyan characteristically proceeds to create personae of great individuality. His creatures are not mere types or pale ghosts tagged with allegorical labels, but men and women of flesh and blood. Even the best souls are not without their shortcomings, as Christian sometimes appears too self-centered for our liking, too intent on winning his own felicity; nor are Faithful and Hopeful easily acquitted of superciliousness from time to time.

The portrait of Ignorance is the richest painting of a villain in the whole book, and he is realized economically at the outset by a phrase, "a very brisk lad," which places him as one concerned with only the externals of religion. On the other hand, By-ends is categorized by a skillful handling of context: he is from the town of Fairspeech yet will not speak his name; but he does name all his kindred until he stands exposed as a fair-weather supporter ("most zealous when religion goes in his silver slippers") whose motive is self-interest. Like so may other characters, By-ends is etched indelibly on the reader's mind and he exemplifies but another aspect of Bunyan's art that sustains continuing interest in the allegory.

These separate excellencies of structure, theme and characterization still might not move us were they not fused by a style which is rightly praised for its simplicity, directness, economy and vigor. George Bernard Shaw was even prepared (with typical Shavian extravagance) to award the palm to Bunyan against Shakespeare for the brilliance of Apollyon's speech. Certainly much of the narrator's persuasive power derives from Bunyan's manipulation of language, which is often homely and colloquial in dialogue yet opulent and expansive in its range of biblical imagery and reference (particularly apocalyptic), to focus our attention where he wishes, all with the object of involving us in the action. And the case remains true whether we are trapped in Doubting Castle,

restoring ourselves after the struggle with Apollyon, fearfully picking our way through the Valley of the Shadow of Death or solacing ourselves upon the Delectable Mountains.

Such are the qualities that have enabled Bunyan's dream to endure and to confront the challenge of time and circumstance. What of the future? There is some hope that Bunyan's little book may once again be returned to its original ownership, the common people, for while it has suffered from the disrepute into which many Puritan works have fallen, there are within it some identifiable elements far less dated than we often find it convenient to admit. Like all classics, ***The Pilgrim's Progress*** asserts values that are of a timeless validity, and what remains from our experience of it is a vision of human life and destiny which far transcends any other consideration. Through its emphasis on the worth of the individual soul, its forceful expression of a life beyond the present and the meaning this gives to the here-and-now, the dream can yet deliver a message supremely relevant to our nuclear age. For still the cry remains: "What shall I do to be saved?"

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## What Shall I Do to Be Saved?

**The opening scene of *The Pilgrim's Progress* presents a solitary figure crying out in anguish. His distress expresses Bunyan's own tormenting struggle with sin—yet not his alone. Throughout the book's history, readers have seen themselves in the man with the great burden on his back, and recognized their own spiritual pilgrimages in Christian's journey to the Celestial City.**

As I walked through the wilderness of this world I lighted on a certain place where was a Den, 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 clothed with rags, 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?"

In this plight, therefore, he went home and refrained himself as long as he could, that his wife and children should not perceive his distress; but he could not be silent long, because that his trouble increased. Wherefore at length he brake his mind to his wife and children; and thus he began to talk to them: O my dear wife, said he, and you the children of my bowels, I, your dear friend, am in myself undone by reason of a burden that lieth hard upon me; moreover, I am for certain informed that this our city will be burned with fire from heaven; in which fearful overthrow, both myself, with thee my wife, and you my sweet babes, shall miserably come to ruin, except (the which yet I see not) some way of escape can be found, whereby we may be delivered. At this his relations were sore amazed; not for that they believed that what he had said to them was true, but because they thought that some frenzy distemper had got into his head; therefore, it drawing towards night, and they hoping that sleep might settle his brains, with all haste they got him to bed. But the night was as troublesome to him as the day; wherefore, instead of sleeping, he spent it in sighs and tears. So, when the morning was come, they would know how he did. He told them, Worse and worse: he also set to talking to them again: but they began to be hardened. They also thought to drive away his distemper by harsh and surly carriages to him; sometimes they would deride, sometimes they would chide, and sometimes they would quite neglect him. Wherefore he began to retire himself to his chamber, to pray for and pity them, and also to condole his own misery: he would also walk solitarily in the fields, sometimes reading, and sometimes praying: and thus for some days he spent his time.

Now I saw, upon a time when he was walking in the fields, that he was, as he was wont, reading in his book, and greatly distressed in his mind; and as he read, he burst out, as he had done before, crying, What shall I do to be saved?

## From the Archives: Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners

*Grace Abounding* is Bunyan's spiritual autobiography. It was written in 1666, when he had already endured six years of imprisonment for his religious commitment. The book contains some record of the events of Bunyan's life, but its major concern is the working of God's grace in his life. Bunyan wrote the account to encourage friends and followers who faced struggles and persecutions like his own. The excerpts below are sections 289–312, and the conclusion.

*While* The Pilgrim's Progress *is recognized as Bunyan's greatest book, it is easily accessible to interested readers, and excerpts can be found in this issue (Bunyan's Understanding of the Christian Life... and What shall I do to be saved?)*

My great desire in my fulfilling my ministry was to get into the darkest places of the country, even amongst those people that were farthest off of profession; yet not because I could not endure the light, for I feared not to show my gospel to any, but because I found my spirit leaned most after awakening and converting work, and the Word that I carried did lead itself most that way also; "yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation" (Rom. 15:20).

In my preaching I have really been in pain, and have, as it were, travailed to bring forth children to God; neither could I be satisfied unless some fruits did appear in my work. If I were fruitless it mattered not who commended me; but if I were fruitful, I cared not who did condemn. I have thought of that, "He that winneth souls *is* wise" (Prov. 11:30); and again, "Lo, children *are* an heritage of the Lord; *and* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward. As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so *are* children of the youth. Happy *is* the man that hath filled his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate" (Ps. 127:3–5),

It pleased me nothing to see people drink in opinions if they seemed ignorant of Jesus Christ, and the worth of their own salvation, sound conviction for sin, especially for unbelief, and an heart set on fire to be saved by Christ, with strong breathing after a truly sanctified soul; that it was that delighted me; those were the souls I counted blessed.

But in this work, as in all other, I had my temptations attending me, and that of diverse kinds, as sometimes I should be assaulted with great discouragement therein, fearing that I should not be able to speak the Word at all to edification; nay, that I should not be able to speak sense unto the people; at which times I should have such a strange faintness and strengthlessness seize upon my body that my legs have scarce been able to carry me to the place of exercise....

Again, when as sometimes I have been about to preach upon some smart and scorching portion of the Word, I have found the tempter suggest, What, will you preach this? this condemns yourself; of this your own soul is guilty; wherefore preach not of it at all; or if you do, yet so mince it as to make way for your own escape; lest instead of awakening others, you lay that guilt upon your own soul, as you will never get from under.

But, I thank the Lord, I have been kept from consenting to these so horrid suggestions, and have rather,

as Samson, bowed myself with all my might, to condemn sin and transgression wherever I found it, yea, though therein also I did bring guilt upon my own conscience! "Let me die," thought I, "with the Philistines" (Judges 16:29, 30), rather than deal corruptly with the blessed Word of God, "Thou that teaches, another, teachest not thou thyself?" It is far better that thou do judge thyself, even by preaching plainly to others, than that thou, to save thyself, imprison the truth in unrighteousness; blessed be God for his help also in this.

I have also, while found in this blessed work of Christ, been often tempted to pride and liftings up of heart; and though I dare not say I have not been infected with this, yet truly the Lord, of his precious mercy, hath so carried it towards me, that, for the most part, I have had but small joy to give way to such a thing; for it hath been my every day's portion to be let into the evil of my own heart, and still made to see such a multitude of corruptions and infirmities therein, that it hath caused hanging down of the head under all my gifts and attainments; I have felt this thorn in the flesh, the very mercy of God to me (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

I have had also, together with this, some notable place or other of the Word presented before me, which word hath contained in it some sharp and piercing sentence concerning the perishing of the soul notwithstanding gifts and parts; as, for instance, that hath been of great use unto me, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1, 2).

A tinkling cymbal is an instrument of music, with which a skilful player can make such melodious and heart-inflaming music, that all who hear him play can scarcely hold from dancing; and yet behold the cymbal hath not life, neither comes the music from it, but because of the art of him that plays therewith; so then the instrument at last may come to naught and perish, though, in times past, such music hath been made upon it.

Just thus I saw it was and will be with them who have gifts, but want saving grace, they are in the hand of Christ, as the cymbal in the hand of David; and as David could, with the cymbal, make that mirth in the service of God, as to elevate the hearts of the worshippers, so Christ can use these gifted men, as with them to affect the souls of his people in his church; yet when he hath done all, hang them by as lifeless, though sounding cymbals.

This consideration, therefore, together with some others, were, for the most part, as a maul on the head of pride, and desire of vain glory; what, thought I, shall I be proud because I am a sounding brass? Is it so much to be a fiddle? Hath not the least creature that hath life, more of God in it than these? Besides, I knew it was love should never die, but these must cease and vanish; so I concluded, a little grace, a little love, a little of the true fear of God, is better than all these gifts; yea, and I am fully convinced of it, that it is possible for a soul that can scarce give a man an answer, but with great confusion as to method, I say it is possible for them to have a thousand times more grace, and so to be more in the love and favour of the Lord than some who, by virtue of the gift of knowledge, can deliver themselves like angels.

Thus, therefore, I came to perceive, that though gifts in themselves were good to the thing for which they are designed, to wit, the edification of others; yet empty and without power to save the soul of him that hath them, if they be alone; neither are they, as so, any sign of a man's state to be happy, being only a dispensation of God to some, of whose improvement, or nonimprovement, they must, when a little love more is over, give an account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

This showed me, too, that gifts being alone, were dangerous, not in themselves, but because of those evils that attend them that have them, to wit, pride, desire of vain glory, self-conceit, etc., all which were easily blown up at the applause and commendation of every unadvised Christian, to the endangering of a poor creature to fall into the condemnation of the devil.

I saw therefore that he that hath gifts had need be let into a sight of the nature of them, to wit, that they come short of making of him to be in a truly saved condition, lest he rest in them, and so fall short of the grace of God.

He hath also cause to walk humbly with God, and be little in his own eyes, and to remember withal, that his gifts are not his own, but the church's; and that by them he is made a servant to the church; and he must give at last an account of his stewardship unto the Lord Jesus; and to give a good account, will be a blessed thing.

Let all men therefore prize a little with the fear of the Lord; gifts indeed are desirable, but yet great grace and small gifts are better than great gifts and no grace. It doth not say, the Lord gives gifts and glory, but the Lord gives grace and glory; and blessed is such an one to whom the Lord gives grace, true grace, for that is a certain forerunner of glory.

But when Satan perceived that his thus tempting and assaulting of me would not answer his design, to wit, to overthrow my ministry, and make it ineffectual, as to the ends thereof; then he tried another way, which was to stir up the minds of the ignorant and malicious, to load me with slanders and reproaches; now therefore I may say, that what the devil could devise, and his instruments invent, was whirled up and down the country against me, thinking, as I said, that by that means they should make my ministry to be abandoned.

It began therefore to be rumoured up and down among the people, that I was a witch, a Jesuit, a highwayman, and the like.

To all which, I shall only say, God knows that I am innocent. But as for mine accusers, let them provide themselves to meet me before the tribunal of the Son of God, there to answer for all these things, with all the rest of their iniquities, unless God shall give them repentance for them, for the which I pray with all my heart.

But that which was reported with the boldest confidence, was, that I had my misses, my whores, my bastards, yea, two wives at once, and the like. Now these slanders, with the other, I glory in, because but slanders, foolish, or knavish lies, and falsehoods cast upon me by the devil and his seed; and should I not be dealt with thus wickedly by the world, I should want one sign of a saint, and a child of God.

"Blessed are ye (said the Lord Jesus) when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake: rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. 5:11).

These things, therefore, upon mine own account, trouble me not; no, though they were twenty times more than they are. I have a good conscience, and whereas they speak evil of me, as an evil doer, they shall be ashamed that falsely accuse my good conversation in Christ.

So then, what shall I say to those that have thus bespattered me? Shall I threaten them? Shall I chide them? Shall I flatter them? Shall I intreat them to hold their tongues? No, not I, were it not for that these things make them ripe for damnation, that are the authors and abettors, I would say unto them, Report it, because it will increase my glory.

Therefore I bind these lies and slanders to me as an ornament, it belongs to my Christian profession to be vilified, slandered, reproached and reviled; and since all this is nothing else, as my God and my conscience do bear me witness, I rejoice in reproaches for Christ's sake.

## **The Conclusion**

**1.** Of all the temptations that ever I met with in my life, to question the being of God, and truth of his gospel, is the worst, and the worst to be borne; when this temptation comes, it takes away my girdle from me, and removeth the foundation from under me. Oh, I have often thought of that word, "Have your loins girt about with truth"; and of that, "When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

**2.** Sometimes, when, after sin committed, I have looked for sore chastisement from the hand of God, the very next that I have had from him hath been the discovery of his grace. Sometimes, when I have been comforted, I have called myself a fool for my so sinking under trouble. And then, again, when I have been cast down, I thought I was not wise to give such way to comfort. With such strength and weight have both these been upon me.

**3.** I have wondered much at this one thing, that though God doth visit my soul with never so blessed a discovery of himself, yet I have found again, that such hours have attended me afterwards, that I have been in my spirit so filled with darkness, that I could not so much as once conceive what that God and that comfort was with which I have been refreshed.

**4.** I have sometimes seen more in a line of the Bible than I could well tell how to stand under, and yet at another time the whole Bible hath been to me as dry as a stick; or rather, my heart hath been so dead and dry unto it, that I could not conceive the least drachm of refreshment, though I have looked it all over.

**5.** Of all tears, they are the best that are made by the blood of Christ; and of all joy, that is the sweetest that is mixed with mourning over Christ. Oh! it is a goodly thing to be on our knees, with Christ in our arms, before God. I hope I know something of these things.

**6.** I find to this day seven abominations in my heart: (1) Inclinations to unbelief. (2) Suddenly to forget the love and mercy that Christ manifesteth. (3) A leaning to the works of the law. (4) Wanderings and coldness in prayer. (5) To forget to watch for that I pray for. (6) Apt to murmur because I have no more, and yet ready to abuse what I have. (7) I can do none of those things which God commands me, but my corruptions will thrust in themselves, "When I would do good, evil is present with me."

**7.** These things I continually see and feel, and am afflicted and oppressed with: yet the wisdom of God doth order them for my good. (1) They make me abhor myself. (2) They keep me from trusting my heart. (3) They convince me of the insufficiency of all inherent righteousness. (4) They show me the necessity of flying to Jesus. (5) They press me to pray unto God. (6) They show me the need I have to watch and be sober. (7) And provoke me to look to God, through Christ, to help me, and carry me through this world. Amen.

# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 11: John Bunyan & Pilgrim's Progress

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## From the Archives: The Sinner and the Spider

An excerpt from Bunyan's *A Book for Boys and Girls*, published in 1686, which consists of forty-nine spiritual lessons based on aspects of nature and everyday life.

The Sinner and the Spider

*Sinner.*

*What black, what ugly crawling thing art thou?*

*Spider.*

*I am a spider—*

*Sinner.*

*A spider, ay, also a filthy creature.*

*Spider.*

*Not filthy as thyself in name or feature.  
My name entailed is to my creation,  
My features from the God of thy salvation.*

*Sinner.*

*I am a man, and in God's image made,  
I have a soul shall neither die nor fade,  
God has possessed me with human reason  
Speak not against me lest thou speakest treason.  
For if I am the image of my Maker,  
Of slanders laid on me He is partaker.*

*Spider.*

*I know thou art a creature far above me,  
Therefore I shun, I fear, and also love thee.  
But though thy God hath made thee such a creature,  
Thou hast against him often played the traitor.  
Thy sin has fetched thee down: leave off to boast;  
Nature thou hast defiled, God's image lost.  
Yea, thou thyself a very beast hast made,  
And art become like grass, which soon doth fade.  
Thy soul, thy reason, yea, thy spotless state,  
Sin has subjected to th' most dreadful fate.*

*But I retain my primitive condition,  
I've all but what I lost by thy ambition.*

*Sinner.*

*Thou venom'd thing I know not what to call thee  
The dregs of nature surely did befall thee,  
Thou wast made of the dross and scum of all,  
Man hates thee; cloth, in scorn, thee spider call.*

*Spider.*

*My venom's good for something, 'cause God made it  
Thy sin hath spoiled thy nature, doth degrade it.  
Of human virtues, therefore, though I fear thee,  
I will not, though I might, despise and jeer thee.  
Thou say'st I am the very dregs of nature,  
Thy sin's the spawn of devils, 'tis no creature.  
Thou say'st man hates me 'cause I am a spider,  
Poor man, thou at thy God art a derider;  
My venom tendeth to my preservation,  
Thy pleasing follies work out thy damnation.  
Poor man, I keep the rules of my creation,  
Thy sin has cast thee headlong from thy station.  
I hurt nobody willingly, but thou  
Art a self-murderer; thou know'st not how  
To do what good is; no, thou lovest evil;  
Thou fliest God's law, adherest to the devil.*

*Sinner.*

*Ill-shaped creature, there's antipathy  
'Twixt man and spiders, 'tis in vain to lie;  
I hate thee, stand off, if thou cost come nigh me,  
I'll crush thee with my foot; I do defy thee.*

*Spider.*

*They are ill-shaped, who warped are by sin,  
Antipathy in thee hath long time been  
To God; no marvel, then, if me, his creature,  
Thou cost defy, pretending name and feature.  
But why stand off? My presence shall not throng thee,  
'Tis not my venom, but thy sin doth wrong thee.  
Come, I will teach thee wisdom, do but hear me,  
I was made for thy profit, do not fear me.  
But if thy God thou wilt not hearken to,  
What can the swallow, ant, or spider do?  
Yet I will speak, I can but be rejected,  
Sometimes great things by small means are effected.  
Hark, then, though man is noble by creation,  
He's lapsed now to such degeneration,  
Is so besotted and so careless grown,*

*As not to grieve though he has overthrown  
Himself, and brought to bondage everything  
Created, from the spider to the king.  
This we poor sensitives do feel and see;  
For subject to the curse you made us be.  
Tread not upon me, neither from me go;  
'Tis man which has brought all the world to woe.  
The law of my creation bids me teach thee;  
I will not for thy pride to God impeach thee.  
I spin, I weave, and all to let thee see,  
Thy best performances but cobwebs be.  
Thy glory now is brought to such an ebb,  
It doth not much excel the spider's web;  
My webs becoming snares and traps for flies,  
Do set the wiles of hell before shine eyes;  
Their tangling nature is to let thee see,  
Thy sins too of a tangling nature be.  
My den, or hole, for that tis' bottomless,  
Doth of damnation show the lastingness.  
My lying quiet until the fly is catch'd,  
Shows secretly hell hath thy ruin hatch'd.  
In that I on her seize, when she is taken,  
I show who gathers whom God hath forsaken.  
The fly lies buzzing in my web to tell  
Thee how the sinners roar and howl in hell.  
Now, since I show thee all these mysteries,  
How canst thou hate me, or me scandalize?*

*Sinner.*

*Well, well; I no more will be a derider,  
I did not look for such things from a spider.*

*Spider.*

*Come, hold thy peace; what I have yet to say,  
If heeded, help thee may another day.  
Since I an ugly ven'mous creature be,  
There is some semblance 'twixt vile man and me.  
My wild and heedless runnings are like those  
Whose ways to ruin do their souls expose.  
Daylight is not my time, I work in th' night,  
To show they are like me who hate the light.  
The maid sweeps one web down, I make another,  
To show how heedless ones convictions smother;  
My web is no defence at all to me,  
Nor will false hopes at judgment be to thee.*

*Sinner.*

*O spider, I have heard thee, and do wonder  
A spider should thus lighten and thus thunder!*

*Spider.*



*I am a spider, yet I can possess  
The palace of a king, where happiness  
So much abounds. Nor when I do go thither,  
Do they ask what, or whence I come, or whither  
I make my hasty travels; no, not they;  
They let me pass, and I go on my way.  
I seize the palace, do with hands take hold  
Of doors, of locks, or bolts; yea, I am bold,  
When in, to clamber up unto the throne,  
And to possess it, as if 'twere mine own.  
Nor is there any law forbidding me  
Here to abide, or in this palace be.  
Yea, if I please, I do the highest stories  
Ascend, there sit, and so behold the glories  
Myself is compassed with, as if I were  
One of the chiefest courtiers that be there.  
Here lords and ladies do come round about me,  
With grave demeanour, nor do any flout me  
For this, my brave adventure, no, not they;  
They come, they go, but leave me there to stay.  
Now, my reproacher, I do by all this  
Show how thou may'st possess thyself of bliss:  
Thou art worst than a spider, but take hold  
On Christ the door, thou shalt not be controll'd.  
By him do thou the heavenly palace enter  
None chide thee will for this thy brave adventure;  
Approach thou then unto the very throne,  
There speak thy mind, fear not, the day's shine own  
Nor saint, nor angel, will thee stop or stay,  
But rather tumble blocks out of the way.  
My venom stops not me; let not thy vice  
Stop thee: possess thyself of paradise.  
Go on, I say, although thou be a sinner,  
Learn to be bold in faith, of me a spinner.  
This is the way the glories to possess,  
And to enjoy what no man can express.  
Sometimes I find the palace door uplock'd,  
And so my entrance thither has upblock'd.  
But am I daunted? No, I here and there  
Do feel and search; so if I anywhere,  
At any chink or crevice, find my way,  
I crowd, I press for passage, make no stay.  
And so through difficulty I attain  
The palace; yea, the throne where princes reign.  
I crowd sometimes, as if I'd burst in sunder;  
And art thou crushed with striving do not wonder.  
Some scarce get in, and yet indeed they enter;  
Knock, for they nothing have, that nothing venture.  
Nor will the King himself throw dirt on thee,  
As thou hast cast reproaches upon me.  
He will not hate thee, O thou foul backslider!  
As thou didst me, because I am a spider.  
Now, to conclude: since I such doctrine bring,  
Slight me no more, call me not ugly thing.*

***God wisdom hath unto the piss-ant given,  
And spiders may teach men the way to heaven.***

***Sinner.***

***Well, my good spider, I my errors see,  
I was a fool for racing upon thee.  
Thy nature, venom, and thy fearful hue,  
Both show what sinners are, and what they do.  
Thy way and works do also darkly tell,  
How some men go to heaven, and some to hell.  
Thou art my monitor, I am a fool;  
They learn may, that to spiders go to school.***

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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Issue 11: John Bunyan & Pilgrim's Progress

## From the Archives: The Pilgrim Hymn

The hymn "He Who Would Valiant Be" is taken from a poem in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part II, found in the section about Mr. Valiant-for-truth. It was adapted for use as a hymn by Percy Dearmer, one of the editors of the *English Hymnal*, 1906.

Canon Douglas, who wrote the music ("St. Dunstan's"), commented concerning this hymn: "Bunyan's burly song strikes a new and welcome note in our *Hymnal*. The quaint sincerity of the words stirs us out of our easygoing dull Christianity to the thrill of great adventure" [From *The Hymnal 1940 Companion* (New York: The Church Plension Fund, 1949), p. 331.]

He Who Would Valiant Be

*He who would valiant be  
'Ginst all disaster,  
Let him in constancy  
Follow the Master.  
There's no discouragement  
Shall make him once relent  
His first avowed intent  
To be a pilgrim.*

*Who so beset him round  
With dismal stories,  
Do but themselves confound,  
His strength the more is.  
No foes shall stay his might  
Though he with giants fight;  
He will make good his right  
To be a pilgrim.*

*Since, Lord, Thou dost defend  
Us with Thy Spirit,  
We know we at the end  
Shall life inherit.  
Then fancies flee away!  
I'll fear not what men say,  
I'll labor night and day  
To be a pilgrim.*

## From the Archives: Mr. Bunyan's Last Sermon

*In a list of Bunyan's works published in 1690, Charles Doe claimed to give the original title page for this sermon as it was first published (posthumously) in 1689: "MR. BUNYAN'S LAST SERMON, at London, preached at Mr. Gamman's meeting-house, near Whitechapel, August 19th, 1688, upon John 1:13: showing a resemblance between a natural and a spiritual birth; and how every man and woman may try themselves, and know whether they are born again or not." If this date is correct, the sermon was preached only two days before Bunyan's fatal illness, and twelve days before his death on August 31, 1688.*

'Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.'

The words have a dependence on what goes before, and therefore I must direct you to them for the right understanding of it. You have it thus: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not: but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, **even** to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh—but of God.'

In the words before, you have two things. **First**, Some of his own rejecting him, when he offered himself to them. **Second**, Others of his own receiving him, and making him welcome; those that reject him, he also passes by: but those that receive him, he gives them power to become the sons of God.

Now, lest any one should look upon it as good luck or fortune, says he, they were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the Will of man, but of God,' They that did not receive him, they were only born of flesh and blood; but those that receive him, they have God to their Father; they receive the doctrine of Christ with a vehement desire.

### [to Explain the Text.]

FIRST, I will show you what he means by blood. They that believe are born to it, as an heir is to an inheritance—they are born of God, not of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God; not of blood. that is. not by generation, not born to the kingdom of heaven by the flesh, not because I am the son of a godly man or woman—that is meant by blood: Acts 17:26: He 'hath made of one blood all nations.' But when he says here, 'not of blood,' he rejects all carnal privileges they did boast of: they boasted they were Abraham's seed; no, no, says he, it is not of blood; think not to say you have Abraham to your father; you must be born of God, if you go to the kingdom of heaven.

SECOND, 'Nor of the will of the flesh.' What must we understand by that?

It is taken for those vehement inclinations that are in man, to all manner of looseness, fulfilling the desires of the flesh: that must not be understood here; men are not made the children of God by fulfilling their lustful desires. It must be understood here in the best sense: there is not only in carnal men a will to be vile, but there is in them a will to be saved also; a will to go to heaven also. But this it will not do; it will not privilege a man in the things of the kingdom of God: natural desires after the things of another world, they are not an argument to prove a man shall go to heaven whenever he dies. I am not a freewiller, I do abhor it; yet there is not the wickedest man but he desires, some time or other, to be saved; he will read some time or other, or, it may be, pray, but this will not do; 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.' There is willing and running, and yet to no purpose. Rom. 9:16.

Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, have not obtained it. Here, I do not understand, as if the apostle had denied a virtuous course of life to be the way to heaven; but that a man without grace, though he have natural gifts, yet he shall not obtain privilege to go to heaven, and be the son of God. Though a man without grace may have a will to be saved, yet he cannot have that will God's way. Nature, it cannot know any thing but the things of nature—the things of God knows no man but by the Spirit of God; unless the Spirit of God be in you, it will leave you on this side the gates of heaven. 'Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh. nor of the will of man, but of God.' It may be, some may have a will, a desire that Ishmael may be saved, know this, it will not save thy child. If it was our will, I would have you all go to heaven. How many are there in the world that pray for their children, and cry for them, and are ready to die [for them]? and this will not do. God's will is the rule of all; it is only through Jesus Christ: 'which were born, not of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.'

Now I come to the doctrine.

Men that believe in Jesus Christ, to the effectual receiving of Jesus Christ, they are born to it, He does not say they shall be born to it. but they are born to it—born of God unto God and the things of God, before he receives God to eternal salvation. 'Except a man be born again. he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Now. unless he be born of God, he cannot see it: suppose the kingdom of God be what it will, he cannot see it before he be begotten of God. Suppose it be the gospel, he cannot see it before he be brought into a state of regeneration. Believing is the consequence of the new birth; 'not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God.'

**First**, I will give you a clear description of it under one similitude or two. A child, before it be born into the world, is in the dark dungeon of its mother's womb: so a child of God, before he be born again, is in the dark dungeon of sin, sees nothing of the kingdom of God; therefore it is called a new birth: the same soul has love one way in its carnal condition, another way when it is born again.

**Second**, As it is compared to a birth, resembling a child in his mother's womb, so it is compared to a man being raised out of the grave; and to be born again, is to be raised out of the grave of sin; 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' To be raised from the grave of sin is to be begotten and born. Rev. 1:5: there is a famous instance of Christ; He is 'the first begotten of the dead;' he is the first-born from the dead, unto which our regeneration alludeth; that is, if you be born again by seeking those things that are above, then there is a similitude betwixt Christ's resurrection and the new birth; which was born, which was restored out of this dark world, and translated out of the kingdom of this dark world, into the kingdom of his dear Son, and made us live a new life—this is to be born again: and he that is delivered from the mother's womb, it is the help of the mother; so he that is born of God. it is by the Spirit of God. I must give you a few consequences of a new birth.

**(1.)** First of all, A child, you know, is incident to cry as soon as it comes into the world; for if there be no noise they say it is dead. You that are born of God, and Christians, if you be not criers, there is no spiritual life in you—if you be born of God, you are crying ones; as soon as he has raised you out of the dark dungeon of sin, you cannot but cry to God, What must I do to be saved? As soon as ever God had touched the jailer, he cries out, 'Men and brethren, what must I do to be saved?' Oh! how many prayerless professors is there in London that never pray! Coffee-houses will not let you pray, trades will not let you pray, looking-glasses will not let you pray; but if you was born of God, you would.

**(2.)** It is not only natural for a child to cry, but it must crave the breast; it cannot live without the breast—therefore Peter makes it the true trial of a new-born babe: the new-born babe desires the sincere milk of the Word, that he may grow thereby: if you be born of God, make it manifest by desiring the breast of God. Do you long for the milk of the promises? A man lives one way when he is in the world, another way when he is brought unto Jesus Christ. (Isa. 66.) They shall suck and be satisfied; if you be born again, there is no satisfaction till you get the milk of God's Word into your souls. Isa. 66:11: To 'suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolation.' Oh! what is a promise to a carnal man? A whore-house, it may be, is more sweet to him; but if you be born again, you cannot live without the milk of God's Word.

What is a woman's breast to a horse? But what is it to a child? there is its comfort night and day, there is its succour night and day. O how loath are they it should be taken from them: minding heavenly things, says a carnal man, is but vanity; but to a child of God, there is his comfort.

**(3.)** A child that is newly born, if it have not other comforts to keep it warm than it had in its mother's womb, it dies; it must have something got for its succour: so Christ had swaddling clothes prepared for him; so those that are born again, they must have some promise of Christ to keep them alive; those that are in a carnal state, they warm themselves with other things; but those that are born again, they cannot live without some promise of Christ to keep them alive; as he did to the poor infant in Ezek. 16:10: I covered thee with embroidered gold: and when women are with child, what fine things will they prepare for their child! Oh, but what fine things has Christ prepared to wrap all in that are born again! Oh what wrappings of gold has Christ prepared for all that are born again! Women will dress their children, that every one may see them how fine they are; so he in Ezek. 16:11: 'I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thine hands, and a chain on thy neck; and I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head.' And, says he in ver. 13, 'Thou didst prosper into a kingdom.' This is to set out nothing in the world but the righteousness of Christ and the graces of the Spirit, without which a new-born babe cannot live, unless they have the golden righteousness of Christ.

**(4.)** A child, when it is in its mother's lap, the mother takes great delight to have that which will be for its comfort; so it is with God's children, they shall be kept on his knee; Isa. 66:11: 'They shall suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations;' ver. 13: 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.' There is a similitude in these things that nobody knows of, but those that are born again.

**(5.)** There is usually some similitude betwixt the father and the child. It may be the child looks like its father; so those that are born again, they have a new similitude—they have the image of Jesus Christ. (Gal. 4.) Every one that is born of God has something of the features of heaven upon him. Men love those children that are likest them most usually; so does God his children, therefore they are called the children of God; but others do not look like him, therefore they are called Sodomites. Christ describes children of the devil by their features—the children of the devil, his works they will do; all works of unrighteousness, they are the devil's works: if you are earthly, you have borne the image of the earthly; if heavenly, you have borne the image of the heavenly.

**(6.)** When a man has a child, he trains him up to his own liking—they have learned the custom of their father's house; so are those that are born of God—they have learned the custom of the true church of God; there they learn to cry 'My Father' and 'My God'; they are brought up in God's house, they learn the method and form of God's house, for regulating their lives in this world.

**(7.)** Children, it is natural for them to depend upon their father for what they want; if they want a pair of shoes, they go and tell him; if they want bread, they go and tell him; so should the children of God do. Do you want spiritual bread? go tell God of it. Do you want strength of grace? ask it of God. Do you want strength against Satan's temptations? go and tell God of it. When the devil tempts you, run home and tell your heavenly Father—go, pour out your complaints to God; this is natural to children; if any wrong them, they go and tell their father; so do those that are born of God, when they meet with temptations; go and tell God of them.

### **[The Application.]**

The first use is this, To make a strict inquiry whether you be born of God or not; examine by those things I laid down before, of a child of nature and a child of grace. Are you brought out of the dark dungeon of this world into Christ? Have you learned to cry, 'My Father?' (Jer. 3:4.) 'And I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father.' All God's children are criers—cannot you be quiet without you have a bellyful of the milk of God's Word? cannot you be satisfied without you have peace with God? Pray you, consider it, and be serious with yourselves; if you have not these marks, you will fall short of the kingdom of God—you shall never have an interest there; 'there' is no intruding. They will say, 'Lord, Lord, open to us; and he will say, I

know you not.' No child of God, no heavenly inheritance. We sometimes give something to those that are not our children, but [we do] not [give them] our lands. O do not flatter yourselves with a portion among the sons, unless you live like sons. When we see a king's son play with a beggar, this is unbecoming; so if you be the king's children, live like the king's children; if you be risen with Christ, set your affections on things above, and not on things below; when you come together, talk of what your Father promised you; you should all love your Father's will, and be content and pleased with the exercises you meet with in the world. If you are the children of God, live together lovingly; if the world quarrel with you, it is no matter; but it is sad if you quarrel together; if this be amongst you, it is a sign of ill-breeding; it is not according to the rules you have in the Word of God. Dost thou see a soul that has the image of God in him? Love him, love him; say, This man and I must go to heaven one day; serve one another, do good for one another; and if any wrong you, pray to God to right you, and love the brotherhood.

Lastly, If you be the children of God, learn that lesson—Gird up the loins of your mind, as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former conversation; but be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Consider that the holy God is your Father, and let this oblige you to live like the children of God, that you may look your Father in the face, with comfort, another day.

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 11: John Bunyan & Pilgrim's Progress

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## John Bunyan: Recommended Resources

**Dangerous Journey** is an adaptation of *Pilgrim's Progress* to introduce the story to children. It is available in book form from Eerdmans Publishing and in film and video from Gateway Films. Gateway also provides a 20 page leader's guide for use with the film series. The film series is best utilized if the leader prepares the children to look for specific characters and experiences and then discuss them after the showing.

**Bunyan the Preacher** is a half hour film that shows a time when Bunyan was let out of his jail cell by a cooperative jailer to go and preach to an "unlawful assembly." The sermon he gives captures the essence and imagery of Bunyan's preaching and writing and provides an excellent experience of Bunyan's era and message.

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