

Memoir of John Bunyan

by George Offor,
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THE FIRST PERIOD.

THIS GREAT MAN DESCENDED FROM
IGNOBLE PARENTS—BORN IN POVERTY—
HIS EDUCATION AND EVIL HABITS—
FOLLOWS HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS AS A
BRAZIER—ENLISTS FOR A SOLDIER—
RETURNS FROM THE WARS AND OBTAINS
AN AMIABLE, RELIGIOUS WIFE—HER
DOWER.

*'We have this treasure in earthen vessels,
that the excellency of the power may be of
God, and not of us.'*—2 Cor 4:7

*'For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, saith the
Lord.'*—Isaiah 55:8.

*'Though ye have lien among the pots, yet
shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with
silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.'*—
Psalm 68:13.

When the Philistine giant, Goliath, mocked
the host of Israel, and challenged any of their
stern warriors to single combat, what human
being could have imagined that the gigantic
heathen would be successfully met in the
mortal struggle by a youth 'ruddy and of a fair

countenance?' who unarmed, except with a sling and a stone, gave the carcasses of the hosts of the Philistines to the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth.'

Who, upon seeing an infant born in a stable, and laid in a manger, or beholding him when a youth working with his father as a carpenter, could have conceived that he was the manifestation of the Deity in human form, before whom every knee should bow, and every tongue confess Him to be THE ETERNAL?

Father Michael, a Franciscan friar, on a journey to Ancona, having lost his way, sought direction from a wretched lad keeping hogs—deserted, forlorn, his back smarting with severe stripes, and his eyes suffused with tears. The poor ragged boy not only went cheerfully with him to point out his road, but besought the monk to take him into his convent, volunteering to fulfill the most degrading services, in the hope of procuring a little learning, and escaping from 'those filthy hogs.' How incredulously would the friar have listened to anyone who could have suggested that this desolate, tattered, dirty boy, might and would fill a greater than an imperial throne! Yet, eventually that swine-herd was clothed in purple and fine linen, and, under the title of Pope Sixtus V., became one of those

mighty magicians who are described in Rogers *Italy*, as

'Setting their feet upon the necks of kings,
And through the worlds subduing, chaining
down
The free, immortal spirit -- theirs a wondrous
spell.'¹

A woman that was 'a loose and ungodly wretch' hearing a tinker lad most awfully cursing and swearing, protested to him that 'he swore and cursed at that most fearful rate that it made her tremble to hear him,' 'that he was the ungodliest fellow for swearing that ever she heard in all her life,' and 'that he was able to spoil all the youth in a whole town, if they came in his company.' This blow at the young reprobate made that indelible impression which all the sermons yet he had heard had failed to make. Satan, by one of his own slaves, wounded a conscience which had resisted all the overtures of mercy. The youth pondered her words in his heart; they were good seed strangely sown, and their working formed one of those mysterious steps which led the foul-mouthed blasphemer to bitter repentance; who, when he had received mercy and pardon,

¹ For a most interesting account of the rise of Sixtus V, see the new volume of the *Lounger's Common-place Book*, 1807, p. 152.

felt impelled to bless and magnify the Divine grace with shining, burning thoughts and words. The poor profligate, swearing tinker became transformed into the most ardent preacher of the love of Christ—the well-trained author of *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved, or Good News to the Vilest of Men*.

How often have the Saints of God been made a most unexpected blessing to others. The good seed of Divine truth has been many times sown by those who did not *go out to sow*, but who were profitably engaged in cultivating their own graces, enjoying the communion of Saints, and advancing their own personal happiness! Think of a few poor, but pious happy women, sitting in the sun one beautiful summer's day, before one of their cottages, probably each one with her pillow on her lap, dexterously twisting the bobbins to make lace, the profits of which helped to maintain their children. While they are communing on the things of God, a traveling tinker draws near, and, over-hearing their talk, takes up a position where he might listen to their converse while he pursued his avocation. Their words distil into his soul; they speak the language of Canaan; they talk of holy enjoyments, the result of being born again, acknowledging their miserable state by nature,

and how freely and undeservedly God had visited their hearts with pardoning mercy, and supported them while suffering the assaults and suggestions of Satan; how they had been borne up in every dark, cloudy, stormy day; and how they contemned, slighted, and abhorred their own righteousness as filthy and insufficient to do them any good. The learned discourses our tinker had heard at church had casually passed over his mind like evanescent clouds, and left little or no lasting impression. But these poor women, 'methought they spake as actually did make them speak; they speak with such pleasant as 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, as if they were people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned among their neighbors' (Num 23:9).

O! how little did they imagine that their pious converse was to be the means employed by the Holy Spirit in the conversion of that poor tinker, and that, by their agency, he was to be transformed into one of the brightest luminaries of heaven; who, when he had entered into rest would leave his works to follow him as spiritual thunder to pierce the hearts of the impenitent, and as heavenly consolation to bind up the broken-hearted;

liberating the prisoners of Giant Despair, and directing the pilgrims to the Celestial City. Thus were blessings in rich abundance showered down upon the church by the instrumentality, in the first instance, of a woman that was a sinner, but most eminently by the Christian converse of a few poor but pious women.

This poverty-stricken, ragged tinker was the son of a working mechanic at Elstow, near Bedford. So obscure was his origin that even the Christian name of his father is yet unknown:² he was born in 1628, a year

² The Rev. J. H. A. Rudd, the Vicar of Elstow, has most kindly furnished me with an extract from the registers of all the entries relative to Bunyan's family. The register commences in 1641, and has been searched to 1750. It confirms the Rev. J. Juke's impression, that soon after Bunyan joined Gifford's church he left Elstow to live in Bedford.

Thomas Bonion, buried, Dec. 9, 1641.

Margaret Bonion, wife, buried, June 20, 1644.

Margaret Bonion, b., July 24, 1644.

Charles, the son of Thos. Bunion, bapt., May 22, 1645.

Charles Bunion, bur., May 30, 1645.

Mary, the daught. of Joh. Bonion, bapt., July 20, 1650

Elizabeth, the daughter of John Bonyon, was born 14th day of April, 1654.

Thomas ? Bonion of the town of Bedford, and Elizabeth _____ of the parish of Elstow, were married, May 10, 1656. (The Christian name of the husband, and the surname of the wife, are very much obliterated.)

memorable as that in which the Bill of Rights was passed. Then began the struggle against arbitrary power, which was overthrown in 1688, the year of Bunyan's death, by the accession of William III. Of Bunyan's parents, his infancy, and childhood, little is recorded. All that we know is from his own account, and that principally contained in his doctrine of the *Law and Grace*, and in his extraordinary development of his spiritual life, under the title of *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. His birth would have shed a luster on the wealthiest mansion, and have imparted additional grandeur to any lordly palace. Had royal or noble gossips, and a splendid entertainment attended his christening, it might have been pointed to with pride; but so obscure was his birth, that it has not been discovered that he was christened at all; while the fact of his new birth by the Holy Ghost is

Ann Bonyonn, Widdo, was buried, 12th day of April, 1659.

Thos. Bunyan, buried, Feby. 7th, 1675.

Ann Bunyon, Widdo, buried in Woolen, September 25, 1680.

The marriage here recorded, May 10, 1656, could not be that of John Bunyan to his second wife Elizabeth; for she declared to Judge Hale in August, 1661, that she had 'not been married to him yet full two years.'—Vol. i. 61.

known over the whole world to the vast extent that his writings have been circulated. He entered this world in a labourer's cottage of the humblest class, at the village of Elstow, about a mile from Bedford.³ His pedigree is thus narrated by himself:—'My descent was of a low and inconsiderable generation, my father's house being of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families in the land.'⁴ Bunyan alludes to this very pointedly in the preface to *A Few Sighs from Hell*:—'I am thine, if thou be not ashamed to own me, because of my low and contemptible descent in the world.'⁵ His poor and abject parentage was so notorious, that his pastor, John Burton, apologized for it in his recommendation to *The Gospel Truths Opened*:—'Be not offended because Christ holds forth the glorious treasure of the gospel to thee in a poor earthen vessel, by one who

³ This cottage has long ceased to exist, and has been replaced by another of the poorest description. But from an old print we have given in the Plate, p. 1, vol. i., a representation of the original, with the shed at side often mentioned as 'The forge'; thus leading us to believe, that to the 'tinker's' humble calling might be united that of the 'smith,' a more manly and honourable trade.

⁴ *Grace Abounding*, No. 2.

⁵ Vol. iii., p. 674.

hath neither the greatness nor the wisdom of this world to commend him to thee.’⁶ And in his most admirable treatise, on *The Fear of God*, Bunyan observes—‘The poor Christian hath something to answer them that reproach him for his ignoble pedigree, and shortness of the glory of the wisdom of this world. True may that man say I am taken out of the dunghill. I was born in a base and low estate; but I fear God. This is the highest and most noble; he hath the honour, the life, and glory that is lasting.’⁷ In his controversy with the Strict Baptists, he chides them for reviling his ignoble pedigree:—‘You closely disdain my person because of my low descent among men, stigmatizing me as a person of THAT rank that need not be heeded or attended unto.’⁸ He inquired of his father—‘Whether we were of the Israelites or no? for, finding in the Scripture that they were once the peculiar people of God, thought I, if I were one of this race, my soul must needs be happy.’⁹ This somewhat justifies the conclusion that his father was a Gipsy tinker, that occupation being then followed by the Gipsy tribe. In the

⁶ Vol. ii., p. 140.

⁷ Vol. i., p. 490.

⁸ Vol. ii., p. 617.

⁹ *Grace Abounding*, No. 18.

life of Bunyan appended to the forged third part of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, his father is described as 'an honest poor labouring man, who, like Adam unparadised, had all the world before him to get his bread in; and was very careful and industrious to maintain his family.'¹⁰

Happily for Bunyan, he was born in a neighbourhood in which it was a disgrace to any parents not to have their children educated. With gratitude he records, that 'it pleased God to put it into their hearts to put me to school to learn both to read and to write.' In the neighbourhood of his birthplace, a noble charity diffused the blessings of lettered knowledge.¹¹ To this charity Bunyan was for a short period indebted for the rudiments of education; but, alas, evil associates made awful havoc of those slight unshapen literary impressions which had been

¹⁰ Extracted from the first edition in the British Museum. It was much altered in the subsequent impressions.

¹¹ In 1566, Sir Thomas Harper, Lord Mayor of London, gave £180 for thirteen acres and a rood of meadow land in Holborn. This was settled, in trust, to promote the education of the poor in and round Bedford. In 1668, it produced a yearly revenue of £99—a considerable sum in that day, but not in any proportion to the present rental, which amounts to upwards of £12,000 a-year.

made upon a mind boisterous and impatient of discipline. He says—‘To my shame, I confess I did soon lose that little I learned, and that almost utterly.’¹² This fact will recur to the reader’s recollection when he peruses *Israel’s Hope Encouraged*, in which, speaking of the all-important doctrine of justification, he says—‘It is with many that begin with this doctrine as it is with boys that go to the Latin school; they learn till they have learned the grounds of their grammar, and then go home and forget all.’¹³

As soon as his strength enabled him, he devoted his whole soul and body to licentiousness—‘As for my own natural life, for the time that I was without God in the world, it was indeed according to the course of this world, and the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. It was my delight to be taken captive by the devil at his will: being filled with all unrighteousness; that from a child I had but few equals, both for cursing, swearing, lying, and blaspheming the holy name of God.’¹⁴

It has been supposed, that in delineating the early career of Badman, ‘Bunyan drew the

¹² *Grace Abounding*, No. 3.

¹³ Vol. i., p. 618.

¹⁴ *Grace Abounding*, No. 4.

picture of his own boyhood.¹⁵ But the difference is broadly given. Badman is the child of pious parents, who gave him a 'good education' in every sense, both moral and secular;¹⁶ the very reverse of Bunyan's training. His associates would enable him to draw the awful character and conduct of Badman, as a terrible example to deter others from the downward road to misery and perdition.

Bunyan's parents do not appear to have checked, or attempted to counteract, his unbridled career of wickedness. He gives no hint of the kind; but when he notices his wife's father, he adds that he 'was counted godly'; and in his beautiful nonsectarian catechism, there is a very touching conclusion to his instructions to children on their behaviour to their parents:—'The Lord, if it be his will, convert our poor parents, that they, with us, may be the children of God.'¹⁷ These fervent expressions may refer to his own parents; and, connecting them with other evidence, it appears that he was not blessed with pious example. Upon one occasion, when severely reproved for swearing, he says—'I wished, with

¹⁵ Philip's *Life of Bunyan*, p. 4.

¹⁶ Vol. iii., p. 597.

¹⁷ Vol. ii., p. 564.

all my heart, that I might be a little child again, that my father *might* learn me to speak without this wicked way of swearing.’¹⁸ In his numerous confessions, he never expresses pain at having, by his vicious conduct, occasioned grief to his father or mother. From this it may be inferred, that neither his father’s example nor precept had checked this wretched propensity to swearing, and that he owed nothing to his parents for moral training; but, on the contrary, they had connived at, and encouraged him in, a course of life which made him a curse to the neighbourhood in which he lived.

In the midst of all this violent depravity, the Holy Spirit began the work of regeneration in his soul—a long, a solemn, yea, an awful work—which was to fit this poor debauched youth for purity of conduct—for communion with heaven—for wondrous usefulness as a minister of the gospel—for patient endurance of sufferings for righteousness’ sake—for the writing of works which promise to be a blessing to the Church in all ages—for his support during his passage through the black river which has no bridge—to shine all bright and glorious, as a star in the firmament of

¹⁸ *Grace Abounding*, No. 27.

heaven. 'Wonders of grace to God belong.'

During the period of his open profligacy, his conscience was ill at ease; at times the clanking of Satan's slavish chains in which he was hurrying to destruction, distracted him. The stern reality of a future state clouded and embittered many of those moments employed in gratifying his baser passions. The face of the eventful times in which he lived was rapidly changing; the trammels were loosened, which, with atrocious penalties, had fettered all free inquiry into religious truth. Puritanism began to walk upright; and as the restraints imposed upon Divine truths were taken off, in the same proportion restraints were imposed upon impiety, profaneness, and debauchery. A ringleader in all wickedness would not long continue without reproof, either personally, or as seen in the holy conduct of others. Bunyan very properly attributed to a gracious God, those checks of conscience which he so strongly felt even while he was apparently dead in trespasses and sins. 'The Lord, even in my childhood, did scare and affright me with fearful dreams, and did terrify me with dreadful visions.'¹⁹ 'I often wished that there had been no hell, or that I had been a devil to torment

¹⁹ *Grace Abounding*, No. 5.

others.' A common childish but demoniac idea. His mind was as 'the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.' 'A while after, these terrible dreams did leave me; and with more greediness, according to the strength of nature, I did let loose the reins of my lusts, and delighted in all transgression against the law of God.' 'I was the very ringleader of all the youth that kept me company, into ALL MANNER of vice and ungodliness.'²⁰

Dr. Southey and others have attempted to whiten this blackamore, but the veil that they throw over him is so transparent that it cannot deceive those who are in the least degree spiritually enlightened. He alleges that Bunyan, in his mad career of vice and folly, 'was never so given over to a reprobate mind,'²¹ as to be wholly free from compunctions of conscience. This is the case with every depraved character; but he goes further, when he asserts that 'Bunyan's heart never was hardened.'²² This is directly opposed to his description of himself:—'I found within me a great desire to take my fill of sin, still studying what sin was yet to be committed; and I made

²⁰ *Ibid.*, No. 8.

²¹ *Life*, p. vii.

²² *Ibid.* p. viii.

as much haste as I could to fill my belly with its delicates, lest I should die before I had my desire.' He thus solemnly adds, 'In these things, I protest before God, I lie not, neither do I feign this sort of speech; these were really, strongly, and with all my heart, my desires; the good Lord, whose mercy is unsearchable, forgive me my transgressions.' The whole of his career, from childhood to manhood, was, 'According to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience' (Eph 2:2).

These reminiscences are alluded to in the prologue of the *Holy War*:—

'When Mansoul trampled upon things Divine,
And wallowed in filth as doth a swine,
Then I was there, and did rejoice to see
Diabolus and Mansoul so agree.'

The Laureate had read this, and yet considers it the language of a heart that 'never was hardened.' He says that 'the wickedness of the tinker has been greatly overcharged, and it is taking the language of self-accusation too literally to pronounce of John Bunyan, that *he was at any time depraved*. The worst of what he was in his worst days is to be expressed in a single word, the full meaning of which no circumlocution can convey; and which, though

it may hardly be deemed presentable in serious composition, I shall use, as Bunyan himself (no mealy-mouthed writer) would have used it, had it in his days borne the same acceptation in which it is now universally understood;—in that word then, he had been a *blackguard*.

The very head and front of his offending

Hath this extent—no more.’²³

The meaning of the epithet is admirably explained; but what could Dr. Southey imagine possible to render such a character *more* vile in the sight of God, or a greater pest to society? Is there any vicious propensity, the gratification of which is not included in that character? Bunyan’s estimate of his immorality and profaneness prior to his conversion, was not made by comparing himself with the infinitely Holy One, but he measured his conduct by that of his more moral neighbours. In his *Jerusalem Sinner Saved*, he pleads with great sinners, the outwardly and violently profane and vicious, that if HE had received mercy, and had become regenerated, they surely ought not to despair, but to seek earnestly for the same grace. He thus describes himself:—‘I speak by experience; I was one of those great sin-breeders; I infected all the

²³ *Life*, pp. xli., xlii.

youth of the town where I was born; the neighbours counted me so, my practice proved me so: wherefore, Christ Jesus took me first; and, taking me first, the contagion was much allayed all the town over. When God made me sigh, they would hearken, and inquiringly say, What's the matter with John? When I went out to seek the bread of life, some of them would follow, and the rest be put into a muse at home. Some of them, perceiving that God had mercy upon me, came crying to him for mercy too.'²⁴ Can any one, in the face of such language, doubt that he was most eminently 'a brand snatched from the fire'; a pitchy burning brand, known and seen as such by all who witnessed his conduct? He pointedly exemplified the character set forth by James, 'the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, set on fire of hell' (James 3:6). This was as publicly known before his conversion, as the effects of the wondrous change were openly seen in his Christian career afterwards. He who, when convinced of sin, strained his eyes to see the distant shining light over the wicket-gate, after he had gazed upon

—'The wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,'

²⁴ Vol. i., p. 79.

became a luminous beacon, to attract the vilest characters to seek newness of life; and if there be hope for them, no one ought to despair. Far be it from us to cloud this light, or to tarnish so conspicuous an example. Like a Magdalene or a thief on the cross, his case may be exhibited to encourage hope in every returning prodigal. During this period of his childhood, while striving to harden his heart against God, many were the glimmerings of light which from time to time directed his unwilling eyes to a dread eternity. In the still hours of the night 'in a dream God opened' his ears²⁵—the dreadful vision was that 'devils and wicked spirits laboured to draw me away with them.' These thoughts must have left a deep and alarming impression upon his mind; for he adds, 'of which I could never be rid.'²⁶

The author of his life, published in 1692, who was one of his personal friends, gives the following account of Bunyan's profligacy, and his checks of conscience:—'He himself hath often, since his conversion, confessed with horror, that when he was but a child or stripling, he had but few equals for lying, swearing, and blaspheming God's holy name—

²⁵ Job 33:15.

²⁶ *Grace Abounding*, No. 5, vol. i., p. 6.

living without God in the world; the thoughts of which, when he, by the light of Divine grace, came to understand his dangerous condition, drew many showers of tears from his sorrowful eyes, and sighs from his groaning heart. The first thing that sensibly touched him in this his unregenerate state, were fearful dreams, and visions of the night, which often made him cry out in his sleep, and alarm the house, as if somebody was about to murder him, and being waked, he would start, and stare about him with such a wildness, as if some real apparition had yet remained; and generally those dreams were about evil spirits, in monstrous shapes and forms, that presented themselves to him in threatening postures, as if they would have taken him away, or torn him in pieces. At some times they seemed to belch flame, at other times a continuous smoke, with horrible noises and roaring. Once he dreamed he saw the face of the heavens, as it were, all on fire; the firmament crackling and shivering with the noise of mighty thunders, and an archangel flew in the midst of heaven, sounding a trumpet, and a glorious throne was seated in the east, whereon sat one in brightness, like the morning star, upon which he, thinking it was the end of the world, fell upon his knees, and, with uplifted hands towards heaven, cried,

O Lord God, have mercy upon me! What shall I do, the day of judgment is come, and I am not prepared! When immediately he heard a voice behind him, exceeding loud, saying, Repent. At another time he dreamed that he was in a pleasant place, jovial and rioting, banqueting and feasting his senses, when a mighty earthquake suddenly rent the earth, and made a wide gap, out of which came bloody flames, and the figures of men tossed up in globes of fire, and falling down again with horrible cries, shrieks, and execrations, whilst some devils that were mingled with them, laughed aloud at their torments; and whilst he stood trembling at this sight, he thought the earth sunk under him, and a circle of flame enclosed him; but when he fancied he was just at the point to perish, one in white shining raiment descended, and plucked him out of that dreadful place; whilst the devils cried after him, to leave him with them, to take the just punishment his sins had deserved, yet he escaped the danger, and leaped for joy when he awoke and found it was a dream.'

Such dreams as these fitted him in after life to be the glorious dreamer of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which a dream is told which doubtless embodies some of those which terrified him in the night visions of his youth.

In the interpreter's house he is 'led into a chamber where there was one rising out of bed, and as he put on his raiment he shook and trembled. Then said Christian, Why doth this man thus tremble? The Interpreter then bid him tell to Christian the reason of his so doing. So he began and said, This night, as I was in my sleep I dreamed, and behold the heavens grew exceeding black; also it thundered and lightened in most fearful wise, that it put me into an agony. So I looked up in my dream, and saw the clouds rack at an unusual rate, upon which I heard a great sound of a trumpet, and saw also a man sit upon a cloud, attended with the thousands of heaven—they were all in flaming fire; also the heavens were in a burning flame. I heard then a voice saying, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment;" and with that the rocks rent, the graves opened, and the dead that were

therein came forth. Some of them were exceeding glad, and looked upward; and some sought to hide themselves under the mountains. Then I saw the man that sat upon the cloud open the book, and bid the world draw near. Yet there was, by reason of a fierce flame which issued out and came from before him, a convenient distance betwixt him and them, as betwixt the judge and prisoners at the bar. I heard it also proclaimed, "Gather together the tares, the chaff, and stubble, and cast them into the burning lake"; and with that the bottomless pit opened just whereabout I stood, out of the mouth of which there came, in an abundant manner, smoke and coals of fire, with hideous noises. It was also said, "Gather my wheat into the garner"; and with that I saw many caught up and carried away into the clouds, but I was left behind. I also sought to hide myself, but I

could not, for the man that sat upon the cloud still kept his eye upon me; my sins also came into my mind, and my conscience did accuse me on every side. Upon that I awaked from my sleep.'

No laboured composition could have produced such a dream as this. It flows in such dream-like order as would lead us to infer, that the author who narrates it had, when a boy, heard the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew read at church, and the solemn impression following him at night assisted in producing a dream which stands, and perhaps will ever stand, unrivalled.

Awful as must have been these impressions upon his imagination, they were soon thrown off, and the mad youth rushed on in his desperate career of vice and folly. Is he then left to fill up the measure of his iniquities? No, the Lord has a great work for him to do. HIS hand is not shortened that he cannot save. Bunyan has to be prepared for his work; and if terrors will not stop him, manifested mercies in judgments are to be tried.

'God did not utterly leave me, but followed me still, not now with convictions, but judgments; yet such as were

mixed with mercy. For once I fell into a creek of the sea, and hardly escaped drowning. Another time I fell out of a boat into Bedford river, but mercy yet preserved me alive. Besides, another time, being in the field with one of my companions, it chanced that an adder passed over the highway, so I, having a stick in my hand, struck her over the back; and having stunned her, I forced open her mouth with my stick, and plucked her sting out with my fingers; by which act, had not God been merciful unto me, I might by my desperateness have brought myself to my end.

‘This also have I taken notice of, with thanksgiving. When I was a soldier, I, with others, were drawn out to go to such a place to besiege it; but when I was just ready to go, one of the company desired to go in my room, to which, when I had consented, he took my place; and coming to the siege, as he

stood sentinel, he was shot into the head with a musket bullet, and died.’²⁷

In addition to these mercies recorded by his own pen, one of his friends asserts that he acknowledged his deep obligations to Divine mercy for being saved when he fell into an exceeding deep pit, as he was traveling in the dark; for having been preserved in sickness; and also for providential goodness that such a sinner was sustained with food and raiment, even to his own admiration.

Bunyan adds, ‘Here were judgments and mercy, but neither of them did awaken my soul to righteousness’; wherefore I sinned still, and grew more and more rebellious against God, and careless of mine own salvation.’²⁸

²⁷ Life appended to the first and second editions of the forged third part of *Pilgrim’s Progress*.

²⁸ *Grace Abounding*, Nos. 12-14, vol. i., p. 7. How do these hair-breadth escapes illustrate the unerring providence of God, and the short-sightedness of even pious Christians. It is easy to imagine the exclamations of a reflecting character when hearing of the marvelous escapes of this wicked youth. ‘Dark providences! the good and benevolent are snatched away; but such a plague as this has his life preserved to pester us still. Short-sighted mortal, “shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”’ No life in the British empire was so precious in the sight and gracious purposes of God, as that of the poor depraved lad;

That such a scape-grace should enter the army can occasion no surprise. His robust, hardy frame, used to exposure in all weathers—his daring courage, as displayed in his perilous dealing with the adder, bordering upon fool-hardiness—his mental depravity and immoral habits, fitted him for all the military glory of rapine and desolation. In his *Grace Abounding* he expressly states that this took place before his marriage, while his earliest biographer places this event some years after his marriage, and even argues upon it, as a reason why he became a soldier, that ‘when the unnatural civil war came on, finding little or nothing to do to support himself and *small family*, he, as many thousands did, betook himself to arms.’²⁹ The same account states that, ‘in June, 1645, being at the siege of Leicester, he was called out to be one who was to make a violent attack upon the town, vigorously defended by the King’s forces against the Parliamentarians, but appearing to the officer who was to command them to be somewhat awkward in handling his arms,

which was thus preserved by the special care of Divine providence.

²⁹ Life appended to part third of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, 1692. This is omitted from the third edition (1700), and all the subsequent ones.

another voluntarily, and as it were thrust himself into his place, who, having the same post that was designed Mr. Bunyan, met his fate by a carbine-shot from the wall; but this little or nothing startled our too secure sinner at that time; for being now in an army where wickedness abounded, he was the more hardened.'

Thus we find Bunyan engaged in military affairs. There can be no doubt but that he was a soldier prior to his marriage, and that he was present at the siege of Leicester; but it is somewhat strange (if true) that he should have preferred the Parliamentary to the Royal army. Although this is a question that cannot be positively decided without further evidence than has yet been discovered, there are strong reasons for thinking that so loyal a man joined the Royal army, and not that of the Republicans.

The army into which Bunyan entered is described as being 'where wickedness abounded,' but, according to Hume, in this year the Republican troops were generally pious men.

Bunyan's loyalty was so remarkable as to appear to be natural to him; for even after he had so severely suffered from the abuse of kingly power, in interfering with the Divine

prerogative of appointing modes of worship, he, who feared the face of no man—who never wrote a line to curry favour with any man or class of men—thus expresses his loyal feelings—‘I do confess myself one of the old-fashioned professors, that covet to fear God, and honour the king. I also am for blessing of them that curse me, for doing good to them that hate me, and for praying for them that despitefully use me and persecute me; and have had more peace in the practice of these things than all the world are aware of.’ ‘Pray for the long life of the king.’ ‘Pray that God would discover all plots and conspiracies against his person and government.’³⁰ ‘Will you rebel against the king? is a word that shakes the world.’³¹ ‘Pray for all that are in authority; reproach not the governor, he is set over thee; all his ways are God’s, either for thy help or the trial of thy graces—this is duty, will render thee lovely to thy friends, terrible to thine enemies, serviceable as a Christian.’³² ‘Let kings have that fear, honour, reverence, worship that is due to their place, their office and dignity.’ ‘I speak it to show my loyalty to

³⁰ Vol. ii., p. 74.

³¹ Vol. i., p. 732.

³² Vol. ii., p. 738.

the king, and my love to my fellow-subjects.’³³ With such proofs of his peaceful submission to government in all things that touched not the prerogatives of God; it would have been marvelous indeed if he had taken up arms against his king. His infatuated delight in swearing, and roisterous habits, were ill suited to the religious restraints of the Parliamentarians, while they would render him a high prize to Rupert’s dragoons. Add to this, the remarkable fact, that Leicester was besieged and stormed with terrible slaughter by the king, but not by the army of the Parliament. The taking of Leicester by the king in person was attended with great cruelties. The abbey was burnt by the cavaliers. Rupert’s black flag was hoisted on the gate which had been treacherously given up. Every Scotchman found in the town was murdered. The mace and town seals were carried off as plunder; and, if the account given by Thoresby in his *History of Leicester* is correct, the scene of carnage was quite enough to sicken Bunyan of a military life. He knew the mode in which plunder taken from the bodies of the slain was divided by the conquerors:—

‘Or as the soldiers give unto

³³ Vol. ii., p. 709; ii., p. 45; ii., 601.

Each man the share and lot,
Which they by dint of sword have won,
From their most daring foe;
While he lies by as still as stone,
Not knowing what they do.’³⁴

‘The king’s forces having made their batteries, stormed Leicester; those within made stout resistance, but some of them betrayed one of the gates; the women of the town laboured in making up the breaches, and in great danger. The king’s forces having entered the town, had a hot encounter in the market-place; and many of them were slain by shot out of the windows, that they gave no quarter, but hanged some of the committee, and cut others to pieces. Some letters say that the kennels ran down with blood; Colonel Gray the governor, and Captain Hacker, were wounded and taken prisoners, and very many of the garrison were put to the sword, and the town

³⁴ Vol. iii., p. 727; v. 7, 8.

miserably plundered. The king's forces killed divers who prayed quarter, and put divers women to the sword,³⁵ and other women and children they turned naked into the streets, and many they ravished. They hanged Mr. Reynor and Mr. Sawyer in cold blood; and at Wighton they smothered Mrs. Barlowes, a minister's wife, and her children.'³⁶

Lord Clarendon admits the rapine and plunder, and that the king regretted that some of his friends suffered with the rest.³⁷ Humphrey Brown deposed that he was present when the garrison, having surrendered upon a promise of quarter, he saw the king's soldiers strip and wound the prisoners, and heard the king say—'cut them more, for they are mine enemies.' A national collection was made for the sufferers, by an ordinance bearing date the 28th October, 1645, which states that—'Whereas it is very well known what miseries befell the inhabitants of the town and county of

³⁵ The women were remarkably active in defending the town.

³⁶ Thoresby's *Leicester*, 4to, p. 128.

³⁷ *Hist. of Rebellion*, edition 1712, vol. ii., p. 652.

Leicester, when the king's army took Leicester, by plundering the said inhabitants, not only of their wares in their shops, but also all their household goods, and their apparel from their backs, both of men, women, and children, not sparing, in that kind, infants in their cradles; and, by violent courses and tortures, compelled them to discover whatsoever they had concealed or hid, and after all they imprisoned their persons, to the undoing of the tradesmen, and the ruin of many of the country.'

Can we wonder that 'the king was abused as a barbarian and a murderer, for having put numbers to death in cold blood after the garrison had surrendered; and for hanging the Parliament's committee, and some Scots found in that town?' The cruelties practiced in the king's presence were signally punished. He lost 709 men on that occasion, and it infused new vigour into the Parliament's army. The battle of Naseby was fought a few days after; the numbers of the contending forces were nearly equal; the royal troops were veterans, commanded by experienced officers; but the God of armies avenged the innocent blood shed in Leicester, and the royal army was cut to pieces; carriages, cannon, the king's cabinet, full of treasonable correspondence, were taken, and from that day he made feeble fight, and

soon lost his crown and his life. The conquerors marched to Leicester, which surrendered by capitulation. Heath, in his *Chronicle*, asserts that 'no life was lost at the retaking of Leicester.' Many of Bunyan's sayings and proverbs are strongly tinged with the spirit of Rupert's dragoons—'as we say, blood up to the ears.'³⁸ 'What can be the meaning of this (trumpeters), they neither sound boot and saddle, nor horse and away, nor a charge?'³⁹ In his allegories when he alludes to fighting, it is with the sword and not with the musket;⁴⁰ 'rub up man, put on thy harness.'⁴¹ 'The father's *sword* in the hand of the sucking child is not able to conquer a foe.'⁴²

Considering his singular loyalty, which, during the French Revolution, was exhibited as a pattern to Dissenters by an eminent Baptist minister;⁴³ considering also his profligate character and military sayings, it is very probable that Bunyan was in the king's army in 1645, being about seventeen years of age. It

³⁸ Vol. i., p. 661.

³⁹ Vol. iii., p. 357.

⁴⁰ Vol. iii., p. 113, 358.

⁴¹ Vol. i., p. 726.

⁴² Vol. i., p. 694.

⁴³ *The Political Sentiments of John Bunyan*, re-published by John Martin, 1798.

was a finishing school to the hardened sinner, which enabled him, in his account of the *Holy War*, so well to describe every filthy lane and dirty street in the town of Mansoul.

Whether Bunyan left the army when Charles was routed at the battle of Naseby, or was discharged, is not known. He returned to his native town full of military ideas, which he used to advantage in his *Holy War*. He was not reformed, but hardened in sin, and, although at times alarmed with convictions of the danger of his soul, yet in the end, the flesh pleading powerfully, it prevailed; and he made a resolution to indulge himself in such carnal delights and pleasures as he was accustomed to, or that fell in his way. 'His neglecting his business, and following gaming and sports, to put melancholy thoughts out of his mind, which he could not always do, had rendered him very poor and despicable.'⁴⁴

In this forlorn and miserable state, he was induced, by the persuasion of friends, under the invisible guidance of God, to enter into the marriage state. Such a youth, then only twenty years of age, would naturally be expected to marry some young woman as hardened as himself, but he made a very different choice.

⁴⁴ *Life of Bunyan*, 1692, p. 12.

His earliest biographer says, with singular simplicity, 'his poverty, and irregular course of life, made it very difficult for him to get a wife suitable to his inclination; and because none that were rich would yield to his allurements, he found himself constrained to marry one without any fortune, though very virtuous, loving, and conformably obedient and obliging, being born of good, honest, godly parents, who had instructed her, as well as they were able, in the ways of truth and saving knowledge.'⁴⁵ The idea of his seeking a rich wife is sufficiently droll; he must have been naturally a persuasive lover, to have gained so good a helpmate. They were not troubled with sending cards, cake, or gloves, nor with the ceremony of receiving the visits of their friends in state; for he says, that 'This woman and I came together as poor as poor might be, not having so much household stuff as a dish or spoon betwixt us both.'⁴⁶ His wife had two books, *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven*, and *The Practice of Piety*; but what was of more importance than wealth or household stuff, she had that seed sown in her heart which no thief could steal.⁴⁷ She enticed

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1692, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Vol. i., p. 7.

⁴⁷ The *Pathway to Heaven* is the work of that pious puritan Dent, and is full of those striking illustrations

and persuaded him to read those books. To do this he by application 'again recovered his reading, which he had almost lost.' His wife became an unspeakable blessing to him. She presents a pattern to any woman, who, having neglected the apostolic injunction not to be unequally yoked, finds herself under the dominion of a swearing dare devil. It affords a lovely proof of the insinuating benign favour of female influence. This was the more surprising, as he says, 'the thoughts of religion were very grievous to me,' and when 'books that concerned Christian piety were read in my hearing, it was as it were a prison to me.' In spite of all obstacles, his rugged heart was softened by her tenderness and obedience, he 'keeping on the old course,'⁴⁸ she upon every proper season teaching him how her father's piety secured his own and his family's happiness. Here was no upbraiding, no

which were admirably adapted to prepare Bunyan for writing his allegories. A copy with the name Ma Bunyann, written on the title page, has long been in the editor's library. We give a facsimile of the writing, as it has been supposed that of Bunyan. This is very doubtful; it appears more like a woman's hand; but, if it is the name of Mrs. Bunyan, then it indicates that his daughter Mary, baptized 20th July, 1650, was called after her.

⁴⁸ *Life of Bunyan*, 1691, p. 13.

snubbing, no curtain lectures; all was affectionate, amiable mildness. At first, he became occasionally alarmed for his soul's salvation; then with the thought of having sinned away the day of grace, he plunged again into sin with greediness; anon a faint hope of mercy would fill him with fear and trembling. But this leads us to the wondrous narrative of his new birth.

THE SECOND PERIOD. THE INTERNAL CONFLICT, OR BUNYAN'S CONVICTIONS AND CONVERSION.

All nature is progressive; if an infant was suddenly to arrive at manhood, how idiotic and dangerous he would be! A long training is essential to fit the human being for the important duties of life; and just so is it in the new birth to spiritual existence—first a babe, then the young man; at length the full stature, and at last the experienced Christian.

The narrative of Bunyan's progress in his conversion is, without exception, the most astonishing of any that has been published. It is well calculated to excite the profoundest investigation of the Christian philosopher. Whence came those sudden suggestions, those

gloomy fears, those heavenly rays of joy? Much learning certainly did not make *him* mad. The Christian dares not attribute his intense feelings to a distempered brain. Whence came the invisible power that struck Paul from his horse? Who was it that scared Job with dreams, and terrified him with visions? What messenger of Satan buffeted Paul? Who put 'a new song' into the mouth of David? We have no space in this short memoir to attempt the drawing a line between convictions of sin and the terrors of a distempered brain. Bunyan's opinions upon this subject are deeply interesting, and are fully developed in his *Holy War*. The capabilities of the soul to entertain vast armies of thoughts, strong and feeble, represented as men, women, and children, are so great as almost to perplex the strongest understanding. All these multitudes of warriors are the innumerable thoughts—the strife—in ONE soul. Upon such a subject an interesting volume might be written. But we must fix our attention upon the poor tinker who was the subject of this wondrous war.

The tender and wise efforts of Mrs. Bunyan to reclaim her husband, were attended by the Divine blessing, and soon led to many resolutions, on his part, to curb his sinful propensities and to promote an outward

reformation; his first effort was regularly to attend Divine worship.

He says, 'I fell in very eagerly with the religion of the times, to wit, to go to church twice a-day, and that too with the foremost; and there should very devoutly both say and sing as others did, yet retaining my wicked life; but withal, I was so overrun with a spirit of superstition, that I adored, and that with great devotion, even all things, both the high-place, priest, clerk, vestment, service, and what else belonging to the Church; counting all things holy that were therein contained, and especially, the priest and clerk most happy, and without doubt greatly blessed, because they were the servants, as I then thought,⁴⁹ of God, and were principal in the holy temple, to

⁴⁹ This is a solemn consideration; many profess to serve God while they are bond-slaves to sin; and many are servants in his family who are not sons, nor heirs, of heaven. Blessed are those who are both servants and sons.

do his work therein. This conceit grew so strong in little time upon my spirit, that had I but seen a priest, though never so sordid and debauched in his life,⁵⁰ I should find my spirit fall under him, reverence him, and knit unto him; yea, I thought, for the love I did bear unto them, supposing they were the ministers of God, I could have lain down at their feet, and have been trampled upon by them; their name, their garb, and work did so intoxicate and bewitch me.'

All this took place at the time when *The Book of Common Prayer*, having been said to occasion 'manifold inconveniency,' was, by an Act of Parliament, 'abolished,'⁵¹ and by a subsequent Act⁵² prohibited, under severe penalties, from being publicly used. The 'manifold inconveniences' to which the Act refers, arose from differences of opinion as to the propriety of the form which had been enforced, heightened by the enormous

⁵⁰ Vol. i., p. 7, 8.

⁵¹ Jan. 3, 1644-5.

⁵² Aug. 23, 1645.

cruelties practiced upon multitudes who refused to use it. Opposition to the English Liturgy as more combined in Scotland, by a covenant entered into, June 20, 1580, by the king, lords, nobles, and people, against Popery; and upon Archbishop Laud's attempt, in 1637, to impose the service-book upon our northern neighbours, tumults and bloodshed ensued; until, in 1643, a new and very solemn league and covenant was entered into, which, in 1645, extended its influence to England, being subscribed by thousands of our best citizens, with many of the nobility—'wherein we all subscribe, and each with his own hands lifted up to the Most High God, doe swear'; that being the mode of taking an oath, instead of kissing the cover of a book, as is now practiced. To the cruel and intemperate measures of Laud, and the zeal of Charles, for priestly domination over conscience, may be justly attributed the wars which desolated the country, while the solemn league and covenant brought an overwhelming force to aid the Parliament in redressing the grievances of the kingdom. During the Commonwealth there was substituted, in place of the *Common Prayer*, *A directory for the Publique Worship of God*, and the uniformity which was enjoined in it was like that of the Presbyterians and

Dissenters of the present day. The people having assembled, and been exhorted to reverence and humility, joined the preacher in prayer. He then read portions of Scripture, with or without an exposition, as he judged it necessary, but not so as to render the service tedious. After singing a psalm, the minister prayed, leading the people to mourn under a sense of sin, and to hunger and thirst after the grace of God, in Jesus Christ; an outline or abstract is given of the subject of public prayer, and similar instructions are given as to the sermon or paraphrase. Immediately after the sermon, prayer was again offered up, and after the outline that is given of this devotional exercise, it is noted, 'And because the prayer which Christ taught his disciples, is not only a pattern of prayer, but itself a most comprehensive prayer, we recommend it also to be used in the prayers of the Church.' This being ended, a psalm was sung, and the minister dismissed the congregation with a solemn blessing.⁵³ Some of the clergy continued the use of prayers, contained in the liturgy, reciting, instead of reading them—a course that was not objected to. This was the form of service which struck Bunyan with such

⁵³ 4to Edit., 1644.

awe and reverence, leaving a very solemn impression upon his mind, which the old form of common prayer had never produced.

Bunyan was fond of athletic sports, bell-ringing, and dancing; and in these he had indulged, so far as his worldly calling allowed. Charles I, whether to promote Popery—to divert his subjects from political grievances—or to punish the Puritans, had endeavoured to drown their serious thoughts in a vortex of dissipation, by re-publishing the *Book of Sports*, to be used on Sundays. That ‘after Divine service our good people be not disturbed, letted, or discouraged from dancing, either men or women; archery, leaping, vaulting, or any other such harmless recreations; May games, Whitsun-ales, Morris dances, May poles, and other sports.’ But this was not all, for every ‘Puritan and Precisian was to be constrained to conformity with these sports, or to leave their country.’ The same severe penalty was enforced upon every clergyman who refused to read from his pulpit the *Book of Sports*, and to persuade the people thus to desecrate the Lord’s-day. ‘Many hundred godly ministers were suspended from their ministry, sequestered, driven from their livings, excommunicated, prosecuted in the high commission court, and forced to leave the

kingdom for not publishing this declaration.⁵⁴ A little gleam of heavenly light falls upon those dark and gloomy times, from the melancholy fact that nearly eight hundred conscientious clergymen were thus wickedly persecuted. This was *one* of the works of Laud, who out-bonnered Bonner himself in his dreadful career of cruelty, while making havoc of the church of Christ. Even transportation for refusing obedience to such diabolical laws was not the greatest penalty; in some cases it was followed by the death of the offender. The punishments inflicted for nonconformity were accompanied by the most refined and barbarous cruelties. Still many of the learned bowed their necks to this yoke with abject servility: thus, Robert Powell, speaking of the *Book of Sports*, says, 'Needless is it to argue or dispute for that which authority hath commanded, and *most insufferable insolence to speak or write against it.*'⁵⁵ These Sunday sports, published by Charles I, in 1633, had doubtless aided in fostering Bunyan's bad conduct in his youthful days. In 1644, when *The Book of Common Prayer* was abolished, an Act was passed for the better observance of the

⁵⁴ Neale, 1822, vol. ii., p. 220.

⁵⁵ *Life of Alfred*, comparing him to Charles I. Preface. 8vo. 1634.

Lord's-day; all persons were prohibited on that day to use any wrestlings, shooting, bowing, ringing of bells for pastime, masques, wakes, church-ales, dancing, game, sports or pastime whatever; and that 'the *Book of Sports* shall be seized, and publicly burnt.' During the civil war this Act does not appear to have been strictly enforced; for, four years after it was passed, we find Bunyan and his dissolute companions worshipping the priest, clerk, and vestments on the Sunday morning, and assembling for their Sabbath-breaking sports in the afternoon. It was upon one of these occasions that a most extraordinary impression was fixed upon the spirit of Bunyan. A remarkable scene took place, worthy the pencil of the most eminent artist. This event cannot be better described than in his own words:—

‘One day, amongst all the sermons our parson made, his subject was, to treat of the Sabbath-day, and of the evil of breaking that, either with labour, sports, or otherwise; now I was, notwithstanding my religion, one that took much delight in all manner of vice, and especially that was the day that I did solace myself

therewith; wherefore I fell in my conscience under his sermons, thinking and believing that he made that sermon on purpose to show me my evil doing. And at that time I felt what guilt was, though never before, that I can remember; but then I was, for the present, greatly loaden therewith, and so went home, when the sermon was ended, with a great burthen upon my spirit.

‘This, for that instant, did benumb the sinews of my best delights, and did imbitter my former pleasures to me; but behold it lasted not for before I had well dined, the trouble began to go off my mind, and my heart returned to its old course. But O! how glad was I, that this trouble was gone from me, and that the fire was put out, that I might sin again without control! Wherefore, when I had satisfied nature with my food, I shook the sermon out of my mind, and to my old

custom of sports and gaming I returned with great delight.

‘But the same day, as I was in the midst of a game at cat, and having struck it one blow from the hole, just as I was about to strike it the second time, a voice did suddenly dart from heaven into my soul, which said, “Wilt thou *leave* thy sins and go to heaven, or *have* thy sins and go to hell?” At this I was put to an exceeding maze; wherefore leaving my cat upon the ground, I looked up to heaven, and was as if I had, with the eyes of my understanding, seen the Lord Jesus looking down upon me, as being very hotly displeased with me, and as if he did severely threaten me with some grievous punishment for these and other my ungodly practices.

‘I had no sooner thus conceived in my mind, but, suddenly, this conclusion was fastened on my spirit, for the former hint did set my sins

again before my face, that I had been a great and grievous sinner, and that it was now too late for me to look after heaven; for Christ would not forgive me, nor pardon my transgressions. Then I fell to musing upon this also; and while I was thinking on it, and fearing lest it should be so, I felt my heart sink in despair, concluding it was too late; and therefore I resolved in my mind I would go on in sin: for, thought I, if the case be thus, my state is surely miserable; miserable if I leave my sins, and but miserable if I follow them; I can but be damned, and if I must be so, I had as good be damned for many sins, as be damned for few.

‘Thus I stood in the midst of my play, before all that then were present: but yet I told them nothing. But I say, I having made this conclusion, I returned desperately to my sport again; and I well remember, that presently this kind of despair did

so possess my soul, that I was persuaded I could never attain to other comfort than what I should get in sin; for heaven was gone already; so that on that I must not think.⁵⁶

How difficult is it, when immorality has been encouraged by royal authority, to turn the tide or to stem the torrent. For at least four years, an Act of Parliament had prohibited these Sunday sports. Still the supineness of the justices, and the connivance of the clergy, allowed the rabble youth to congregate on the Green at Elstow, summoned by the church bells to celebrate their sports and pastimes, as they had been in the habit of doing on the Lord's day.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Vol. i., p. 8, 9.

⁵⁷ The game of cat, tipcat, or "sly," so called by Wilson, in his life of Bunyan [Wilson's Edition of *Works*, vol. i., fol. 1736], is an ancient game well known in many parts of the kingdom. A number of holes are made in the ground, at equal distances, in a circular direction; a player is stationed at each hole; the opposite party stand around; one of them throws the cat to the batsman nearest to him; every time the cat is struck, the batsmen run from one hole to the next, and score as many as they change positions; but if the cat is thrown between them before reaching the hole, the batsman is out [Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes*, 8vo., p. 110]. Such was the childish game played by men on

This solemn warning, received in the midst of his sport, was one of a series of convictions, by which he hardened sinner was to be fitted to receive the messages of mercy and love. In the midst of his companions and of the spectators, Bunyan was struck with a sense of guilt. How rapid were his thoughts—‘Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?’ With the eye of his understanding he saw the Lord Jesus as ‘hotly displeased.’ The tempter suggests it is ‘too, too late’ to seek for pardon, and with a desperate resolution which must have cost his heart the severest pangs, he continued his game. Still the impression remained indelibly fixed upon his mind.

The next blow which fell upon his hardened spirit was still more deeply felt, because it was given by one from whom he could the least have expected it. He was standing at a neighbour’s shop-window, ‘belching out oaths like the madman that Solomon speaks of, who scatters abroad firebrands, arrows, and death’⁵⁸ ‘after his wonted manner.’ He exemplified the character drawn by the Psalmist. ‘As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment: so let it come into his bowels like water, and

the Lord’s-day.

⁵⁸ *Life* by C. Doe, 1698.

like oil into his bones.’ Here was a disease that set all human skill at defiance, but the great, the Almighty Physician, cured it with strange physic. Had any professor reproved him, it might have been passed by as a matter of course; but it was so ordered that a woman who was notoriously ‘a very loose and ungodly wretch,’ protested that she trembled to hear him swear and curse at that most fearful rate; that he was the ungodliest fellow she had ever heard, and that he was able to spoil all the youth in a whole town.⁵⁹ Public reproof from the lips of such a woman was an arrow that pierced his inmost soul; it effected a reformation marvelous to all his companions, and bordering upon the miraculous. The walls of a fortified city were once thrown down by a shout and the tiny blast of rams’-horns (Josh 6:20); and in this instance, the foundations of Heart Castle, fortified by Satan, are shaken by the voice of one of his own emissaries. Mortified and convicted, the foul-mouthed blasphemer swore no more; an outward reformation in words and conduct took place, but without inward spiritual life. Thus was he making vows to God and breaking them, repenting and promising to do better next

⁵⁹ Vol. i., p. 9.

time; so, to use his own homely phrase, he was 'feeding God with chapters, and prayers, and promises, and vows, and a great many more such dainty dishes, and thinks that he serveth God as well as any man in England can, while he has only got into a cleaner way to hell than the rest of his neighbours are in.'⁶⁰

Such a conversion, as he himself calls it, was 'from prodigious profaneness to something like moral life.'⁶¹ 'Now I was, as they said, become godly, and their words pleased me well, though as yet I was nothing but a poor painted hypocrite.' These are hard words, but, in the most important sense, they were true. He was pointed out as a miracle of mercy—the great convert—a wonder to the world. He could now suffer opprobrium and cavils—play with errors—entangle himself and drink in flattery. No one can suppose that this outward reform was put on hypocritically, as a disguise to attain some sinister object; it was real, but it arose from a desire to shine before his neighbours, from shame and from the fear of future punishment, and not from that love to God which leads the Christian to the fear of offending him. It did not arise from a change of

⁶⁰ *Saved by Grace*, vol. i., p. 351.

⁶¹ Vol. i., p. 9; No. 32.

heart; the secret springs of action remained polluted; it was outside show, and therefore he called himself a painted hypocrite. He became less a despiser of religion, but more awfully a destroyer of his own soul.

A new source of uneasiness now presented itself in his practice of bell-ringing, an occupation requiring severe labour, usually performed on the Lord's-day; and, judging from the general character of bell-ringers, it has a most injurious effect, both with regard to morals and religion. A circumstance had recently taken place which was doubtless interpreted as an instance of Divine judgment upon Sabbath-breaking. Clark, in his *Looking-Glass for Saints and Sinners*, 1657, published the narrative:—'Not long since, in Bedfordshire, a match at football being appointed on the Sabbath, in the afternoon whilst two were in the belfry, tolling of a bell to call the company together, there was suddenly heard a clap of thunder, and a flash of lightning was seen by some that sat in the church-porch coming through a dark lane, and flashing in their faces, which must terrified them, and, passing through the porch into the belfry, it tripped up his heels that was tolling the bell, and struck him stark dead; and the other that was with him was so sorely blasted

therewith, that shortly after he died also.⁶² Thus we find that the church bells ministered to the *Book of Sports*, to call the company to Sabbath-breaking. The bell-ringers might come within the same class as those upon whom the tower at Siloam fell, still it was a most solemn warning, and accounts for the timidity of so resolute a man as Bunyan. Although he thought it did not become his newly-assumed religious character, yet his old propensity drew him to the church tower. At first he ventured in, but took care to stand under a main beam, lest the bell should fall and crush him; afterwards he would stand in the door; then he feared the steeple might fall; and the terrors of an untimely death, and his newly-acquired garb of religion, eventually deterred him from this mode of Sabbath-breaking. His next sacrifice made at the shrine of self-righteousness was dancing: this took him one whole year to accomplish, and then he bade farewell to these sports for the rest of his life.⁶³ We are not to conclude from the example

⁶² Folio edition, pp. 595-6.

⁶³ In the Engraving, p. 1, vol. i., is a view of part of the village green, Elstow, with the ancient building now used as a school-house, as seen from the church-yard. This building is older than the time of Bunyan, and was the scene of village meetings at the period in which he lived, and doubtless associated with his

of a man who in after-life proved so great and excellent a character, that, under all circumstances, bell-ringing and dancing are immoral. In those days, such sports and pastimes usually took place on the Lord's-day; and however the Church of England might then sanction it, and proclaim by royal authority, in all her churches, the lawfulness of sports on that sacred day, yet it is now universally admitted that it was commanding a desecration of the Sabbath, and letting loose a flood of vice and profaneness. In themselves, on days proper for recreation, such sports may be innocent; but if they engender an unholy thought, or occupy time needed for self-examination and devotion, they ought to be avoided as sinful hindrances to a spiritual life.

Bunyan was now dressed in the garb of a religious professor, and had become a brisk talker in the matters of religion, when, by Divine mercy, he was stripped of all his good opinion of himself; his want of holiness, and his unchanged heart, were revealed to his surprise and wonder, by means simple and efficacious, but which no human forethought

dancing and thoughtless amusements, as the green itself was the scene of the game of cat. A view looking towards the church is given in Vignette to vol. i. of the Works.

could have devised. Being engaged in his trade at Bedford, he overheard the conversation of some poor pious women, and it humbled and alarmed him. 'I heard, but I understood not; for they were far above, out of my reach. Their talk was about a new birth, the work of God on their hearts, also how they were convinced of their miserable state by nature; how God had visited their souls with his love in the Lord Jesus, and with what words and promises they had been refreshed, comforted, and supported against the temptations of the devil. Moreover, they reasoned of the suggestions and temptations of Satan in particular; and told to each other by which they had been afflicted, and how they were borne up under his assaults. They also discoursed of their own wretchedness of heart, of their unbelief; and did contemn, slight, and abhor their own righteousness, as filthy and insufficient to do them any good. And methought they spake as if joy did make them speak; they spake 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; as if they were people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned among their neighbours (Num 23:9).

'At this I felt my own heart

began to shake, as mistrusting my condition to be nought; for I saw that in all my thoughts about religion and salvation, the new birth did never enter into my mind; neither knew I the comfort of the Word and promise, nor the deceitfulness and treachery of my own wicked heart. As for secret thoughts, I took no notice of them; neither did I understand what Satan's temptations were, nor how they were to be withstood, and resisted.

'Thus, therefore, when I heard and considered what they said, I left them, and went about my employment again, but their talk and discourse went with me; also my heart would tarry with them, for I was greatly affected with their words, both because by them I was convinced that I wanted the true tokens of a truly godly man, and also because by them I was convinced of the happy and blessed condition of him that

was such a one.’⁶⁴

The brisk talker of ‘talkative,’ was confounded—he heard pious godly women mourning over their worthlessness instead of vaunting of their attainments. They exhibited, doubtless to his great surprise, that self-distrust and humility are the beginnings of wisdom.

These humble disciples could have had no conception that the Holy Spirit was blessing their Christian communion to the mind of the tinker, standing near them, pursuing his occupation. The recollection of the converse of these poor women led to solemn heart-searching and the most painful anxiety; again and again he sought their company, and his convictions became more deep, his solicitude more intense. This was the commencement of an internal struggle, the most remarkable of any upon record, excepting that of the psalmist David.

It was the work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating and preparing an ignorant and rebellious man for extraordinary submission to the sacred Scriptures, and for most extensive usefulness. To those who never experienced in any degree such feelings, they appear to

⁶⁴ Vol. i., p. 10.

indicate religious insanity. It was so marvelous and so mysterious, as to be mistaken by a poet laureate, who profanely calls it a being 'shaken continually by the hot and cold fits of a spiritual ague': 'reveries': or one of the 'frequent and contagious disorders of the human mind,'⁶⁵ instead of considering it as wholesome but bitter medicine for the soul, administered by the heavenly Physician. At times he felt, like David, 'a sword in his bones,' 'tears his meat.' God's waves and billows overwhelmed him (Psa 43). Then came glimmerings of hope—precious promises saving him from despair—followed by the shadow of death overspreading his soul, and involving him in midnight darkness. He could complain in the bitterness of his anguish, 'Thy fierce wrath goeth over me.' Bound in affliction and iron, his 'soul was melted because of trouble.' 'Now Satan assaults the soul with darkness, fears, frightful thoughts of apparitions; now they sweat, pant, and struggle for life. The angels now come (Psa 107) down to behold the sight, and rejoice to see a bit of dust and ashes to overcome principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion.'⁶⁶ His mind

⁶⁵ Southey's *Life*, pp. xxv., xxxii.

⁶⁶ Vol. i., p. 80.

was fixed on eternity, and out of the abundance of his heart he spoke to one of his former companions; his language was that of reproof—‘Harry, why do you swear and curse thus? what will become of you if you die in this condition?’⁶⁷ His sermon, probably the first he had preached, was like throwing pearls before swine—‘He answered in a great chafe, what would the devil do for company, if it were not for such as I am.’⁶⁸

By this time he had recovered the art of reading, and its use a little perplexed him, for he became much puzzled with the opinions of the Ranters, as set forth in their books. It is extremely difficult to delineate their sentiments; they were despised by all the sects which had been connected with the government, because, with the Quakers and Baptists, they denied any magisterial or state authority over conscience, and refused maintenance to ministers; but from the testimony of Bunyan, and that of the early Quakers, they appear to have been practical Antinomians, or at least very nearly allied to the new sect called Mormonites. Ross, who copied from Pagitt, describes them with much

⁶⁷ Vol. i., p. 11.

⁶⁸ Vol. iii., p. 607.

bitterness—‘The Ranters are unclean beasts—their maxim is that there is nothing sin but what a man thinks to be so—they reject the Bible—they are the merriest of all devils—they deny all obedience to magistrates.’⁶⁹

This temptation must have been severe. The Ranters were like the black man with the white robe, named Flatterer, who led the pilgrims into a net,⁷⁰ under the pretence of showing them the way to the celestial city; or like Adam the first, who offered Faithful his three daughters to wife⁷¹—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—if he would dwell with him in the town of Deceit. ‘These temptations,’ he says, ‘were suitable to my flesh,’⁷² I being but a young man, and my nature in its prime; and, with his characteristic humility, he adds, ‘God, who had, as I hope, designed me for better things, kept me in the fear of his name, and did not suffer me to accept such cursed principles.’ Prayer opened the door of escape; it led him to the fountain of truth. ‘I began to look into the Bible with new eyes. Prayer preserved me from Ranting errors.

⁶⁹ *Heresiography*. 4tp. 1654. p. 143.

⁷⁰ Vol. iii., p. 151.

⁷¹ Vol. iii., p. 118.

⁷² Vol. i., p. 11.

The Bible was precious to me in those days.⁷³ His study of the Holy Oracles now became a daily habit, and that with intense earnestness and prayer. In the mist of the multitude of sects with which he was on all sides surrounded, he felt the need of a standard for the opinions which were each of them eagerly followed by votaries, who proclaimed them to be THE TRUTH, the way, and the life. He was like a man, feeling that if he erred in the way, it would be attended with misery, and, but for Divine interference, with unutterable ruin—possessed of a correct map, but surrounded with those who, by flattery, or threats, or deceit, and armed with all human eloquence, strove to mislead him. With an enemy within to urge him to accept their wily guidance, that they might lead him to perdition—inspired by Divine grace, like Christian in his *Pilgrim*, he ‘put his fingers in his ears, and ran on, crying Life, life, eternal life.’ He felt utter dependence upon Divine guidance, leading him to most earnest prayer, and an implicit obedience to Holy Writ, which followed him all through the remainder of his pilgrimage. ‘The Bible’ he calls ‘the scaffold, or stage, that God has builded for hope to play his part upon in this

⁷³ Vol. i., p. 11.

world.⁷⁴ Hence the Word was precious in his eyes; and with so immense a loss, or so magnificent a gain, the throne of grace was all his hope, that he might be guided by that counsel that cannot err, and that should eventually insure his reception to eternal glory.

While in this inquiring state, he experienced much doubt and uncertainty arising from the apparent confidence of many professors. In his own esteem he appeared to be thoroughly humbled; and when he lighted on that passage—‘To one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom, to another, knowledge, and to another, faith’ (1 Cor 12:8,9), his solemn inquiry was, how it happened that he possessed so little of any of these gifts of wisdom, knowledge, or faith—more especially of faith, that being essential to the pleasing of God. He had read (Matt 21:21), ‘If ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done’; and (Luke 17:6), ‘If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say to this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it shall obey you’; and (1 Cor 13:2), ‘Though I

⁷⁴ Vol. i., p. 591.

have all faith, so that I could remove mountains.’ The poor tinker, considering these passages in their literal import, imagined they were meant as tests to try whether the believer possessed faith or not. He was a stranger to the rules of Hebrew rhetoric; nor did he consider that they were addressed to the apostles, who had the power to work miracles. He had no idea that the removing a mountain, or planting a sycamore tree in the sea, were figures of speech conveying to us the fact that, aided by faith, mountainous difficulties might and would be overcome. Anxious for some ocular demonstration that he had faith, he almost determined to attempt to work a miracle—not to convert or confirm the faith of others, but to satisfy his own mind as to his possessing faith. He had no such magnificent idea as the removal of a mountain, for there were none in his neighbourhood, nor to plant a tree in the sea, for Bedfordshire is an inland county; but it was of the humblest kind—that some puddles on the road between Elstow and Bedford should change places with the dry ground. When he had thought of praying for ability, his natural good sense led him to abandon the experiment.⁷⁵ This he calls ‘being in my plunge

⁷⁵ The Rev. H. J. Rose, in his *Biographical Dictionary*,

about faith, tossed betwixt the devil and my own ignorance.⁷⁶ All this shows the intensity of his feelings and his earnest inquiries.

It may occasion surprise to some, that a young man of such extraordinary powers of mind, should have indulged the thought of working a miracle to settle or confirm his doubts; but we must take into account, that when a boy he had no opportunity of acquiring scriptural knowledge; no Sunday schools, no Bible class excited his inquiries as to the meaning of the sacred language. The Bible had been to him a sealed book until, in a state of mental agony, he cried, What must I do to be saved? The plain text was all his guide; and it would not have been surprising, had he been called to bottle a cask of new wine, if he had refused to use old wine bottles; or had he cast a loaf into the neighbouring river Ouse, expecting to find it after many days. The astonishing fact is, that one so unlettered should, by intense thought, by earnest prayer, and by comparing one passage with another, arrive eventually at so clear a view both of the external and internal meaning of the whole Bible. The results of his researches were more

distorts this singular affair into, 'he laid claim to a faith of such magnitude as to work miracles!'

⁷⁶ Vol. i., p. 12.

deeply impressed upon his mind by the mistakes which he had made; and his intense study, both of the Old and New Testaments, furnished him with an inexhaustible store of things new and old—those vivid images and burning thoughts, those bright and striking illustrations of Divine truth, which so shine and sparkle in all his works. What can be more clear than his illustration of saving faith which worketh by love, when in after-life he wrote the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Hopeful was in a similar state of inquiry whether he had faith. 'Then I said, But, Lord, what is believing?' And then I saw from that saying, He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst, that believing and coming was all one, and that he that came, that is, ran out in his heart and affections after salvation by Christ, he indeed believed in Christ (John 6:25).⁷⁷

In addition to his want of scriptural education, it must be remembered that, when he thought of miraculous power being an evidence of faith, his mind was in a most excited state—doubts spread over him like a huge masses of thick black clouds, hiding the Sun of Righteousness from his sight. Not only

⁷⁷ Vol. iii., pp. 155, 156.

is he to be pardoned for his error, but admired for the humility which prompted him to record so singular a trial, and his escape from 'this delusion of the tempter.' While 'thus he was tossed betwixt the devil and his own ignorance,'⁷⁸ the happiness of the poor women whose conversation he had heard at Bedford, was brought to his recollection by a remarkable reverie or day dream:—

'About this time, the state and happiness of these poor people at Bedford was thus, in a dream or vision, represented to me. I saw as if they were set on the sunny side of some high mountain, there refreshing themselves with the pleasant beams of the sun, while I was shivering and shrinking in the cold, afflicted with frost, snow, and dark clouds. Methought also, betwixt me and them, I saw a wall that did compass about this mountain; now through this wall my soul did greatly desire to pass, concluding that if I could, I would go even into the

⁷⁸ Vol. i., p. 12.

very midst of them, and there also comfort myself with the heat of their sun.

‘About this wall I thought myself to go again and again, still prying, as I went, to see if I could find some way or passage, by which I might enter therein; but none could I find for some time. At the last I saw, as it were, a narrow gap, like a little doorway in the wall, through which I attempted to pass; but the passage being very strait and narrow, I made many efforts to get in, but all in vain, even until I was well nigh quite beat out, by striving to get in; at last, with great striving, methought I at first did get in my head, and after that, by a sidling striving, my shoulders, and my whole body; then I was exceeding glad, and went and sat down in the midst of them, and so was comforted with the light and heat of their sun.

‘Now this mountain, and wall, was thus made out to me:

The mountain signified the church of the living God; the sun that shone thereon, the comfortable shining of his merciful face on them that were therein; the wall I thought was the Word, that did make separation between the Christians and the world; and the gap which was in this wall, I thought, was Jesus Christ, who is the way to God the Father (John 14:6; Matt 7:14). But forasmuch as the passage was wonderful narrow, even so narrow that I could not, but with great difficulty, enter in thereat, it showed me, that none could enter into life, but those that were in downright earnest, and unless also they left this wicked world behind them; for here was only room for body and soul, but not for body and soul and sin.⁷⁹

‘This resemblance abode

⁷⁹ It is as easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, as for a man to pass through this door with the world on his back.

upon my spirit many days; all which time I saw myself in a forlorn and sad condition, but yet was provoked to a vehement hunger and desire to be one of that number that did sit in the sunshine. Now also I should pray wherever I was; whether at home or abroad, in house or field, and should also often, with lifting up of heart, sing that of the fifty-first Psalm, "O Lord, consider my distress."⁸⁰

In this striking reverie we discover the budding forth of that great genius which produced most beautiful flowers and delicious fruit, when it became fully developed in his allegories.

While this trial clouded his spirits, he was called to endure temptations which are common to most, if not all, inquiring souls, and which frequently produce much anxiety. He plunged into the university problems of predestination, before he had completed his lower grammar-school exercises on faith and repentance. Am I one of the elect? or has the day of grace been suffered to pass by never to

⁸⁰ Vol. i., p. 13.

return? ‘Although he was in a flame to find the way to heaven and glory,’ these questions afflicted and disquieted him, so that the very strength of his body was taken away by the force and power thereof. ‘Lord, thought I, what if I should not be elected! It may be you are not, said the tempter; it may be so, indeed thought I. Why then, said Satan, you had as good leave off, and strive no farther; for if indeed you should not be elected and chosen of God, there is no talk of your being saved; “for *it is* neither of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”

‘By these things I was driven to my wit’s end, not knowing what to say, or how to answer these temptations. Indeed, I little thought that Satan had thus assaulted me, but that rather it was my own prudence thus to start the question: for that the elect only obtained eternal life; that I without scruple did heartily close withal; but that myself was one of them, there lay all the question.’⁸¹

Thus was he for many weeks oppressed and

⁸¹ Vol. i., p. 13.

cast down, and near to 'giving up the ghost of all his hopes of ever attaining life,' when a sentence fell with weight upon his spirit—'Look at the generations of old and see; did ever any trust in the Lord and was confounded' (Ecclesiasticus 2:10). This encouraged him to a diligent search from Genesis to Revelation, which lasted for above a year, and although he could not find that sentence, yet he was amply rewarded for this diligent examination of the Holy Oracles, and thus he obtained 'yet more experience of the love and kindness of God.' At length he found it in the Apocrypha, and, although not the language of inspiration, yet as it contained the sum and substance of the promises, he took the comfort of it, and it shone before his face for years. The fear that the day of grace had passed pressed heavily upon him; he was humbled, and bemoaned the time that he had wasted. Now he was confronted with that 'grim-faced one, the Captain Past-hope, with his terrible standard,' carried by Ensign Despair, red colours, with a hot iron and a hard heart, and exhibited at Eye-gate.⁸² At length these words broke in upon his mind, 'compel them to come in, that my house may be filled—and yet there is room.' This

⁸² *Holy War*, vol. iii., p. 342, 346.

Scripture powerfully affected him with hope, that there was room in the bosom and in the house of Jesus for his afflicted soul.

His next temptation was to return to the world. This was that terrible battle with Apollyon, depicted in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and it is also described at some length in the *Jerusalem Sinner Saved*. Among many very graphic and varied pictures of his own experience, he introduces the following dialogue with the tempter, probably alluding to the trials he was now passing through. Satan is loath to part with a great sinner. 'This day is usually attended with much evil towards them that are asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward. Now the devil has lost a sinner; there is a captive has broke prison, and one run away from his master. Now hell seems to be awakened from sleep, the devils are come out. They roar, and roaring they seek to recover their runaway. Now tempt him, threaten him, flatter him, stigmatize him, throw dust into his eyes, poison him with error, spoil him while he is upon the potter's wheel, anything to keep him from coming to Christ.'⁸³ 'What, my true servant,' quoth he, 'my old servant, wilt thou forsake me now?

⁸³ Bunyan on the *Throne of Grace*, vol. i., p. 677.

Having so often sold thyself to me to work wickedness, wilt thou forsake me now? Thou horrible wretch, dost not know, that thou hast sinned thyself beyond the reach of grace, and dost thou think to find mercy now? Art not thou a murderer, a thief, a harlot, a witch, a sinner of the greatest size, and dost thou look for mercy now? Dost thou think that Christ will foul his fingers with thee? It is enough to make angels *blush*, saith Satan, to see so vile a one knock at heaven-gates for mercy, and wilt thou be so abominably bold to do it?' Thus Satan dealt with me, says the great sinner, when at first I came to Jesus Christ. And what did you reply? saith the tempted. Why, I granted the whole charge to be true, says the other. And what, did you despair, or how? No, saith he, I said, I am Magdalene, I am Zaccheus, I am the thief, I am the harlot, I am the publican, I am the prodigal, and one of Christ's murderers; yea, worse than any of these; and yet God was so far off from rejecting of me, as I found afterwards, that there was music and dancing in his house for me, and for joy that I was come home unto him. O blessed be God for grace (says the other), for then I hope there is favour for me. Yea, as I told you, such a one is a continual spectacle in the church, for every one by to behold God's grace

and wonder by.⁸⁴ These are the ‘things the angels desire to look into’ (1 Peter 1:12), or as Bunyan quaintly says, this is the music which causes ‘them that dwell in the higher orbs to open their windows, put out their heads, and look down to see the cause of that glory’ (Lev 15:7,10).⁸⁵

As he became less agitated with fear, and drew consolation more frequently from the promises, with a timid hope of salvation, he began to exhibit singular powers of conception in spiritualizing temporal things. His first essay was to find the hidden meaning in the division of God’s creatures into clean and unclean. Chewing the cud, and parting the hoof, he conceived to be emblematical of our feeding upon the Word of God, and parting, if we would be saved, with the ways of ungodly men.⁸⁶ It is not sufficient to chew the cud like the hare—nor to part the hoof like the wine—we must do both; that is, possess the word of faith, and that be evidenced by parting with our outward pollutions. This spiritual meaning of part of the Mosaic dispensation is admirably introduced into the *Pilgrim’s Progress*, when Christian and Faithful analyse the character of

⁸⁴ Vol. i., p. 80.

⁸⁵ *Holy War*, vol. iii., p. 297.

⁸⁶ Vol. i., p. 14.

Talkative.⁸⁷ This is the germ of that singular talent which flourished in after-life, of exhibiting a spiritual meaning drawn from every part of the Mosaic dispensation, and which leads one of our most admired writers⁸⁸ to suggest, that if Bunyan had lived and written during the early days of Christianity, he would have been the greatest of the fathers.

Although he had received that portion of comfort which enabled him to indulge in religious speculations, still his mind was unsettled, and full of fears. He now became alarmed lest he had not been effectually called to inherit the kingdom of heaven.⁸⁹ He felt still more humbled at the weakness of human nature, and at the poverty of wealth. Could this call have been gotten for money, and ‘could I have given it; had I a whole world, it had all gone ten thousand times over for this.’ In this he was sincere, and so he was when he said, I would not lose one promise, or have it struck out of the Bible, if in return I could have as much gold as would reach from London to York, piled up to the heavens. In proportion to his soul’s salvation, honour was a worthless phantom, and gold but glittering dust. His

⁸⁷ Vol. iii., p. 123.

⁸⁸ Addison.

⁸⁹ Vol. i., p. 14.

earnest desire was to hear his Saviour's voice calling him to his service. Like many young disciples, he regretted not having been born when Christ was manifest in the flesh. 'Would I had been Peter or John!' their privations, sufferings, martyrdom, was nothing in comparison to their being with, and hearing the voice of the Son of God calling them to his service. Strange, but general delusion! as if Christ were not the same yesterday, to day, and for ever. Groaning for a sense of pardon, he was comforted by Joel—'I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed, for the Lord dwelleth in Zion' (Joel 3:21), and he was led to seek advice and assistance from a neighbouring minister, and from pious persons.

The poor women in Bedford, whose conversation had been blessed to his thorough awakening, were sought for, and to them he unfolded his sorrows. They were members of a Baptist church, under the pastoral care of John Gifford, a godly, painstaking, and most intelligent minister, whose history is very remarkable. In early life he had been, like Bunyan, a thoroughly depraved character; like him had entered the army, and had been promoted to the rank of a major in the royal forces. Having made an abortive attempt to

raise a rebellion in his native county of Kent,⁹⁰ he and eleven others were made prisoners, tried by martial law, and condemned to the gallows. On the night previous to the day appointed for his execution, his sister found access to the prison. The guards were asleep, and his companions drowned in intoxication. She embraced the favourable moment, and set him at liberty. He lay concealed in a ditch for three days, till the heat of the search was over, and in disguise escaped to London, and thence to Bedford, where, aided by some great people who favoured the royal cause, he commenced business as a doctor. Here his evil habits followed him, notwithstanding his merciful deliverance. Swearing, drunkenness, gambling, and other immoral practices, rendered him a curse to others, especially to the Puritans, whom he bitterly persecuted. One night he lost fifteen pounds at play, and, becoming outrageous, he cast angry reproaches upon God. In this state he took up a book by R. Bolton—he read, and his conscience was terror-stricken. Distress, under conviction of

⁹⁰ April 1645. About 300 discontented persons got together in Kent, and took Sir Percival Hart's house; Colonel Blunt attacked and dispersed them with horse and foot, regained the house, and made the chief of them prisoners. Whitelock, folio 137.

sin, followed him. He searched his Bible, and found pardon and acceptance. He now sought acquaintance with those whom before he had persecuted, but, like Paul, when in similar circumstances, 'they were all afraid of him.' His sincerity soon became apparent; and, uniting with eleven others, they formed a church. These men had thrown off the fetters of education, and were, unbiased by any sectarian feeling, being guided solely by their prayerful researches into divine truth as revealed in the Bible. Their whole object was to enjoy Christian communion—to extend the reign of grace—to live to the honour of Christ—and they formed a new, and at that time unheard-of, community. Water-baptism was to be left to individual conviction; they were to love each other equally, whether they advocated baptism in infancy, or in riper years. The only thing essential to church-fellowship, in Mr. Gifford's opinion, was—'UNION WITH CHRIST; this is the foundation of all saints' communion, and not any judgment about externals.' To the honour of the Baptists, these peaceable principles appear to have commenced with two or three of their ministers, and for the last two centuries they have been, like heavenly leaven, extending their delightful influence over all bodies of

Christians.

Such was the man to whom Bunyan was introduced for religious advice and consolation; and he assisted in forming those enlarged and nonsectarian principles which made his ministry blessed, and will render his Works equally acceptable to all evangelical Christians in every age of the church. Introduced to such a minister, and attending social meetings for prayer and Christian converse, he felt still more painfully his own ignorance, and the inward wretchedness of his own heart. 'His corruptions put themselves forth, and his desires for heaven seemed to fail.' In fact, while he compared himself with his former self, he was a religious giant; in comparison with these pious, long-standing Christians, he dwindled into a pigmy; and in the presence of Christ he became, in his own view, less than nothing, and vanity. He thus describes his feelings:—'I began to sink—my heart laid me low as hell. I was driven as with a tempest—my heart would be unclean—the Canaanites would dwell in the land.'⁹¹ He was like the child which the father brought to Christ, who, while he was coming to Him, was thrown down by the devil, and so rent and torn

⁹¹ Vol. i., p. 15.

that he lay and wallowed, foaming. His heart felt so hard, that with many a bitter sigh he cried, 'Good Lord! break it open. Lord, break these gates of brass, and cut these bars of iron asunder' (Psa 107:16). Little did he then think that his bitterness of spirit was a direct answer to such prayers. Breaking the heart was attended with anguish in proportion as it had been hardened. During this time he was tender and sensitive as to the least sin; 'now I durst not take a pin or a stick, my conscience would smart at every touch.' 'O, how gingerly did I then go in all I said or did!'⁹² 'Still sin would as naturally bubble out of my heart as water would bubble out of a fountain.' He felt surprised when he saw professors much troubled at their losses, even at the death of the dearest relative. His whole concern was for his salvation. He imagined that he could bear these *small* afflictions with patience; but 'a wounded spirit who can bear?'

In the midst of all these miseries, and at times regretting that he had been endowed with an immortal spirit, liable to eternal ruin, he was jealous of receiving comfort, lest it might be based upon any false foundation. Still as his only hope he was constant in his

⁹² Vol. i., p. 15; No. 82.

attendance upon the means of grace, and 'when comforting time was come,' he heard one preach upon two words of a verse, which conveyed strong consolation to his weary spirit; the words were, 'my love' (Song 4:1). From these words the minister drew the following conclusions:—1. That the church, and so every saved soul, is Christ's love, even when loveless; 2. Christ's love is without a cause; 3. They are Christ's love when hated of the world; 4. Christ's love when under temptation and under desertion; 5. Christ's love from first to last.⁹³ Now was his heart filled with comfort and hope. 'I could believe that my sins should be forgiven me'; and, in a state of rapture, he thought that his trials were over, and that the savour of it would go with him through life. Alas! his enjoyment was but for a season—the preparation of his soul for future usefulness was not yet finished. In a short time the words of our Lord to Peter came powerfully into his mind—'Satan hath desired *to have* you'; and so strong was the impression they made, that he thought some man addressed them to him; he even turned his head to see who it was that thus spoke to him. This was the forerunner of a cloud and a storm

⁹³ Vol. i., p. 16.

that was coming upon him. It was the gathering up of Satan's mighty strength, to have, if possible, overwhelmed him. His narrative of this internal tempest in his soul—this last great struggle with the powers of darkness—is very striking.

‘About the space of a month after, a very great storm came down upon me, which handled me twenty times worse than all I had met with before; it came stealing upon me, now by one piece, then by another. First, all my comfort was taken from me; then darkness seized upon me; after which, whole floods of blasphemies, both against God, Christ, and the Scriptures, were poured upon my spirit, to my great confusion and astonishment. These blasphemous thoughts were such as also stirred up questions in me against the very being of God, and of his only beloved Son. As, whether there were in truth a God or Christ, or no? And whether the Holy Scriptures were not rather a

fable, and cunning story, than the holy and pure Word of God.

‘These suggestions, with many others, which at this time I may not, dare not utter, neither by word nor pen, did make such a seizure upon my spirit, and did so overweigh my heart, both with their number, continuance, and fiery force, that I felt as if there were nothing else but these from morning to night within me, and as though indeed there could be room for nothing else; and also concluded, that God had, in very wrath to my soul, given me up unto them, to be carried away with them as with a mighty whirlwind.

‘Only by the distaste that they gave unto my spirit, I felt there was something in me that refused to embrace them.’⁹⁴

Here are the facts which are allegorized in the history of Christian, passing through the Valley of Humiliation, and fighting with the

⁹⁴ Vol. i., p. 17, 18.

Prince of the power of the air. ‘Then Apollyon, espying his opportunity, began to gather up close to Christian, and wrestling with him, gave him a dreadful fall; and with that Christian’s sword flew out of his hand.’ This was the effect of his doubts of the inspiration of the Scriptures—the sword of the Spirit. ‘I am sure of thee now, said Apollyon; and with that he had almost pressed him to death, so that Christian began to despair of life; but as God would have it, while Apollyon was fetching of his last blow, Christian nimbly stretched out his hand for his sword, and caught it, saying, “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall I shall arise” (Matt 7:8), and with that gave him a deadly thrust, which made him give back as one that had received his mortal wound. Christian perceiving that, made at him again, saying, “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us”; and with that Apollyon spread forth his dragon wings, and sped him away.’⁹⁵ What an awful moment, when he fell unarmed before his ferocious enemy! ‘Faith now has but little time to speak to the conscience—it is now struggling for life—it is now fighting with angels—with infernals—all it can do now is to

⁹⁵ Vol. iii., p. 113.

cry, groan, sweat, fear, fight, and gasp for life.⁹⁶ How desperate the conflict—the mouth of hell yawning to swallow him—man cannot aid the poor warrior, all his help is in God. Is it not a wonder to see a poor creature, who in himself is weaker than the moth, to stand against and overcome all devils—all the world—all his lusts and corruptions; or, if he fall, is it not a wonder to see him, when devils and guilt are upon him, to rise again, stand upon his legs, walk with God again, and persevere in faith and holiness?⁹⁷

This severe conflict lasted for about a year. He describes his feelings at times as resembling the frightful pangs of one broken on the wheel. The sources of his misery were fears that he had sinned against the Holy Ghost; and that through his hardness of heart and impatience in prayer—he should not persevere to the end. During all this time, occasional visits of mercy kept him from despair; and at some intervals filled him with transports of joy. At one time so delightfully was his burden removed that he could not tell how to contain himself. ‘I thought I could have spoken of his love and of his mercy to me, even

⁹⁶ Bunyan’s *Saints’ Privilege and Profit*, vol. i., p. 661.

⁹⁷ Bunyan’s *Saved by Grace*, vol. i., p. 340.

to the very crows that sat upon the ploughed lands before me, *had they been capable to have understood me.*'⁹⁸ Thus his feelings were controlled by reason, very different to the poor madman who, in olden time, is represented as preaching to the fish. With Bunyan it was a hallowed joy—a gush of holy gladness, in which he wished all creation to participate. his heart was baptized in hope. 'I know that my Redeemer liveth'; and with holy Job, he wished to perpetuate his joy by a memorial not in rock, but in a book of resemblance. 'I would I had a pen and ink here to write it down.' This is the first desire that he expressed to proclaim or publish to others the great Saviour he had found: but he was not yet prepared; he must pass through deeper depths, and possess a living knowledge of Divine truth, burnt into his soul by satanic fires.

Very soon after this, he was harassed with fear lest he should part with Christ. The tempter, as he did with Christian in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, suggested blasphemies to him, which he thought had proceeded from his own mind. 'Satan troubled him with his stinking breath. How many strange, hideous, and amazing blasphemies have some that are

⁹⁸ Vol. i., p. 17.

coming to Christ had injected upon their spirits against him.’⁹⁹ ‘The devil is indeed very busy at work during the darkness of a soul. He throws in his fiery darts to amazement, when we are encompassed with the terrors of a dismal night; he is bold and undaunted in his assaults, and injects with a quick and sudden malice a thousand monstrous and abominable thoughts of God, which seem to be the motions of our own minds, and terribly grieve and trouble us.’¹⁰⁰

What makes those arrows more penetrating and distressing is, that Satan, with subtle art,

⁹⁹ Bunyan’s *Christ a Complete Saviour*, vol. i., p. 210.

¹⁰⁰ Rogers on *Trouble of Mind*. Preface. Thus temptations are suited to the state of the inquiring soul; the learned man who studies Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas, is filled with doubts arising from ‘philosophy and vain deceit, profane and vain babblings’; the unlettered mechanic is tried not by logic, but by infernal artillery; the threatenings of God’s Word are made to obscure the promises. It is a struggle which, to one possessing a vivid imagination, is attended with almost intolerable agonies—unbelief seals up the door of mercy.

Bunyan agreed with his learned contemporary, Milton, in the invisible agency of good and bad spirits.

‘Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep!’

The malignant demons watch their opportunity to harass the pilgrim with evil thoughts, injected when least expected.

tips them with sentences of Scripture. 'No place for repentance'; 'rejected'; 'hath never forgiveness,' and other passages which, by the malignant ingenuity of the fiend, are formed by his skill as the cutting and barbed points of his shafts. At one time Bunyan concluded that he was possessed of the devil; then he was tempted to speak and sin against the Holy Ghost. He thought himself alone in such a tempest, and that no one had ever felt such misery as he did. When in prayer, his mind was distracted with the thought that Satan was pulling his clothes; he was even tempted to fall down and worship him. Then he would cry after God, in awful fear that eventually Satan would overcome him. During all this time he was struggling against the tempter; and, at length, the dayspring visited him in these words, 'I am persuaded that nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.' Again he was cast down with a recollection of his former blasphemies. What reason can I have to hope for an inheritance in eternal life? The questions was answered with that portion of Scripture, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' These were visits which, like Peter's sheet, of a sudden were caught up

to heaven again.¹⁰¹ At length the Sun of Righteousness arose, and shone upon him with healing influence. 'He hath made peace through the blood of his cross,' came with power to his mind, followed by the consoling words of the apostle, 'Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage' (Heb 2:14,15). This was the key that opened every lock in Doubting Castle. The prisoner escaped to breathe the air of hope, and joy, and peace. 'This,' said he, 'was a good day to me, I hope I shall not forget it.' 'I thought that the glory of those words was then so weighty on me, that I was, both once and twice, ready to swoon as I sat, not with grief and trouble, but with solid joy and peace.'

His mind was now in a fit state to seek for church fellowship, as a further means of advance in his knowledge of Divine love. To effect this object, he was naturally led to the Baptist church at Bedford, to which those pious women belonged whose Christian

¹⁰¹ Vol. i., p. 19.

communion had been blessed to him. I sat under the ministry of holy Mr. Gifford, whose doctrine, by God's grace, was much for my stability.¹⁰² Although his soul was led from truth to truth, his trials were not over—he passed through many severe exercises before he was received into communion with the church.¹⁰³

At length he determined to become identified with a body of professed Christians, who were treated with great scorn by other sects because they denied infant baptism, and he became engaged in the religious controversies which were fashionable in those days. We have noticed his encounter with the Ranters, and he soon had to give battle to persons called Quakers. Before the Society of Friends was formed, and their rules of discipline were published, many Ranters and

¹⁰² Vol. i., p. 20.

¹⁰³ The anxiety of this pious teacher was to press upon his hearers to take special heed, not to receive any truth upon trust from any man, but to pray over it and search 'the Holy Word.' This, Mr. Southey designates, 'doctrine of a most perilous kind.' How happy would it be for society if every religious teacher pressed this perilous doctrine upon their hearers, that it might bring forth the same fruit universally, as it did specially in Bunyan. Compare *Grace Abounding*, No. 117, and *Southey's Life*, p. 27, 28.

others, some of whom were bad characters and held the wildest opinions, passed under the name of Quakers. Some of these denied that the Bible was the Word of God; and asserted that the death of Christ was not a full atonement for sin—that there is no future resurrection, and other gross errors. The Quakers, who were afterwards united to form the Society of Friends, from the first denied all those errors. Their earliest apologist, Barclay, in his theses on the Scriptures, says, ‘They are the doctrines of Christ, held forth in precious declarations, spoken and written by the movings of God’s Spirit.’ Whoever it was that asserted the heresies, to Bunyan the investigation of them, in the light of Divine truth, was attended with great advantages. It was through ‘this narrow search of the Scriptures that he was not only enlightened, but greatly confirmed and comforted in the truth.’¹⁰⁴

He longed to compare his experience with that of some old and eminent convert, and ‘God did cast into his hand’ Luther *On the Galatians*, ‘so old that it was ready to fall piece from piece, if I did but turn it over.’¹⁰⁵ The

¹⁰⁴ Vol. i., p. 21.

¹⁰⁵ Vol. i., p. 22.

commentary of this enlightened man was a counterpart to his own feelings. 'I found,' says Bunyan, 'my condition, in his experience so largely and profoundly handled, as if his book had been written out of my own heart. I prefer the book before all others as most fit for a wounded conscience.' This was the 'voice of a man' that Christian 'heard as going before him in the Valley of the Shadow of Death,' and was glad that some who feared God were in this valley as well as himself, who could say, 'I will fear no evil for thou art with me.'¹⁰⁶ In many things Luther and Bunyan were men of similar temperament. Like Emmanuel's captains, in the *Holy War*, they were 'very stout rough-hewn men; men that were fit to break the ice, and to make their way by dint of sword.'¹⁰⁷ They were animated by the same principles, and fought with the same weapons; and although Luther resided in a castle protected by princes, was furnished with profound scholastic learning, and became a terror to Popery; yet the voice of the unlettered tinker, issuing from a dreary prison, bids fair to be far more extensively heard and blessed than that of this most illustrious reformer.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Vol. iii., p. 115.

¹⁰⁷ Vol. iii., p. 270.

¹⁰⁸ Luther fell into the same mistake as to the Baptists,

Bunyan's happiness was now very great; his soul, with all its affections, clave unto Christ: but lest spiritual pride should exalt him beyond measure, and lest he should be scared to renounce his Saviour, by the threat of transportation and death, his heart was again wounded, and quickly after this his 'love was tried to purpose.'

The tempter came in upon him with a most grievous and dreadful temptation; it was to

that Bunyan did as to the Quakers. Both were keenly alive to the honour of Christianity, and were equally misled by the loose conduct of some unworthy professors. Luther charges the Baptists as being 'devils possessed with worse devils' [Preface to Galatians]. 'It is all one whether he be called a Frank, a Turk, a Jew, or an Anabaptist' [*Com. Gal.* iv. 8, 9]. 'Possessed with the devil, seditious, and bloody men' [Gal. v. 19]. Even a few days before his death, he wrote to his wife, 'Dearest Kate, we reached Halle at eight o'clock, but could not get on to Eisleben, for there met us a great Anabaptist, with waves and lumps of ice, which threatened us with a second baptism.' Bunyan, in the same spirit, calls the Quakers 'a company of loose ranters, light notionists, shaking in their principles!' [Vol. ii., p. 133, 9, 21]. Denying the Scriptures and the resurrection [*Com. Gal.* iv. 29]. These two great men went through the same furnace of the regeneration; and Bunyan, notwithstanding Luther's prejudices against the Baptists, most affectionately recommended his *Comment on the Galatians*, as an invaluable work for binding up the broken-hearted.

part with Christ, to exchange him for the things of this life; he was perpetually tormented with the words 'sell Christ.' At length, he thought that his spirit gave way to the temptation, and a dreadful and profound state of despair overpowered him for the dreary space of more than two years.¹⁰⁹ This is the most extraordinary part of this wonderful narrative, that he, without apparent cause, should thus be tempted, and feel the bitterness of a supposed parting with Christ. There was, doubtless, a cause for every pang; his heavenly Father afflicted him for his profit. We shall soon have to follow him through fiery trials. Before the justices, allured by their arguments, and particularly by the sophistry of their clerk, Mr. Cobb, and then dragged from a beloved wife and from children to whom he was most fondly attached—all these fiery trials might be avoided, if he would but 'sell Christ.' A cold damp dungeon was to incarcerate his body for twelve tedious years of the prime of his life, unless he would 'sell Christ.' His ministering brother and friend, John Child, a Bedford man, who had joined in recommending Bunyan's *Vindication of Gospel Truths*,¹¹⁰ fell under this

¹⁰⁹ Vol. i., p. 23.

¹¹⁰ Vol. ii., p. 181.

temptation, and fearing temporal ruin and imprisonment for life, conformed, and then fell into the most awful state of despair, suffering such agonies of conscience, that, to get rid of present trouble, he hurried himself into eternity. Probably Bunyan alludes to this awful instance of fell despair in his *Publican and Pharisee*: 'Sin, when appearing in its monstrous shape and hue, frighteth all mortals out of their wits, away from God; and if he stops them not, also out of the world.'¹¹¹ To arm Bunyan against being overcome by a fear of the lions in the way to the house Beautiful—against giving way, under persecution—he was visited with terrors lest he should sell or part with Christ. During these sad years he was not wholly sunk in despair, but had at times some glimmerings of mercy. In comparing his supposed sin with that of Judas, he was constrained to find a difference between a deliberate intention to sell Christ and a sudden temptation.¹¹² Through all these searchings of heart and inquiries at the Word, he became fixed in the doctrine of the final perseverance of God's saints. 'O what love, what care, what kindness and mercy did I now see mixing itself

¹¹¹ Vol. ii., p. 260.

¹¹² Vol. i., p. 25; No. 158.

with the most severe and dreadful of all God's ways to his people; he never let them fall into sin unpardonable.' 'But these thoughts added grief and horror to me; I thought that all things wrought for my eternal overthrow.' So ready is the tender heart to write bitter things against itself, and as ready is the tempter to whisper despairing thoughts. In the midst of this distress he 'saw a glory in walking with God,' although a dismal cloud enveloped him.

This misery was aggravated by reading the fearful estate of Francis Spira, who had been persuaded to return to a profession of Popery, and died in a state of awful despair.¹¹³ 'This book' was to his troubled spirit like salt rubbed into a fresh wound.

Bunyan now felt his body and mind shaking and tottering under the sense of the dreadful judgment of God; and he thought his sin—of a momentary and unwilling consent to give up Christ—was a greater sin than all the sins of David, Solomon, Manasseh, and even than all the sins that had been committed by all God's redeemed ones. Was there ever a man in the world so capable of describing the miseries of Doubting Castle, or of the Slough of Despond, as poor John Bunyan?

¹¹³ See note in vol. i., p. 26.

He would have run from God in utter desperation; 'but, blessed be his grace, that Scripture, in these flying sins, would call, as running after me, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee"' (Isa 44:22). Still he was haunted by that scripture, 'You know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.' Thus was he tossed and buffeted, involved in cloudy darkness, with now and then a faint gleam of hope to save him from despair. 'In all these,' he says, 'I was but as those that jostle against the rocks; more broken, scattered, and rent. Oh! the unthought of imaginations, frights, fears, and terrors, that are effected by a thorough application of guilt.'¹¹⁴ 'Methought I saw as if the sun that shineth in the heavens did grudge to give light, and as if the very stones in the street, and tiles upon the houses, did bend themselves against me.'¹¹⁵ Here we find him in that doleful valley, where Christian was surrounded by enemies that 'cared not for his sword,' he put it up, and places his dependence

¹¹⁴ Vol. i., p. 29.

¹¹⁵ Vol. i., p. 30.

upon the more penetrating weapon, 'All Prayer.' Depending upon this last resource, he prayed, even when in this great darkness and distress. To whom could he go? his case was beyond the power of men or angels. His refuge, from a fear of having committed the unpardonable sin, was that he had never refused to be justified by the blood of Christ, but ardently wished it; this, in the midst of the storm, caused a temporary calm. At length, he was led to look prayerfully upon those scriptures that had tormented him, and to examine their scope and tendency, and then he 'found their visage changed, for they looked not so grimly on him as before he thought they did.'¹¹⁶ Still, after such a tempest, the sea did not at once become a calm. Like one that had been scared with fire, every voice was fire, fire; every little touch hurt his tender conscience.¹¹⁷

All this instructive history is pictured by a

¹¹⁶ The study of those scriptures, in order that the solemn question might be safely resolved, 'Can such a fallen sinner rise again?' was like the investigation of the title to an estate upon which a whole livelihood depended. Every apparent flaw must be critically examined. Tremblingly alive to the importance of a right decision, his prayers were most earnest; and at length, to his unspeakable delight, the word of the law and wrath gave place to that of life and grace.

¹¹⁷ Vol. i., p. 35.

few words in the *Pilgrim's Progress*. At the Interpreter's house the pilgrim is shown 'a fire burning against a wall, and one standing by it, always casting much water upon it, to quench it; yet did the fire burn higher and hotter.'¹¹⁸ As Esau beat him down, Christ raised him again. The threatening and the promise were like glittering swords clashing together, but the promise must prevail.

His entire relief at last was sudden, while meditating in the field upon the words, 'Thy righteousness is in heaven.' Hence he drew the conclusion, that his righteousness was in Christ, at God's right hand, ever before him, secure from all the powers of sin and Satan. Now his chains fell off; he was loosed from his affliction and irons; his temptation fled away. His present supply of grace he compared to the cracked groats and fourpence half-pennies,¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Vol. iii., p. 100.

¹¹⁹ Irish sixpences, which passed for fourpence-halfpenny. See the note on vol. i., p. 36. Since writing that note I have discovered another proof of the contempt with which that coin was treated:—'Christian, the wife of Robert Green, of Brexham, Somersetshire, in 1663, is said to have made a covenant with the devil; he pricked the fourth finger of her right hand, between the middle and upper joints, and took two drops of her blood on his finger, giving her a *fourpence-halfpenny*. Then he spake in private with Catharine her sister, and vanished, leaving a smell of brimstone behind!'—

which rich men carry in their pockets, while their treasure is safe in their trunks at home, as his was in the store-house of heaven.

This dreary night of awful conflict lasted more than two years; but when the day-spring from on high visited him, the promises spangled in his eyes, and he broke out into a song, 'Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.'¹²⁰

Bunyan's opinion as to the cause of this bitter suffering, was his want of watchfulness, his not coming boldly to the throne of grace, and that he had tempted God. The advantages he considered that he had gained by it were, that it confirmed his knowledge of the existence of God, so that he lost all his temptations to unbelief, blasphemy, and hardness of heart, Doubts as to the truth of the Word, and certainty of the world to come, were gone for ever.

He found no difficulty as to the keys of the kingdom of heaven. 'Now I saw the apostles to be the elders of the city of refuge, those that they were to receive in, were received to life,

Turner's *Remarkable Providences*, folio, 1667, p. 28.

¹²⁰ Vol. i., p. 36.

but those that they were to shut out, were to be slain by the avenger of blood.' Those were to enter who, with Peter, confessed to Jesus, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God' (Matt 16:16). This is simply an authority to proclaim salvation or condemnation to those who receive or reject the Saviour. It is upon his shoulder the key of the house is laid (Isa 22:22). Christ only has the key, no MAN openeth or shutteth (Rev 1:18, 3:7). All that man can do, as to binding or loosening, is to warn the hardened and to invite the contrite.

By these trials, the promises, became more clear and invaluable than ever. He never saw those heights and depths in grace, and love, and mercy, as he saw them after this severe trial—'great sins drew out great grace'; and the more terrible and fierce guilt was, the more high and mighty did the mercy of God in Christ appear. These are Bunyan's own reflections; but may we not add to them, that while he was in God's school of trial, every groan, every bitter pang of anguish, and every gleam of hope, were intended to fit him for his future work as a preacher and writer? Weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, there was not a jot too little, or an iota too much. Every important subject which embarrasses the convert, was most minutely investigated,

especially faith, the sin against the Holy Ghost, the divinity of Christ, and such essential truths. He well knew every dirty lane, and nook, and corner of Mansoul, in which the Diabolonians found shelter, and well he knew the frightful sound of Diabolus' drum.¹²¹ Well did his pastor, John Burton, say of him, 'He hath through grace taken these three heavenly degrees, to wit, union with Christ, the anointing of the Spirit, and experience of the temptations of Satan, which do more fit a man for that mighty work of preaching the gospel, than all the university learning and degrees that can be had.'¹²²

Preserved in Christ Jesus, and called—selected from his associates in sin, he was taken into this school, and underwent the strictest religious education. It was here alone that his rare talent could be cultivated, to enable him, in two immortal allegories, to narrate the internal discipline he underwent. It was here he attained that habitual access to the throne of grace, and that insight into the inspired volume, which filled his writings with those solemn realities of the world to come; while it enabled him to reveal the mysteries of

¹²¹ Holy War.

¹²² Vol. ii., p. 141.

communion with the Father of spirits, as he so wondrously does in his treatise on prayer. To use the language of Milton—‘These are works that could not be composed by the invocation of Dame Memory and her Siren daughters, but by devout prayer to that eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and send out his seraphim, with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases, without reference to station, birth, or education.’ The tent-maker and tinker, the fisherman and publican, and even a friar or monk,¹²³ became the honoured instruments of his choice.

Throughout all Bunyan’s writings, he never murmurs at his want of education, although it is often a source of humble apology. He honoured the learned godly as Christians, but preferred the Bible before the library of the two universities.¹²⁴ He saw, what every pious man must see and lament, that there is much idolatry in human learning, and that it was frequently applied to confuse and impede the gospel. Thus he addresses the reader of his treatise on *The Law and Grace*—‘If thou find this book empty of fantastical expressions, and

¹²³ Luther and Tyndale.

¹²⁴ Vol. iii., p. 398.

without light, vain, whimsical, scholar-like terms, it is because I never went to school, to Aristotle or Plato, but was brought up at my father's house, in a very mean condition, among a company of poor countrymen. But if thou do find a parcel of plain, yet sound, true, and home sayings, attribute that to the Lord Jesus his gifts and abilities, which he hath bestowed upon such a poor creature as I am and have been.'¹²⁵ His maxim was—'Words easy to be understood do often hit the mark, when high and learned ones do only pierce the air. He also that speaks to the weakest may make the learned understand him; when he that *striveth* to be high, is not only of the most part understood but of a sort, but also many times is neither understood by them nor by himself!'¹²⁶ This is one of Bunyan's maxims, well worthy the consideration of the most profoundly learned writers, and also of the most eloquent preachers and public speakers.

Bunyan was one of those pioneers who are far in advance of the age in which they live, and the narrative of his birth and education adds to the innumerable contradictions which the history of man opposes to the system of Mr.

¹²⁵ Vol. i., p. 495.

¹²⁶ Vol. iii., p. 398.

Owen and the Socialists, and to every scheme for making the offspring of the poor follow in leading-strings the course of their parents, or for rendering them blindly submissive to the dictates of the rich, the learned, or the influential. It incontestably proves the gospel doctrine of individuality, and, that native talent will rise superior to all impediments. Our forefathers struggled for the right of private judgment in matters of faith and worship—their descendants will insist upon it, as essential to salvation, personally to examine every doctrine relative to the sacred objects of religion, limited only by Holy Writ. This must be done with rigorous impartiality, throwing aside all the prejudices of education, and be followed by prompt obedience to Divine truth, at any risk of offending parents, or laws, or resisting institutions, or ceremonies which he discovers to be of human invention. All this, as we have seen in Bunyan, was attended with great mental sufferings, with painstaking labour, with a simple reliance upon the Word of God, and with earnest prayer. If man impiously dares to submit his conscience to his fellow-man, or to any body of men called a church, what perplexity must he experience ere he can make up his mind which to choose! Instead of relying upon the ONE standard

which God has given him in his Word; should he build his hope upon a human system he could be certain only that man is fallible and subject to err. How striking an instance have we, in our day, of the result of education, when the mind does not implicitly follow the guidance of the revealed Word of God. Two brothers, named Newman, educated at the same school, trained in the same university, brought up under the same religious system—all human arts exhausted to mould their minds into strict uniformity, yet gradually receding from the same point in opposite directions, but in equally downward roads; one to embrace the most puerile legends of the middle ages, the other to open infidelity. Not so with those who follow the teachings of the Word of God, by which, and not by any church, they are to be individually judged at the great day: no pontiff, no priest, no minister, can intervene or mediate for them at the bar of God. There it will be said, ‘I know you, by your prayers for Divine guidance and your submission to my revealed will’; or, ‘I know you not,’ for you preferred the guidance of frail, fallible men, to me, and to my Word—a solemn consideration, which, as it proved a source of solid happiness and extensive usefulness to Bunyan in his pilgrimage, so it insured to him, as it will to all

who follow his course, a solid foundation on which to stand at the great and terrible day, and thus enable them to live as well as die in the sure and certain hope of a triumphant entry into the celestial city.

THE THIRD PERIOD. BUNYAN IS BAPTIZED, AND ENTERS INTO COMMUNION WITH A CHRISTIAN CHURCH AT BEDFORD—IS SET APART TO FILL THE DEACON'S OFFICE, AND SENT OUT AS AN ITINERANT PREACHER IN THE NEIGHBOURING VILLAGES.

Man is naturally led to seek the society of his fellow-men. His personal progress, and the great interests of civilization, depend upon the nature of his friendly intercourse and his proper associations. So is it with the Christian, but in a much higher degree. Not only does he require companions with whom he can enjoy Christian communion—of sufferings and of pleasures—in seasons of depressing trials, and in holy elevations—but with whom he may also form plans to spread the genial influence of Christianity, which has blessed and so

boundlessly enriched his own soul. Christian fellowship and communion has received the broad seal of heaven. 'The Lord hearkened,' when they that feared him spake often to one another, 'and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord' (Mal 3:16).

Bunyan possessed a soul with faculties capable of the highest enjoyment of the communion of saints in church order. His ideas of mutual forbearance—that 'in lowliness of mind should each esteem others better than themselves'—he enforces with very peculiar power, and, at the same time, with delicate sensibility. After the pilgrims had been washed by Innocence in the Interpreter's bath, he sealed them, which 'greatly added to their beauty,' and then arrayed them in white raiment of fine linen; and 'when the women were thus adorned, they seemed to be a terror one to the other, for that they could not see that glory each one on herself which they could see in each other. Now, therefore, they began to esteem each other better than themselves.'¹²⁷ 'The Interpreter led them into his garden, where was great variety of flowers. Then said he, Behold, the flowers are diverse in

¹²⁷ Vol. iii., p.190.

stature, in quality and colour, and smell and virtue, and some are better than some; also, where the gardener hath set them, there they stand, and quarrel not with one another.’¹²⁸ ‘When Christians stand every one in their places, and do their relative work, then they are like the flowers in the garden that grow where the gardener hath planted them, and both honour the gardener and the garden in which they are planted.’¹²⁹ In the same treatise on *Christian Behaviour*, similar sentiments are expressed in language extremely striking and beautiful. ‘The doctrine of the gospel is like the dew and the small rain that distilleth upon the tender grass, wherewith it doth flourish and is kept green (Deut 32:2). Christians are like the several flowers in a garden that have upon each of them the dew of heaven, which, being shaken with the wind, they let fall their dew at each other’s roots, whereby they are jointly nourished, and become nourishers of one another. For Christians to commune savourly of God’s matters one with another, it is as if they opened to each other’s nostrils boxes of perfume.’¹³⁰ Similar peaceful, heavenly principles, flow through Bunyan’s *Discourse of*

¹²⁸ Vol. iii., p. 186.

¹²⁹ Bunyan on *Christian Behaviour*, vol. ii., p. 550.

¹³⁰ Vol. ii., p. 570.

the Building, &c., of the House of God and its inmates;¹³¹ and blessed would it be if in all our churches every believer was baptized into such motives of forbearance and brotherly love. These sentiments do honour to the head and heart of the prince of allegorists, and should be presented in letters of gold to every candidate for church fellowship. A young man entertaining such opinions as these, however rude his former conduct, being born again to spiritual enjoyments, would become a treasure to the Christian society with which he might be connected.

In ordinary cases, the minister or people who have been useful to a young convert, lead him in his first choice of Christian associates; but here we have no ordinary man. Bunyan, in all things pertaining to religion, followed no human authority, but submitted himself to the guidance of the inspired volume. Possessing a humble hope of salvation, he would read with deep interest that ‘the Lord added to the church such as should be saved.’ The question which has so much puzzled the learned, as to *a* church or *the* church, would be solved without difficulty by one who was as learned in the Scriptures as he was ignorant of the subtle

¹³¹ Vol. ii., p. 585.

distinctions and niceties of the schools. He found that there was one church at Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), another at Corinth (1 Cor 1:2), seven in Asia (Rev 1:4), and others distributed over the world; that ‘the visible church of Christ is a (or every) congregation of faithful men.’¹³² He well knew that uniformity is a fool’s paradise; that though man was made in the image of God; it derogates not from the beauty of that image that no two men are alike. The stars show forth God’s handy work, yet ‘one star different from another star in glory’ (1 Cor 15:41). Uniformity is opposed to every law of nature, for no two leaves upon a majestic tree are alike. Who but an idiot or a maniac would attempt to reduce the mental powers of all men to uniformity? Every church may have its own order of public worship while the Scriptures form the standard of truth and morals. Where differences of opinion occur, as they most certainly will, as to the observance of days or abstinence from meats—whether to stand, or sit, or kneel, in prayer—whether to stand while listening to some pages of the inspired volume, and to sit while others are publicly read—whether to call Jude a saint, and refuse the title to Isaiah—are questions

¹³² The Nineteenth Article.

which should bring into active exercise all the graces of Christian charity; and, in obedience to the apostolic injunction, they must agree to differ. 'Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind' (Rom 14:5). Human arts have been exhausted to prevent that mental exercise or self-persuasion which is essential to a Christian profession. The great object of Satan has ever been to foster indifference, that deadly lethargy, by leading man to any source of information rather than prayerful researches into the Bible. Bunyan's severe discipline in Christ's school would lead him to form a judgment for himself; he was surrounded by a host of sects, and, with such a Bible-loving man, it is an interesting inquiry what party he would join.

He lived in times of extraordinary excitement. England was in a transition state. A long chain of events brought on a crisis which involved the kingdom in tribulation. It was the struggle between the unbridled despotism of Epsicopacy, and the sturdy liberty of Puritanism. For although the immediate cause of the civil wars was gross misgovernment—arbitrary taxation without the intervention of Parliament, monopolies and patents, to the ruin of trade; in fact, every abuse of the royal power—still, without the

additional spur of religious persecution, the spirit of the people would never have proved invincible and overpowering. The efforts of Archbishop Laud, aided by the queen and her popish confessor, Panzani, to subjugate Britain to the galling yoke of Rome, signally failed, involving in the ruin the life of the king and his archbishop, and all the desolating calamities of intestine wars, strangely called 'civil.' In this strife many of the clergy and most of the bishops took a very active part, aiding and abetting the king's party in their war against the parliament—and they thus brought upon themselves great pains and penalties. The people became suddenly released from mental bondage; and if the man who had been born blind, when he first received the blessing of sight, 'saw men as trees walking,' we cannot be surprised that religious speculations were indulged in, some of which proved to be crude and wild, requiring much vigorous persuasive pruning before they produced good fruit. Bunyan was surrounded by all these parties; for although the rights of conscience were not recognized—the Papists and Episcopalians, the Baptists and Unitarians, with the Jews, being proscribed—yet the hand of persecution was comparatively light. Had Bunyan chosen to associate with the

Episcopalians, he would not have passed through those severe sufferings on which are founded his lasting honours. The Presbyterians and Independents received the patronage of the state under the Commonwealth, and the great mass of the clergy conformed to the directory, many of them reciting the prayers they had formerly read; while a considerable number, whose conscience could not submit to the system then enforced by law, did, to their honour, resign their livings, and suffer the privations and odium of being Dissenters. Among these were necessarily included the bishops.¹³³

Of all sects that of the Baptists had been the most bitterly written against and persecuted. Even their first cousins, the Quakers, attacked them in language that would, in our peaceful days, be considered

¹³³ The sufferings of the Episcopalians were severe; they drank the bitter cup which they had shortly before administered to the Puritans. Under suspicion of disloyalty to the Commonwealth, they were most unjustly compelled to swallow the Covenant as a religious test, or leave preaching and teaching. Their miseries were not to be compared with those of the Puritans. Laud was beheaded for treason, but none were put to death for nonconformity. It was an age when religious liberty was almost unknown. These sufferings were repaid by an awful retaliation and revenge, when Royalty and Episcopacy were restored.

outrageous. 'The Baptists used to meet in garrets, cheese-lofts, coal-holes, and such like mice walks,'—'theses tumultuous, blood-thirsty, covenant-breaking, government-destroying Anabaptists.'¹³⁴ The offence that called forth these epithets was, that in addressing Charles II on his restoration, they stated that "they were no abettors of the Quakers." Had royal authority possessed the slightest influence over Bunyan's religious opinions, the question as to his joining the Baptists would have been settled without investigation. Among other infatuations of Charles I, had been his hatred of any sect that professed the right and duty of man to think for himself in choosing his way to heaven. In 1639 he published his 'Declaration concerning the tumults in Scotland,' when violence was resorted to against the introduction of the Common Prayer in which he denounced voluntary obedience because it was not of constraint, and called it 'damnable'; he calls the principles of the Anabaptists, in not submitting their consciences to human laws, 'furious frenzies,' and 'madness'; all Protestants are 'to detest and persecute them'; 'these Anabaptists raged most in their

¹³⁴ Penn's *Christian Quaker*.

madness'; 'the scandal of their frenzies'; 'we are amazed at, and aggrieved at their horrible impudence'; 'we do abhor and detest them all as rebellious and treasonable.'¹³⁵ This whole volume is amusingly assuming. The king claims his subjects as personal chattels, with whose bodies and minds he had a right to do as he pleased. Bunyan owed no spiritual submission to man, 'whose breath is in his nostrils'; and risking all hazards, he became one of the denounced and despised sect of Baptists. To use the language of his pilgrim, he passed the lions, braving all the dangers of an open profession of faith in Christ, and entered the house called Beautiful, which 'was built by the Lord of the hill, on purpose to entertain such pilgrims in.'¹³⁶ He first gains permission of the watchman, or minister, and then of the inmates, or church members. This interesting event is said to have taken place about the year 1653.¹³⁷ Mr. Doe, in *The Struggler*, thus refers to it, Bunyan 'took all advantages to ripen his understanding in religion, and so he lit on the dissenting congregation of Christians at

¹³⁵ Folio, p. 417.

¹³⁶ Vol. iii., p. 107.

¹³⁷ Vol. iii., p. 765. The author of *Bunyan's Life*, published in 1690, dates his baptism 'about the year 1653.'

Bedford, and was, upon confession of faith, baptized about the year 1653,¹³⁸ when he was in the twenty-fifth year of his age. No minutes of the proceedings of this church, prior to the death of Mr. Gifford in 1656,¹³⁹ are extant, or they would identify the exact period when Bunyan's baptism and admission to the church took place. The spot where he was baptized is a creek by the river Ouse, at the end of Duck Mill Lane. It is a natural baptistery, a proper width and depth of water constantly fresh; pleasantly situated; sheltered from the public highway near the High Street. The Lord's Supper was celebrated in a large room in which the disciples met, the worship consecrating the place.¹⁴⁰

Religious feelings and conduct have at all times a tendency to promote the comfort, and

¹³⁸ *Life from his Cradle to his Grave*, 1700.

¹³⁹ September 21.

¹⁴⁰ In the same year, and about the same period, Oliver Cromwell was made Lord Protector. Upon this coincidence, Mr. Carlisle uses the following remarkable language:—"Two common men thus elevated, putting their hats upon their heads, might exclaim, "God enable me to be king of what lies under this! For eternities lie under it, and infinities, and heaven also and hell! and it is as big as the universe, this kingdom; and I am to conquer it, or be for ever conquered by it. Now, WHILE IT IS CALLED TO-DAY!"

elevate the character of the poor. How often have we seen them thus blessed; the ragged family comfortably clothed, the hungry fed, and the inmates of a dirty miserable cottage or hovel become a pattern of cleanly happiness. One of Bunyan's biographers, who was an eye-witness, bears this testimony. 'By this time his family was increased, and as that increased God increased his stores, so that he lived now in great credit among his neighbours.' He soon became a respectable member of civil as well as religious society; for, by the time that he joined the church, his Christian character was so fully established, that, notwithstanding the meanness of his origin and employment, he was considered worthy of uniting in a memorial to the Lord Protector. It was to recommend two gentlemen to form part of the council, after Cromwell had dissolved the Long Parliament. It is a curious document, very little known, and illustrative of the peculiar style of these eventful times.

Letter from the people of
Bedfordshire to the Lord
Generall Cromwell, and the
Councill of the army.

May 13th, 1653.

May it please your Lordship,
and the rest of the council of the

army. We (we trust) servants of Jesus Christ, inhabitants in the county of Bedford, haveing fresh upon our hearts the sadde oppressions we have (a long while) groan'd under from the late parlayment, and now eyeing and owning (through grace) the good hand of God in this great turne of providence, being persuaded that it is from the Lord that you should be instrument in his hand at such a time as this, for the electing of such persons whoe may goe in and out before his people in righteousnesse, and governe these nations in judgment, we having sought the Lord for yow, and hoping that God will still doe greate things by yow, understanding that it is in your hearte through the Lord's assistance, to establish an authority consisting of men able, loveing truth, feareing God, and hateing covetouseness; and we having had some experience of men with us, we

have judged it our duty to God, to yow, and to the rest of his people, humbly to present two men, viz., Nathaniell Taylor, and John Croke, now Justices of Peace in our County, whom we judge in the Lord qualified to manage a trust in the ensuing government. All which we humbly referre to your serious considerations, and subscribe our names this 13th day of May, 1653—

John Eston, Clement Berridge, Isaac Freeman, John Grewe, John Bunyan, William Dell, John Gifford, William Baker, junr., William Wheelar, Ja. Rush, Anth. Harrington, John Gibbs, Tho. Varrse, Richard Spensley, John Donne, Michael Cooke, Edward Covinson, Tho. Gibbs, John Ramsay, John Hogge, Edward White, Robert English, John Jeffard, John Browne, John Edridge, John Ivory, John White, George Gee, Daniell Groome, Charles Peirse,

Ambrose Gregory, Luke Parratt,
Thomas Cooke, William Page,
Thomas Knott, Thomas Honnor.

These to the Lord Generall
Cromwell, and the rest of the
councell of the army, present.¹⁴¹

Bunyan's daughter Elizabeth was born at Elstow, April 14, 1654, and a singular proof of his having changed his principles on baptism appears in the church register. His daughter Mary was *baptized* in 1650, but his Elizabeth in 1654 is registered as *born*, but no mention is made of baptism.

The poor harassed pilgrim having been admitted into communion with a Christian church, enjoyed fully, for a short season, his new privileges. He thus expresses his feelings:—'After I had propounded to the church that my desire was to walk in the order and ordinances of Christ with them, and was also admitted by them: while I thought of that blessed ordinance of Christ, which was his last supper with his disciples before his death, that scriptures, "this do in remembrance of me," was made a very precious word unto me; for by it the Lord came down upon my conscience with the discovery of his death for my sins: and

¹⁴¹ In possession of the Society of Antiquities.

as I then felt, did as if he plunged me in the virtue of the same.’¹⁴²

In this language we have an expression which furnishes a good sample of his energetic feelings. He had been immersed in water at his baptism, and doubtless believed it to be a figure of his death to sin and resurrection to holiness; and when he sat at the Lord’s table he felt that he was baptized into the virtue of his Lord’s death; he is *plunged* into it, and feels the holy influence covering his soul with all its powers.

His pastor, John Gifford, was a remarkably pious and sensible man, exactly fitted to assist in maturing the mind of his young member. Bunyan had, for a considerable time, sat under his ministry, and had cultivated acquaintance with the members of his church; and so prayerfully had he made up his mind as to this important choice of a church, with which he might enter into fellowship, that, although tempted by the most alluring prospects of greater usefulness, popularity, and emolument, he continued his church fellowship with these poor people through persecution and distress, imprisonment and the threats of transportation, or an ignominious death, until

¹⁴² Vol. i., p. 39.

he crossed the river 'which has no bridge,' and ascended to the celestial city, a period of nearly forty years. Of the labours of his first pastor, John Gifford, but little is known, except that he founded the church of Christ at Bedford, probably the first, in modern times, which allowed to every individual freedom of judgment as to water baptism; receiving all those who decidedly appeared to have put on Christ, and had been received by him; but avoiding, with godly jealousy, any mixture of the world with the church. Mr. Gifford's race was short, consistent, and successful. Bunyan calls him by an appellation, very probably common in his neighbourhood and among his flock, 'holy Mr. Gifford';¹⁴³ a title infinitely superior to all the honours of nobility, or of royalty. He was a miracle of mercy and grace, for a very few years before he had borne the character of an impure and licentious man—an open enemy to the saints of God. His pastoral letter, left upon record in the church-book, written when drawing near the end of his pilgrimage, is most admirable; it contains an allusion to his successors, Burton or Bunyan, and must have had a tendency in forming their views of a gospel church. Even Mr. Southey

¹⁴³ Vol. i., p. 20.

praises this puritanic epistle as exemplifying 'a wise and tolerant and truly Christian spirit': and as it has not been published in any life of Bunyan, I venture to introduce it without abridgement:—

To the Church over which
God made me an overseer when
I was in the world.

I beseech you, brethren beloved, let these following words (wrote in my love to you, and care over you, when our heavenly Father was removing me to the kingdom of his dear Son), be read in your church-gatherings together. I shall not now, dearly beloved, write unto you about that which is the first, and without which all other things are as nothing in the sight of God, viz., the keeping the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience; I shall not, I say, write of these things, though the greatest, having spent my labours among you, to root you and build you up in Christ through the grace you have received; and to press you

to all manner of holiness in your conversations, that you may be found of the Lord, without spot, and blameless, at His coming. But the things I shall speak to you of, are about your CHURCH AFFAIRS, which I fear have been little considered by most of you; which things, if not mended aright, and submitted unto, according to the will of God, will by degrees bring you under divisions, distractions, and at last, to confusion of that gospel order and fellowship which now, through grace, you enjoy. Therefore, my brethren, in the first place, I would not have any of you ignorant of this, that every one of you are as much bound now to walk with the church in all love; and in the ordinances of Jesus Christ our Lord, as when I was present among you: neither have any of you liberty to join yourselves to any other society, because your pastor is removed from you; for you were not joined to the

ministry, but to Christ, and the church; and this is and was the will of God in Christ to all the churches of the saints, read Acts 2:42; and compare it with Acts 1:14, 15. And I charge you before the Lord, as you will answer it at the coming of our Lord Jesus, that none of you be found guilty herein.

Secondly. Be constant in your church assemblies. Let all the work which concerns the church be done faithfully among you; as admission of members, exercising of gifts, election of officers, as need requires, and all other things as if named, which the Scriptures being searched, will lead you into, through the Spirit; which things, if you do, the Lord will be with you, and you will convince others that Christ is your head, and your dependency is not upon man; but if you do the work of the Lord negligently, if you mind your own things and not the things of Christ, if you grow of

indifferent spirits, whether you mind the work of the Lord in his church or no, I fear the Lord by degrees will suffer the comfort of your communion to be dried up, and the candlestick which is yet standing to be broken in pieces; which God forbid.

Now, concerning your admission of members, I shall leave you to the Lord for counsel, who hath hitherto been with you; only thus much I think expedient to stir up your remembrance in; that after you are satisfied in the work of grace in the party you are to join with, the said party do solemnly declare (before some of the church at least), That Union with Christ is the foundation of all saints' communion; and not any ordinances of Christ, or any judgment or opinion about externals; and the said party ought to declare, whether a brother or sister, that through grace they will walk in love with the church, though there should

happen any difference in judgment about other things.

Concerning separation from the church about baptism, laying on of hands, anointing with oil, psalms, or any externals, I charge every one of you respectively, as you will give an account for it to our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge both quick and dead at his coming, that none of you be found guilty of this great evil; which, while some have committed, and that through a zeal for God, yet not according to knowledge, they have erred from the law of the love of Christ, and have made a rent from the true church, which is but one. I exhort you, brethren, in your comings together, Let all things be done decently, and in order, according to the Scriptures. Let all things be done among you without strife and envy, without self-seeking and vain-glory. Be clothed with humility, and submit to one

another in love. Let the gifts of the church be exercised according to order. Let no gift be concealed which is for edification; yet let those gifts be chiefly exercised which are most for the perfecting of the saints. Let your discourses be to build up one another in your most holy faith, and to provoke one another to love and good works: if this be not well-minded, much time may be spent and the church reap little or no advantage. Let there be strong meat for the strong, and milk for babes. In your assemblies avoid all disputes which gender to strife, as questions about externals, and all doubtful disputations. If any come among you who will be contentious in these things, let it be declared that you have no such order, nor any of the churches of God. If any come among you with any doctrine contrary to the doctrine of Christ, you must not treat with such an one as with a

brother, or enter into dispute of the things of faith with reasonings (for this is contrary to the Scriptures); but let such of the brethren who are the fullest of the Spirit, and the word of Christ, oppose such an one steadfastly face to face, and lay open his folly to the church, from the Scriptures. If a brother through weakness speak anything contrary to any known truth of God (though not intended by him), some other brother of the church must in love clear up the truth, lest many of the church be laid under temptation. Let no respect of persons be in your comings-together; when you are met as a church there's neither rich nor poor, bond nor free in Christ Jesus. 'Tis not a good practice to be offering places or seats when those who are rich come in; especially it is a great evil to take notice of such in time of prayer, or the word; then are bowings and civil

observances at such times not of God. Private wrongs are not presently to be brought unto the church. If any of the brethren are troubled about externals, let some of the church (let it not be a church business) pray for and with such parties.

None ought to withdraw from the church if any brother should walk disorderly, but he that walketh disorderly must bear his own burden, according to the Scriptures. If any brother should walk disorderly, he cannot be shut out from any ordinance before church censure. Study among yourselves what is the nature of fellowship, as the word,¹⁴⁴ prayer, and breaking of bread; which, whilst few, I judge, seriously consider, there is much falling short of duty in the churches of Christ. You that are most eminent in profession, set a pattern to all the rest of the

¹⁴⁴ Reading and Preaching.

church. Let your faith, love, and zeal, be very eminent; if any of you cast a dim light, you will do much hurt in the church. Let there be kept up among you solemn days of prayer and thanksgiving; and let some time be set apart, to seek God for your seeds, which thing hath hitherto been omitted. Let your deacons have a constant stock by them, to supply the necessity of those who are in want. Truly, brethren, there is utterly a fault among you that are rich, especially in this thing, 'tis not that little which comes from you on the first day of the week that will excuse you. I beseech you, be not found guilty of this sin any longer. He that sows sparingly will reap sparingly. Be not backward in your gatherings-together; let none of you willingly stay till part of the meeting be come,¹⁴⁵ especially

¹⁴⁵ Not to wait for one another, each one to come in good time.

such who should be examples to the flock. One or two things are omitted about your comings-together, which I shall here add. I beseech you, forbear sitting in prayer, except parties be any way disabled; 'tis not a posture which suits with the majesty of such an ordinance. Would you serve your prince so? In prayer, let all self-affected expressions be avoided, and all vain repetitions. God hath not gifted, I judge, every brother to be a mouth to the church. Let such as have most of the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, shut up all your comings-together, that ye may go away with your hearts comforted and quickened.

Come together in time, and leave off orderly; for God is a God of order among his saints. Let none of you give offence to his brethren in indifferent things, but be subject to one another in love. Be very careful what gifts you approve of by

consent for public service.

Spend much time before the Lord, about choosing a pastor, for though I suppose he is before you,¹⁴⁶ whom the Lord hath appointed, yet it will be no disadvantage to you, I hope, if you walk a year or two as you are before election; and then, if you be all agreed, let him be set apart, according to the Scriptures. Salute the brethren who walk not in fellowship with you, with the same love and name of brother or sister as those who do.

Let the promises made to be accomplished in the latter days, be often urged before the Lord in your comings-together; and forget not your brethren in bonds. Love him much for the work's sake, who labours over you in the word and doctrine. Let no man despise his youth.¹⁴⁷ Muzzle not the mouth of the ox

¹⁴⁶ Alluding to Bunyan, or his co-pastor, Burton, or to both of them.

¹⁴⁷ Bunyan was about twenty-seven years of age.

that treads out the corn to you. Search the Scriptures; let some of them be read to you about this thing. If your teacher at any time be laid aside, you ought to meet together as a church, and build up one another. If the members at such a time will go to a public ministry, it must first be approved of by the church. Farewell; exhort, counsel, support, reprove one another in love.

Finally, brethren, be all of one mind, walk in love one to another, even as Christ Jesus hath loved you, and given himself for you. Search the Scriptures for a supply of those things wherein I am wanting. Now the God of peace, who raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, multiply his peace upon you, and preserve you to his everlasting kingdom by Jesus Christ. Stand fast: the Lord is at hand.

That this was written by me, I have set my name to it, in the

presence of two of the brethren
of the church.

John Gifford.¹⁴⁸

Bunyan was now settled under the happiest circumstances, and doubtless looked forward to much religious enjoyment. A pious wife—peace in his soul—a most excellent pastor, and in full communion with a Christian church. Alas! his enjoyments were soon interrupted; again a tempest was to agitate his mind, that he might be more deeply humbled and prepared to become a Barnabas or son of consolation to the spiritually distressed.

It is a remarkable fact, that upon the baptism of our Lord, after that sublime declaration of Jehovah—‘this is my beloved Son,’ ‘Jesus was led into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.’ As it was with their leader, so it frequently happens to his followers. After having partaken, for the first time, of the holy enjoyments of the Lord’s table—tending to exalt and elevate them, they are often abased and humbled in their own

¹⁴⁸ This letter was copied into the church records at the time: the original cannot be found. It was published with Ryland’s Funeral Sermon on Symonds, 1788, and in Jukes’ very interesting account of Bunyan’s church, in 1849. The signature is copied from an original in the *Milton State Papers*, library of the Antiquarian Society.

esteem, by the assaults of Satan and his temptations, aided by an evil heart of unbelief. Thus Christian having been cherished in the house called Beautiful, and armed for the conflict, descended into the Valley of Humiliation, encountered Apollyon in deadly combat, and walked through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. 'For three quarters of a year, fierce and said temptations did beset me to blasphemy, that I could never have rest nor ease. But at last the Lord came in upon my soul with that same scripture, by which my soul was visited before; and after that, I have been usually very well and comfortable in the partaking of that blessed ordinance; and have, I trust, therein discerned the Lord's body, as broken for my sins, and that his precious blood hath been shed for my transgressions.'¹⁴⁹ This is what Bunyan calls, 'the soul killing to itself its sins, its righteousness, wisdom, resolutions, and the things which it trusted in by nature'; and then receiving 'a most glorious, perfect, and never-fading life.' The life of Christ in all its purity and perfections imputed to me—'Sometimes I bless the Lord my soul hath had this life not only imputed to me, but the very glory of it upon my soul—the Son of God

¹⁴⁹ Vol. i., p. 39.

himself in his own person, now at the right hand of his Father representing me complete before the mercy-seat in his ownself.' 'There was my righteousness just before the eyes of Divine glory.'¹⁵⁰

About this period his robust hardy frame gave way under the attack of disease, and we have to witness his feelings when the king of terrors appeared to be beginning his deadly work. Whether the fiery trials, the mental tempest through which he had passed, were too severe for his bodily frame, is not recorded. His narrative is, that, 'Upon a time I was somewhat inclining to a consumption, wherewith, about the spring I was suddenly and violently seized, with much weakness in my outward man; insomuch that I thought I could not live.'¹⁵¹ This is slightly varied in his account of this illness in his *Law and Grace*. He there says, 'having contracted guilt upon my soul, and having some distemper of body upon me, I supposed that death might now so seize upon, as to take me away from among men.'¹⁵² These serious considerations led to a solemn investigation of his hopes. His having been baptized, his union to a church, the good

¹⁵⁰ Vol. i., p. 545.

¹⁵¹ *Grace Abounding*, No. 255, vol. i., p. 39.

¹⁵² Vol. i., p. 545.

opinion of his fellow-men, are not in the slightest degree relied upon as evidences of the new birth, or of a death to sin and resurrection to holiness.' 'Now began I afresh to give myself up to a serious examination after my state and condition for the future, and of my evidences for that blessed world to come: for it hath, I bless the name of God, been my usual course, as always, so especially in the day of affliction, to endeavour to keep my interest in the life to come, clear before my eye.

‘But I had no sooner began to recall to mind my former experience of the goodness of God to my soul, but there came flocking into my mind an innumerable company of my sins and transgressions: amongst which these were at this time most to my affliction, namely, my deadness, dullness, and coldness in holy duties; my wanderings of heart, my wearisomeness in all good things, my want of love to God, his ways and people, with this at the end of all, “Are these the fruits of Christianity? Are these the tokens of a blessed man?”

‘At the apprehension of these things my sickness was doubled upon me, for now was I sick in my inward man, my soul was clogged with guilt; now also was my former experience of God’s goodness to me quite taken out of my mind, and hid as if it had never been, nor seen. Now was my soul greatly pinched between these two considerations, “Live I must not, die I dare not.” Now I sunk and fell in my spirit, and was giving up all for lost; but as I was walking up and down in my house, as a man in a most woeful state, that word of God took hold of my heart, Ye are “justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ” (Rom 3:24). But O! what a turn it made upon me!

‘Now was I as one awakened out of some troublesome sleep and dream; and listening to this heavenly sentence, I was as if I had heard it thus expounded to me:—“Sinner, thou thinkest, that because of thy sins and

infirmities, I cannot save thy soul; but behold my Son is by me, and upon him I look, and not on thee, and will deal with thee according as I am pleased with him.” At this I was greatly lightened in my mind, and made to understand, that God could justify a sinner at any time; it was but his looking upon Christ, and imputing of his benefits to us, and the work was forthwith done.¹⁵³

‘Now was I got on high, I saw myself within the arms of grace and mercy; and though I was before afraid to think of a dying hour, yet now I cried, Let me die. Now death was lovely and beautiful in my sight, for I saw that we shall never live indeed, till we be gone to the other world. I saw more in those words, “Heirs of God” (Rom 8:17), than ever I shall be able to express. “Heirs of God,” God himself is the portion of his

¹⁵³ *Grace Abounding*, No 255-259, vol. i., p. 39.

saints.’¹⁵⁴

As his mental agitation subsided into this delicious calm, his bodily health was restored; to use his own figure, Captain Consumption, with all his men of death, were¹⁵⁵ routed, and his strong bodily health triumphed over disease; or, to use the more proper language of an eminent Puritan, ‘When overwhelmed with the deepest sorrows, and that for many doleful months, he who is Lord of nature healed my body, and he who is the Father of mercies and God of all grace has proclaimed liberty to the captive, and given rest to my weary soul.’¹⁵⁶ Here we have a key to the most eventful picture in the *Pilgrim’s Progress*—The Valley of the Shadow of Death—which is placed in the midst of the journey. When in the prime of life, death looked at him and withdrew for a season. It was the *shadow* of death that came over his spirit.

The church at Bedford having increased, Bunyan was chosen to fill the honourable office of a deacon. No man could have been better fitted for that office than Bunyan was. He was honesty itself, had suffered severe privations, so as to feel for those who were

¹⁵⁴ Vol. i., p. 40.

¹⁵⁵ Vol. iii., p. 655.

¹⁵⁶ Rogers on *Trouble of Mind*.

pinched with want; he had great powers of discrimination, to distinguish between the poverty of idleness, and that distress which arises from circumstances over which human foresight has no control, so as to relieve with propriety the pressure of want, without encouraging the degrading and debasing habit of depending upon alms, instead of labouring to provide the necessaries of life. He had no fine clothes to be spoiled by trudging down the filthiest lanes, and entering the meanest hovels to relieve suffering humanity. The poor—and that is the great class to whom the gospel is preached, and by whom it is received—would hail him as a brother. Gifted in prayer, full of sound and wholesome counsel drawn from holy writ, he must have been a peculiar blessing to the distressed, and to all the members who stood in need of advice and assistance. Such were the men intended by the apostles, ‘men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom’ (Acts 6:3), whom the church were to select, to relieve the apostles from the duties of ministration to the wants of the afflicted members, in the discharge of which they had given offence.

While thus actively employed, he was again visited with a severe illness, and again was subject to a most searching and solemn

investigation as to his fitness to appear before the judgment-seat of God. 'All that time the tempter did beset me strongly, labouring to hide from me my former experience of God's goodness; setting before me the terrors of death, and the judgment of God, insomuch that at this time, through my fear of miscarrying for ever, should I now die, I was as one dead before death came; I thought that there was no way but to hell I must.'¹⁵⁷

'A wounded spirit who can bear.' Well might the apostle say, 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable' (1 Cor 15:19). Bunyan had enjoyed holy emotions full of glory, and now the devil was threatening him, not only with the loss of heaven, but the terrors of hell. The Puritan, Rogers, describes religious melancholy as 'the worst of all distempers, and those sinking and guilty fears which it brings along with it are inexpressibly dreadful; what anguish, what desolation! I dare not look to heaven; there I see the greatness of God, who is against me. I dare not look into his Word; for there I see all his threats, as so many barbed arrows to strike me to the heart. I dare not look into the grave; because thence I am like to have a doleful

¹⁵⁷ *Grace Abounding*, No. 260.

resurrection; in this doleful night the soul hath no evidence at all of its former grace.’¹⁵⁸ Bunyan’s experience reminds us of the impressive language of Job—a book full of powerful imagery and magnificent ideas, in which Bunyan delighted, calling it ‘that blessed book.’¹⁵⁹ Job goes on, from step to step, describing his mental wretchedness, until he rises to a climax, God ‘runneth upon me like a giant’ (16:7-22). ‘Thou huntest me as a fierce lion’ (10:16). ‘The arrows of the Almighty are within me; they drink up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me’ (6:4). Poor Bunyan, in the depth of his distress, cried unto God, and was heard and relieved from these soul troubles. He recollected the joyful ascent of Lazarus from the extreme of human misery to the height of celestial enjoyments. His spirit was sweetly revived, and he was enabled, with delight, to hope yet in God, when that word fell with great weight upon his mind, ‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?’ ‘At this he became both well in body and mind at once; his sickness did presently vanish, and he again walked comfortably in his work for God.’¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ 1st edition, p. 355.

¹⁵⁹ Vol. ii., p. 425.

¹⁶⁰ Vol. i., p. 40.

The words, 'by grace are ye saved,' followed him through the rest of his pilgrimage. His consolation was, that 'a little true grace will go a great way; yea, and do more wonders than we are aware of. If we have but grace enough to keep us groaning after God, it is not all the world that can destroy us.'¹⁶¹ He had now become deeply instructed in the school of Christ, and was richly furnished with the weapons of spiritual warfare; 'a scribe instructed into the kingdom of heaven, like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old' (Matt 13:12). Or, as 'the man of God, perfected, thoroughly furnished unto all good works' (2 Tim 3:17). It was powerfully impressed upon his mind that all his inward conflicts were to be made use of in preparing him to instruct others. All the events of his Saviour's life passed before his mind as if he had stood by as a witness to his birth—his walking with his disciples; his wondrous parables and stupendous miracles; his mental and bodily sufferings; his sacrifice, burial, ascension, intercession, and final judgment; all passed in vivid review before the eye of his mind; and then, he says, 'as I was musing with

¹⁶¹ Vol. i., p. 769.

myself what these things should mean, methought I heard such a word in my heart as this, I have set thee down on purpose, for I have something more than ordinary for thee to do'; which made me the more to marvel, saying, 'What, my Lord, such a poor wretch as I?'¹⁶² Such was his inward call to the ministry; and it being attended with the three requisites usually insisted on among Dissenters—ability, inclination, and opportunity—he was sent out as an itinerant preacher in the surrounding villages in 1655, and laid the foundation of many churches, which now flourish to the praise of the glory of Divine grace. In some of these villages the gospel had never before been preached; they were strongholds of Satan. These were fit places for the full display of his intrepid energy.

After thus preaching and much suffering, for fifteen years, he was appointed to the pastoral office, or eldership.¹⁶³ Can a man enter upon the work of the ministry from a better school than this? Deeply versed in scriptural knowledge; thoroughly humbled by the assaults of sin and Satan; aware of his devices; with a keen perception of the value of the soul;

¹⁶² Vol. i., p. 549.

¹⁶³ Church Book, 1671.

its greatness; and, if lost, the causes and the unspeakable extent of its loss. Solemnly devout and fluent in prayer; ready in conversation upon heavenly things; speaking the truth without fear of consequences, yet avoiding unnecessary offence; first speaking in the church-meeting, and then more extensively in barns, or woods, or dells, to avoid the informers.¹⁶⁴ Such was his training; and the

¹⁶⁴ This secrecy became needful after the Restoration, as noticed more fully afterwards, p. lix. During those years of persecution, a frequent place of resort was a dell in Wain-wood, about three miles from Hitchin. Of this locality the following notice will be acceptable:— On the 19th of May, 1853, a splendidly hot day, my pilgrimage to the shrines of Bunyan was continued at Hitchin and its vicinity, in company with S. B. Geard, Esq. Here it was my honour to shake hands with honest Edward Foster, whose grandfather often entertained and sheltered John Bunyan. So singular a case I had never met with, that three lives should connect, in a direct line, evidence of transactions which occurred at a distance of 190 years. His grandfather was born in 1642, and for many years was a friend and companion of the illustrious dreamer. In 1706, when he was sixty-four years of age, his youngest son was born, and in 1777, when that son was seventy-one years of age, his youngest son was born, and in 1853 he has the perfect use of limbs and faculties, and properly executes the important office of assistant overseer to his extensive parish. With such direct testimony, we visited the very romantic dell, where, in the still hours of midnight, the saints of God

were wont to meet and unite in Divine worship. It is a most romantic dell, in Wain-wood, which crowns a hill about three miles from Hitchin. We had some difficulty in making our way through the underwood—crushing the beautiful hyacinths and primroses which covered the ground in the richest profusion, and near the top of the hill came suddenly upon this singular dell—a natural little eminence formed the pulpit, while the dell would hold under its shade at least a thousand people—and now I must give you the countryman’s eloquent description of the meetings of his ancestors. “Here, under the canopy of heaven, with the rigour of winter’s nipping frost, while the clouds, obscuring the moon, have discharged their flaky treasures, they often assembled while the highly-gifted and heavenly-minded Bunyan has broken to them the bread of life. The word of the Lord was precious in those days. And here over his devoted head, while uncovered in prayer, the pious matrons warded off the driving hail and snow, by holding a shawl over him by its four corners. In this devoted dell these plain unpolished husbandmen, like the ancient Waldenses, in the valleys of Piedmont, proved themselves firm defenders of the faith in its primitive purity, and of Divine worship in its primitive style.”

Their horses on which they rode, from various parts, were sheltered in neighbouring friendly farms, while they, to avoid suspicion, ascended the hill by scarcely visible footpaths. Could fine weather be insured, it would form a lovely spot for a meeting to celebrate the third jubilee of religious toleration—there listen to a Bunyan of our age, and devise measures for religious equality. Then we might close the service by solemnly objoining every system which gave power to tyrannise over the rights of conscience. Here, as in other places where Bunyan founded churches, the cause of Christ

result was, that, when permitted to proclaim the gospel publicly, thousands hung upon his words with intense feeling; numerous converts were by his means added to the church; the proud became broken-hearted, and the lowly were raised, and blessings abounded; the drunkards were made sober; thieves and

hath spread. At Hitchin, in 1681, about thirty-five Christians united in the following covenant:—

‘We who, through the mercy of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have obtained grace to give ourselves to the Lord, and one to another by the will of God, to have communion with one another, as saints in one gospel fellowship:—Do, before God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and the holy angels, agree and promise to walk together in this one gospel communion and fellowship as a church of Jesus Christ, in love to the Lord and one to another, and endeavour to yield sincere and hearty obedience to the laws, ordinances, and appointments of our Lord and Lawgiver in his church. And also do agree and promise, the Lord assisting, to follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another, that so living and walking in love and peace, the God of love and peace may be with us. Amen.’

This was probably drawn by Bunyan, and so simple and comprehensive has it proved, that the church has flourished, and lately a spacious and handsome place of worship has been erected, to accommodate a thousand worshippers, at a cost of £3000, all paid for, with a surplus fund in hand for contingencies, of £500. In addition, there are also large and commodious chapels for the Independents, Wesleyans, and Quakers.

covetous were reclaimed; the blasphemers were made to sing the praises of God; the desert bid fair to blossom and bring forth fruit as a garden. But, alas! his early labours were contrary to acts of parliament; the spirit of intolerance and persecution soon troubled, and eventually consigned him to a prison.

Before we bid a final farewell to Bunyan's extraordinary mental struggles with unbelief, it may be well to indulge in a few sober reflections. Are the narratives of these mighty tempests in his spirit plain matters of fact? No one can read the works of Bunyan and doubt for a moment his truthfulness. His language is that of the heart, fervent but not exaggerated, strong but a plain tale of real feelings. He says, and he believed it, 'My sins have appeared so big to me, that I thought one of my sins have been as big as all the sins of all the men in the nation; ay and of other nations too, reader; these things be not fancies, for I have smarted for this experience. It is true that Satan has the art of making the uttermost of every sin; he can blow it up, make it swell, make every hair of its head as big as a cedar;¹⁶⁵ but yet the least stream of the heart blood of Jesus hath vanished all away and hath made it to fly, to

¹⁶⁵ *Christ a Complete Saviour*, vol. i., p. 210.

the astonishment of such a poor sinner, and hath delivered me up into sweet and heavenly peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.’¹⁶⁶ Some have supposed the narrative to be exaggerated, while others have attributed the disturbed state of his mind to disease; my humble belief is that the whole is a plain unvarnished account of facts; that those facts occurred while he was in full possession of all the faculties of his mind. To ascribe such powers to the invisible world by which we are constantly surrounded, does not agree with the doctrines of modern philosophers. Those holy or unholy suggestions suddenly injected, would by the world be set down as the hallucinations of a distempered imagination. Carnal relations attributed Christian’s alarm to ‘some frenzy distemper got into his head,’ and Southey, following their example, ascribes Bunyan’s hallowed feelings to his want of ‘sober judgment,’ ‘his brutality and extreme ignorance,’ a ‘stage of burning enthusiasm,’ and to ‘an age in which hypocrisy was regnant, and fanaticism rampant throughout the land.’¹⁶⁷ What a display of reigning hypocrisy and rampant fanaticism was it to see the game

¹⁶⁶ *Law and Grace*, vol. i., pp. 549, 550.

¹⁶⁷ *Life of Bunyan*, p. xiv.

at cat openly played by men on Sunday, the church bells calling them to their sport!!! Had Southey been poet-laureate to Charles II, he might with equal truth have concealed the sensuality, open profaneness, and debauchery of that profligate monarch and his court of concubines, and have praised him as 'the Lord's anointed.' Bunyan was an eye-witness of the state of the times in which he lived, and he associated with numbers of the poor in Bedfordshire and the adjoining counties. So truthful a man's testimony is of great value, and he proves that no miraculous reformation of manners had taken place; no regnant hypocrisy nor rampant fanaticism. In 1655, that being the brightest period of the Commonwealth, he thus 'sighs' over the state of his country:—"There are but a few places in the Bible but there are threatenings against one sinner or another; against drunkards, swearers, liars, proud persons, strumpets, whoremongers, covetous, railers, extortioners, thieves, lazy persons. In a word, all manner of sins are reprov'd, and there is a sore punishment to be executed on the committers of them; and all this made mention of in the Scriptures. But for all this, how thick, and by heaps, do these wretches walk up and down our streets? Do but go into the ale-houses, and

you shall see almost every room besprinkled with them, so foaming out their own shame that it is enough to make the heart of a saint to tremble.’¹⁶⁸ This was a true character of the great masses of the labouring and trading portions of the commonwealth. Let us hear his testimony also as to the most sacred profession, the clergy, in 1654:—

‘A reason why delusions do so easily take place in the hearts of the ignorant, is, because those that pretend to be their teachers, do behave themselves so basely among them. And indeed I may say of these, as our Lord said of the Pharisees in another case, the blood of the ignorant shall be laid to their charge. They that pretend they are sent of the Lord, and come, saying, Thus saith the Lord; we are the servants of the Lord, our commission is from the Lord by succession; I say, these pretending themselves to be the preachers of truth, but are not, do, by their loose conversation,

¹⁶⁸ *Sighs*, vol. iii., p. 712.

render the doctrine of God, and his Son Jesus Christ, by whom the saints are saved, contemptible, and do give the adversary mighty encouragement, to cry out against the truths of our Lord Jesus Christ, because of their wicked waling. For the most part of them, they are the men that at this day do so harden their hearers in their sins by giving them such ill examples, that none goeth beyond them for impiety. As, for example, would a parishioner learn to be proud, he or she need look no farther than to the priest, his wife, and family; for there is a notable pattern before them. Would the people learn to be wanton? they may also see a pattern among their teachers. Would they learn to be drunkards? they may also have that from some of their ministers; for indeed they are ministers in this, to minister ill example to their congregations.

Again, would the people learn to be covetous? they need but look to their minister, and they shall have a lively, or rather a deadly resemblance set before them, in both riding and running after great benefices, and parsonages by night and by day. Nay, they among themselves will scramble for the same. I have seen, that so soon as a man hath but departed from his benefice as he calls it, either by death or out of covetousness of a bigger, we have had one priest from this town, and another from that, so run, for these tithe-cocks and handfuls of barley, as if it were their proper trade, and calling, to hunt after the same. O wonderful impiety and ungodliness! are you not ashamed of your doings? Read Romans 1 towards the end. As it was with them, so, it is to be feared, it is with many of you, who knowing the judgments of God, that they who do such things are worthy of death, not

only do the same, but have pleasure also in them that do them. And now you that pretend to be the teachers of the people in verity and truth, though we know that some of you are not, is it a small thing with you to set them such an example as this? Were ever the Pharisees so profane; to whom Christ said, Ye vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Doth not the ground groan under you? surely, it will favour you no more than it favoured your fore-runners. Certainly the wrath of God lies heavy at your doors, it is but a very little while, and your recompense shall be upon your own head. And as for you that are indeed of God among them, though not of them, separate yourselves. Why should the righteous partake of the same plagues with the wicked? O ye children of the harlot! I cannot well tell how to have done with you, your stain is so odious, and you are so senseless, as appears

by your practices.'¹⁶⁹

The testimony of George Fox as to England's fashions in 1654, is very pointed and extremely droll:—Men and women are carried away with fooleries and vanities; gold and silver upon their backs,¹⁷⁰ store of ribbands hanging about the waist, knees, and feet—red or white, black or yellow; women with their gold; their spots on their faces, noses, cheeks, foreheads; rings on their fingers, cuffs double, like a butcher's white sleeves; ribbands about their hands, and three or four gold laces about their clothes; men dressed like fiddlers' boys or stage players; see them playing at bowls, or at tables, or at shovel-board, or each one decking his horse with bunches of ribbands on his head, as the rider hath on his own. These are gentlemen, and brave fellows, that say pleasures are lawful, and in their sports they should like wild asses. This is the generation carried away with pride, arrogancy, lust, gluttony, and uncleanness; who eat and drink and rise up to play, their eyes full of adultery, and their bodies of the devil's adorning.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ *Gospel Truths*, vol. ii., p. 178.

¹⁷⁰ Like the Beef-eaters, or yeomen of the guard at the present day.

¹⁷¹ *Journal*, folio, 1694, p. 144. Is it surprising that the Quakers, at such a time, assumed their peculiar

Such quotations from the writings of men of undoubted veracity, and who lived during that period, might be multiplied to fill a volume.

Is this the regnant hypocrisy and rampant fanaticism which prevailed in England, and which Southey supposes to have influenced Bunyan and deranged his sober judgment? It is true that the Protector and his council discountenanced vice and folly, and that there was more piety and virtue in the kingdom at that time than it had ever before witnessed. But it would have been the greatest of miracles, had the people been suddenly moralized, after having been baptized in brutality for ages. Not a century had elapsed since the *autos da fe* had blazed throughout the country, burning the most pious, moral, and enlightened of her citizens. A century of misery to the professors of religions had passed, in which the persecutions of Papists and Puritans, hanging, transporting, murdering by frightful imprisonments all those who dared to dissent from the church of England. All this must have produced a debasing effect upon public morals. Even among professors Bunyan discovered pride,

neatness of dress?

covetousness, impiety and uncleanness.¹⁷²

Bunyan's religious impressions did not, as Southey states, arise from his ignorance, brutal manners, low station, nor from the fanaticism of the age in which he lived. Did the similar feeling of Job or David spring from these polluted fountains? He is a stranger to Christ's school that confounds its discipline with mental drunkenness, or with the other depraved sources alluded to by Southey. The luxurious imagination which ruled over him, must be curbed and brought into subjection to Christ. He must be weaned from a reliance upon sudden impulses to rely upon Divine truth. The discovery of errors by scriptural investigation was putting on armour of proof. Self-confidence was gradually swallowed up by dependence upon the word—the result of the severest spiritual training. Those painful exercises produced a life of holiness and usefulness. Can the thistle produce grapes, or the noxious weeds corn? Never! His experience came from heaven, in mercy to his soul, and to make him a blessing to millions of his race. By this he was made truly wise, civilized, enlightened, and elevated. Every painful feeling was measured by Divine rule—weighed in the

¹⁷² Vol. ii., p. 178, 566.

sanctuary balance—not one iota too much or too little to form his noble character. He has been compared with Lord Byron, one of our most impassioned thinkers and writers; but the noble poet's heart-griefs were on the wrong side. Judging of his own feelings by those painted on his heroes—they fight for freedom only to gratify lust, pride, and ambition, while the future appeared in dark, dreary uncertainty. But Bunyan strives to be released from the slavery of sin and Satan, that he might enjoy the *liberty* of being a *servant* of Christ, whose service is perfect freedom, with a glorious vista of eternity occasionally breaking in upon his soul.

Well may it be said of him:—Simple, enchanting man! what does not the world owe to thee and to the great Being who could produce such as thee? Teacher alike of the infant and of the aged; who canst direct the first thought and remove the last doubt of man; property alike of the peasant and the prince; welcomed by the ignorant and honoured by the wise; thou hast translated Christianity into a new language, and that a universal one! Thou art the prose poet of all time!

**THE FOURTH PERIOD. BUNYAN
ENTERS INTO CONTROVERSY—
BECOMES AN AUTHOR—OFFENDS A
PERSECUTING MAGISTRACY, AND IS
PROCEEDED AGAINST AT THE
SESSIONS UNDER AN ACT OF THE
COMMONWEALTH—IS ACCUSED OF
REPORTING A STRANGE CHARGE OF
WITCHCRAFT—PUBLICLY DISPUTES
WITH THE QUAKERS.**

In proportion as a man becomes a public character, especially if eminent for talent and usefulness in the church, so will his enemies increase. The envy of some and the malice of others will invent slanders, or, what is worse, put an evil construction upon the most innocent conduct, in the hope of throwing a shade over that brightness which reveals their own defects. In this they are aided by all the craft, and cunning, and power of Satan, the archenemy of man. The purity of gospel truth carries with it the blessed fruits of the highest order of civilization; the atmosphere in which it lives is 'good will to man.' Salvation is a free gift, direct from God to the penitent sinner. It cannot be obtained by human aid, nor for all

the gold in the universe. It cannot possibly be traded in, bought, or sold, but is bestowed without money or price. Hence the opposition of Antichrist. The cry or groan of the contrite enters heaven and brings down blessings, while the most elegant and elaborately-composed prayer, not springing from the heart, is read or recited in vain. Human monarchs must be approached by petitions drawn up in form, and which may be accepted, although the perfection of insincerity and hypocrisy. The King of kings accepts no forms; he knows the heart, and requires the approach of those who worship him to be in sincerity and in truth; the heart may plead without words, God accepteth the groans and sighs of those that fear him. These were the notions that Bunyan had drawn from the Holy Oracles, and his conversation soon made him a favourite with the Puritans, while it excited feelings of great hostility among the neighbouring clergy and magistrates.

Bunyan's conversion from being a pest to the neighbourhood to becoming a pious man, might have been pardoned had he conformed to the Directory; but for him to appear as a Dissenter and a public teacher, without going through the usual course of education and ordination, was an unpardonable offence. The

opinions of man gave him no concern; all his anxiety was to have the approbation of his God, and then to walk accordingly, braving all the dangers, the obloquy, and contempt that might arise from his conscientious discharge of duties, for the performance of which he knew that he alone must give a solemn account at the great day.

He entered upon the serious work of the ministry with fear and trembling, with much heart-searching, earnest prayer, and the advice of the church to which he was united, not with any pledge to abide by their decision contrary to his own conviction, but to aid him in his determination. His own account of these important inquiries is very striking:—‘After I had been about five or six years awakened, and helped myself to see both the want and worth of Jesus Christ our Lord, and also enabled to venture my soul upon him, some of the most able among the saints with us, for judgment and holiness of life, as they conceived, did perceive that God had counted me worthy to understand something of his will in His holy and blessed Word, and had given me utterance, in some measure, to express what I saw to others for edification; therefore they desired me, and that with much earnestness, that I would be willing at some times to take in hand,

in one of the meetings, to speak a word of exhortation unto them. The which, though at the first it did much dash and abash my spirit, yet being still by them desired and entreated, I consented to their request, and did twice, at two several assemblies in private, though with much weakness and infirmity, discover my gift amongst them; at which they did solemnly protest, as in the sight of the great God, they were both affected and comforted, and gave thanks to the Father of mercies for the grace bestowed on me.

‘After this, sometimes, when some of them did go into the country to teach, they would also that I should go with them; where, though as yet I did not, nor durst not, make use of my gift in an open way, yet more privately, as I came amongst the good people in those places, I did sometimes speak a word of admonition unto them also, the which they, as the other, received with rejoicing at the mercy of God to me-ward, professing their souls were edified thereby.

‘Wherefore at last, being still

desired by the church, after some solemn prayer to the Lord, with fasting, I was more particularly called forth, and appointed to a more ordinary and public preaching of the word, not only to and amongst them that believed, but also to offer the gospel to those who had not yet received the faith thereof.¹⁷³

The ministry of Bunyan's pastor, whom he affectionately called holy Mr. Gifford, must have been wonderfully blessed. In 1650 only twelve pious men and women were formed into a Christian church, and, although subject to fierce persecution, they had so increased that in 1672 ten members had been solemnly set apart for the work of the ministry, and they became a blessing to the country round Bedford. The benighted state of the villages was a cause of earnest prayer that men might be sent out, apt to teach, and willing to sacrifice liberty, and even life, to promote the peaceful reign of the Redeemer. The names of the men who were thus set apart were—John Bunyan, Samuel Fenn, Joseph Whiteman, John Fenn,

¹⁷³ *Grace Abounding*, vol. i., p. 41.

Oliver Scott, Luke Ashwood, Thomas Cooper, Edward Dent, Edward Isaac, and Nehemiah Coxe.¹⁷⁴ Four of these were permitted to fulfil

¹⁷⁴ Nehemiah Coxe is said to have been a descendant from Dr. Richard Coxe, preceptor to Edward VI, and Dean of Oxford. He fled from persecution under Mary, was a troubler of his brother refugees by his turbulent temper, and his attachment to superstitious ceremonies. On his return, he was made Bishop of Ely, and became a bitter persecutor. Benjamin Coxe, A.M., probably a son of the furious bishop, was as ardently fond of rites and ceremonies. He was cited to appear before Laud for denying the *jure divino* of bishops, and the poor bishop said, "God did so bless me that I gave him satisfaction." Mr. Coxe soon after came out as a Baptist, and having preached at Bedford, he settled in Coventry. Here he disputed with Mr. Baxter and the Presbyterians; and the Independents had him imprisoned for defending adult baptism (Crosby, *History of Baptists*, i. 354), a very short mode of settling the controversy. Probably Nehemiah Coxe was his son, settled at Bedford as a shoemaker. He was a learned man, and, when tried at Bedford assizes for preaching the gospel, he was indicted in the usual Norman-French, or Latin; and pleaded first in Greek, which the prosecutors not understanding, he pleaded in Hebrew, arguing, that as his indictment was in a foreign tongue, he was entitled to plead in any of the learned languages. The counsel being ignorant of those languages, and the judge glad to get rid of a vexatious indictment, dismissed him, saying to the counselors, 'Well, this cordwainer hath wound you all up, gentlemen.' This anecdote is handed down in a funeral sermon by T. Sutcliff, on the death of Symonds, one of the pastors of the church at Bedford.

their course without notoriety; the others were severely persecuted, fined and imprisoned, but not forsaken.

Encouraged by the opinion of the church which had been so prayerfully formed, that it was his duty to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, Bunyan entered upon his important work, and was soon encouraged by a hope that his labours were useful to his fellow-men. 'About this time,' he narrates, 'I did evidently find in my mind a secret pricking forward thereto, though, I bless God, not for desire of vain glory, for at that time I was most sorely afflicted with the fiery darts of the devil concerning my eternal state. But yet I could

Another of this little band that was set apart with Bunyan, became so useful a preacher as to have been honoured with a record in the annals of persecution in the reign of Charles II. John Fenn was on Lord's-day, May 15, 1670, committed to prison for preaching in his own house; and on Tuesday, all his goods and stock in trade were seized and carted away, leaving his family in the most desolate condition.

In the following week, Edward Isaac, a blacksmith, another of this little band, having been fined, had all his stock in trade, and even the anvil upon which he worked, seized and carted away.

Such were the severe trials which these excellent citizens were, with their families, called to pass through, by the tyranny of the church; but they were light, indeed, in comparison with those that awaited the amiable and pious Bunyan.

not be content unless I was found in the exercise of my gift; unto which also I was greatly animated, not only by the continual desires of the godly, but also by that saying of Paul to the Corinthians, “I beseech you, brethren [ye know the household of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints], that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth” (1 Cor 16:15,16).

‘By this text I was made to see that the Holy Ghost never intended that men, who have gifts and abilities, should bury them in the earth, but rather did command and stir up such to the exercise of their gift, and also did commend those that were apt and ready so to do.

‘Wherefore, though of myself, of all the saints the most unworthy, yet I, but with great fear and trembling at the sight of my own weakness, did set upon the work, and did according to my gift, and the proportion of my faith, preach that blessed gospel that God had

showed me in the holy Word of truth; which, when the country understood, they came in to hear the Word by hundreds, and that from all parts. And I thank God he gave unto me some measure of bowels and pity for their souls, which did put me forward to labour with great diligence and earnestness, to find out such a word as might, if God would bless it, lay hold of and awaken the conscience, in which also the good Lord had respect to the desire of his servant; for I had not preached long before some began to be touched, and be greatly afflicted in their minds at the apprehension of the greatness of their sin, and of their need of Jesus Christ.

‘But I at first could not believe that God should speak by me to the heart of any man, still counting myself unworthy; yet those who were thus touched would love me, and have a particular respect for me; and

though I did put it from me that they should be awakened by me, still they would confess it, and affirm it before the saints of God. They would also bless God for me, unworthy wretch that I am! and count me God's instrument that showed to them the way of salvation.

'Wherefore, seeing them in both their words and deeds to be so constant, and also in their hearts so earnestly pressing after the knowledge of Jesus Christ, rejoicing that ever God did send me where they were; then I began to conclude that it might be so, that God had owned in his work such a foolish one as I; and then came that word of God to my heart with much sweet refreshment, "The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy" (Job 29:13).

'At this therefore I rejoiced; yea, the tears of those whom God did awaken by my

preaching would be both solace and encouragement to me. I thought on those sayings, “Who is he that maketh me glad, but the same that is made sorry by me” (2 Cor 2:2). And again, “Though I be not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am unto you: for the seal of my apostleship are ye in the Lord” (1 Cor 9:2). These things, therefore, were as an another argument unto me, that God had called me to, and stood by me in this work.

‘In my preaching of the Word I took special notice of this one thing, namely, that the Lord did lead me to begin where his Word begins with sinners; that is, to condemn all flesh, and to open and allege, that the curse of God by the law doth belong to, and lay hold on all men as they come into the world, because of sin. Now this part of my work I fulfilled with great feeling, for the terrors of the law, and guilt for my

transgressions, lay heavy on my own conscience. I preached what I felt, what I smartingly did feel, even that under which my poor soul did groan and tremble to astonishment. Indeed, I have been as one sent to them from the dead; I went myself in chains to preach to them in chains; and carried that fire in my own conscience that I persuaded them to beware of.¹⁷⁵ I can truly say, that when I have been to preach, I have gone full of guilt and terror even to the pulpit-door, and there it hath been taken off, and I have been at liberty in my mind until I have done my work, and then, immediately, even before I could get down the pulpit stairs, I have been as bad as I was before: yet God carried me on with a strong hand, for neither guilt nor hell could take me off my work. Thus

¹⁷⁵ If Christians recollected with what anxiety their teachers prepared and delivered their sermons, how constant and prayerful would be their attendance on the means of grace.

I went on for the space of two years, crying out against men's sins, and their fearful state because of them.'¹⁷⁶

A man so much in earnest soon became a most acceptable and popular preacher. He studied his sermons carefully, and wrote such memorandums and notes as might refresh his memory before going into the pulpit, although his intensity of feeling, his ready utterance, and natural eloquence which charmed his hearers, and his extensive usefulness as a preacher, render it quite improbable that he restricted himself to notes while publicly engaged in sacred services. They must have aided him when he did not enjoy liberty of utterance. 'At times when I have begun to speak the Word with much liberty, I have been presently so straitened in speech that I scarcely

¹⁷⁶ *Grace Abounding*, vol. i., p. 42. The taunts and revilings of a poet laureate upon Bunyan's preaching and sufferings need only a passing notice. No words could be more vile and slanderous than those of Mr. Southey. He says, 'Peace might be on his lips, and zeal for the salvation of others in his heart, but he was certainly, at that time, no preacher of good will, nor of Christian charity.' How can we judge of a preacher's good will, but by 'peace on his lips?' and what is the criterion of Christian charity, except it be 'zeal for the salvation of others in his heart?'

knew what I was about, or as if my head had been in a bag.’¹⁷⁷ They were valuable, also, as a proof that all he said had its exclusive reference to the world to come, without the mixture of politics, which might have given offence to the Government. Thus, when he was apprehended for neglecting to attend the church service and for preaching the gospel, in his conversation with Mr. Cobb, the magistrate’s clerk, he said ‘that, to cut off all occasions of suspicion from any, as touching the harmlessness of my doctrine, in private I would willingly take the pains to give any one *the notes of all my sermons*, for I do sincerely desire to live quietly in my country, and to submit to the present authority.’¹⁷⁸ In such troublesome times these would afford abundant proof that he was desirous of submitting to all the political institutions of his country, while he dared not conform to human laws affecting his faith or his mode of worshipping God, for which he alone was to stand answerable at the great day.

The employment of his time in earning a

¹⁷⁷ *Grace Abounding*, No. 293, vol. i., p. 44.

¹⁷⁸ Vol. i., p. 59. Eben. Chandler thus describes Bunyan: ‘His wit was sharp and quick, his memory tenacious; it being customary with him to commit his sermons to writing after he had preached them.’—Chandler and Wilson’s *Preface to Bunyan’s Works*, folio, 1692. All these autographs have unaccountably disappeared.

maintenance for his family, and his constant engagements to preach, interfered with the proper fulfillment of his duties as a deacon of the church. His resignation of this important office is thus recorded in the minutes of the church—‘At a meeting held on the 27th of the 6th month, 1657, the deacon’s office was transferred from John Bunyan to John Pernie, because he could no longer discharge its duties aright, in consequence of his being so much employed in preaching.’

We cannot wonder that his time was incessantly employed. His was no ordinary case. He had to recover and improve upon the little education he had received, and lost again by dissipated habits. He must have made every effort, by his diligent study of the Bible, to gain that spiritual knowledge which alone could enable him to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ, and that profound internal converse with the throne of God which appears in all his writings. In addition to all this, he was engaged in continual controversy with a variety of sects, which, in his sober judgment, opposed the simplicity of the gospel. Among these the Ranters, or Sweet Singers, were very conspicuous. It is difficult to discover what were their opinions, but they appear to have been nearly like the Dutch Adamites; they were

severely persecuted, by public authority, under the Commonwealth, for blasphemy. George Fox found some of them in prison at Coventry in 1649, and held a short disputation with them. They claimed each one to be GOD, founding their notion on such passages as 1 Corinthians 14:25, 'God is in you of a truth.' Fox quaintly asked them whether it would rain the next day; and upon their answering that they could not tell, 'Then said I unto them, God can tell.'¹⁷⁹ Strange as it may appear, the Ranters had many followers, while numerous pious people were troubled by their impudence and perversion of Scripture, but more especially by their being a persecuted people. Taking advantage of the inquiries that were excited by these strange doctrines, Bunyan determined to become an author, that he might set forth more extensively than he could do by preaching, the truths of the gospel in their native purity, simplicity, and beauty, as an antidote to fanaticism. The learned and eloquent looked with contempt upon the follies of the Ranters, Familists, and some loose Quakers, 'and only deigned to abuse them with raillery, while the poor unlettered tinker wrote against them.' To indite a work would be to

¹⁷⁹ Noticed in the life annexed to *Pilgrim*, Part III.

him a pleasant recreation, but *writing* a book must have been extremely difficult, and have required extraordinary patience. This will be better seen by a specimen of his handwriting, now in the Bedford Library, found in Fox's *Book of Martyrs*, the three volumes of which beguiled many of his tedious hours when in prison.

To write a volume, containing about twenty-five thousand words, must have been a serious task to such a scribe.

It is interesting to trace his improvement in calligraphy while recovering his lost education, and advancing in proficiency in an art so essential to his constantly extending usefulness.

The next is a more useful running hand, however defective in orthography and grammar; it is from the first page of a copy of Bishop Andrews' sermons¹⁸⁰—

The inscription in a copy of his *Holy City*, 1665, in Dr. Williams' or the Dissenter's Library, Red Cross Street, is in a still more useful hand, as good as that of most authors of that day—

¹⁸⁰ In the editor's library, folio, 1635. Orthography was little cared for in those days. On the beautiful portrait of Andrews, is the autograph of Annie Brokett hir Blook!

The autograph in Powell's *Concordance*, in the library of the Baptist Academy, Bristol, is in a fair hand—

His autograph is in possession of the Society of Antiquaries. The document to which it is subscribed is written in a remarkably neat hand, addressed to the Lord Protector. The signatures appear to be written as if in the writer's best style.¹⁸¹

Signature to the deed of gift¹⁸²—

In addition to the motives which have been noticed as inducing him to become an author, it appears, that in the course of his itinerating labours, he was much grieved with the general depravity which had overspread all classes of society. Evil communications had corrupted the great mass, and occasioned an aversion to hear the gospel, which plunged the people into carnal security. When roused by his preaching they too often found refuge in despair, or in vain attempts to impose upon God their unholy self-righteousness, endeavouring 'to earn heaven with their fingers' ends';¹⁸³ anything rather than submit to receive salvation as the free gift of God, and thus be led to consecrate all their powers to his glory and

¹⁸¹ This document is copied on page xxvi.

¹⁸² See page lxxii.

¹⁸³ Vol. ii., p. 132.

the comfort of society. A few who appeared to have thought on this solemn subject, without any change of conduct, are called by Bunyan 'light notionists, with here and there a legalist,'¹⁸⁴ or those who relied upon a creed without the fruits of righteousness, and some of these imbibed notions of the strangest kind—that the light within was all-sufficient, without any written revelation of the will of God—that the account of Christ's personal appearance on earth was a myth, to represent his residence in the persons of believers, in whom he suffers, is crucified, buried, and raised again to spiritual life—that such persons might do whatever their inclinations led them to, without incurring guilt or sin; in short, many sinned that grace might abound!! Some of them professed to be the Almighty God manifest in the flesh. All this took place in what was called a Christian country, upon which millions of treasure had been spent to teach religion by systems, which had persecuted the honest, pious professors of vital Christianity to bonds, imprisonment, and death. This had naturally involved the kingdom in impiety and gross immorality. The discovery of the awful state of his country, while he was

¹⁸⁴ Vol. ii., p. 133.

engaged in preaching in the villages round Bedford induced him, in the humble hope of doing good, to become an author, and with trembling anxiety he issued to the world the first production of his pen, in 1656, under the title of *Some Gospel Truths Opened According to the Scriptures*; and, as we shall presently find, it met with a rough reception, plunging him into controversy, which in those days was conducted with bitter acrimony.

Before it was published, he sought the approbation and protection of Mr. John Burton, who had been united with Mr. Gifford in the pastoral charge of the church to which Bunyan belonged. The testimony that he gives is very interesting:—

‘Here thou hast things certain and necessary to be believed, which thou canst not too much study. Therefore pray that thou mayest receive it, so it is according to the Scriptures, in faith and love, not as the word of man but as the word of God, and be not offended, because Christ holds forth the glorious treasure of the gospel to thee in a poor earthen vessel, by one who hath neither the greatness nor the

wisdom of this world to commend him to thee; for as the Scriptures saith, Christ, who was low and contemptible in the world himself, ordinarily chooseth such for himself and for the doing of his work. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world." This man [Bunyan] is not chosen out of an earthly, but out of the heavenly university, the church of Christ, furnished with the Spirit, gifts, and graces of Christ - - out of which, to the end of the world, the word of the Lord and all true gospel ministers must proceed. And, though this man hath not the learning or wisdom of man; yet, through grace, he hath received the teaching of God, and the learning of the Spirit of Christ. He hath taken these three heavenly degrees—union with Christ, the anointing of the Spirit, and experience of the

temptations of Satan—which do more fit a man for the mighty work of preaching the gospel, than all the university learning and degrees that can be had. I have had experience with many other saints of this man's [Bunyan's] soundness in the faith, his godly conversation, and his ability to preach the gospel, not by human art, but by the Spirit of Christ, and that with much success in the conversion of sinners. I thought it my duty to bear witness with my brother to these glorious truths of the Lord Jesus Christ.'¹⁸⁵

Bunyan was twenty-eight years of age when he published this work, and as he attacked the follies of his times, and what he deemed to be heresies, were exposed to Scripture light and condemned without mercy, it very naturally involved him in controversy. This brought forth the remarkable resources of his mind, which was stored with the Scriptures—his fearlessness—ready wit and keen retort, much

¹⁸⁵ Vol. ii., pp. 140, 141.

sanctified by an earnest desire for the salvation of his opponents. An extraordinary man, younger than himself, full of energy and enthusiasm, entered the lists with him; and in Edward Burrough, very properly called a son of thunder and of consolation, Bunyan found an able disputant. He was talented, pious, and fearless in his Master's work, and became eminently useful in laying the foundation of the Society of Friends. Soon after this he was numbered with the noble army of martyrs at the age of twenty-eight, being sacrificed in Newgate, at the shrine of religious intolerance.

At this time the Quakers were not united as a body, and consequently there was no test of character nor rules of discipline for those who assumed that name. They were very dissimilar men to their quiet and unobtrusive descendants. The markets, fairs, and every public concourse were attended by them, denouncing false weights and measures, drunkenness and villany, with the curses of the Almighty, calling upon the people, frequently with furious and fearful energy and powerful eloquence, to repent, and cry unto God, that his mercy might be extended to the salvation of their immortal souls. their zeal led them to many breaches of good manners. They would enter churches, and after the service, when the

quiet folks were thinking of gratifying their bodies with a substantial dinner, they were arrested by the violent declamation of a man or woman, frequently denouncing the priest as being the blind leading the blind. This naturally led to a scene of riot and confusion, in which the Quakers were in many cases handled with great barbarity. among these disturbers were mingled persons of bad character. The violence of sectarian feeling in the churches thus disturbed, made no discrimination between bad and good; they were equally subjected to the roughest treatment. Bunyan attacked those who denied that Christ had appeared in the world as Emmanuel, God with us 'in fashion as a man,' that by the infinite merits of his life and death imputed to believers, they might be made holy. His attack was also directed against those who refused obedience to the written Word, or who relied upon inward light in contradistinction and preference to the Bible. The title to Burrough's answer is a strange contrast to the violence of his language—*The Gospel of Peace Contended for in the Spirit of Meekness and Love*. In this spirit of meekness he calls his opponents 'crafty fowlers preying upon the innocent'; and lovingly exclaims, 'How long shall the righteous be a prey to your teeth, ye

subtle foxes; your dens are in darkness, and your mischief is hatched upon your beds of secret whoredoms.' The unhallowed spirit of the age mistook abuse for argument, and harsh epithets for faithful dealing.¹⁸⁶

Bunyan replied in *A Vindication of Gospel Truths*, to the great satisfaction of all his friends; and although Burrough answered this tract also, Bunyan very wisely allowed his railing opponent to have the last word, and applied his great powers to more important labours than caviling with one who in reality did not differ with him. The Quaker had been seriously misled by supposing that the Baptist was a hireling preacher; and we must be pleased that he was so falsely charged, because it elicited a crushing reply. Burrough, in reply to an imputation made by Bunyan, that the

¹⁸⁶ The American authors of a recent life of Burrough, (*William and Thomas Evans, Philadelphia, republished by Gilpin, London, 1851*), have given an unfair account of his controversy with Bunyan, drawn from Burrough's works in the shape of a supposed dialogue. Such a disputation can only be understood by reading both sides of the question. We unite with them in admiring the character of that young but noble martyr. They are, however, wrong in their conclusion that 'the meekness and gentleness of Christ softened and adorned *his whole character*.' He was one of those that are called in the *Holy War*, 'rough hewn men fit to break the ice.' Vol. iii. p. 270

Quakers were the false prophets alluded to in Scripture, observed that 'in those days there was not a Quaker heard of.' 'Friend,' replied Bunyan, 'thou hast rightly said, there was not a Quaker heard of indeed, though there were many Christians heard of then. Again, to defend thyself thou throwest the dirt in my face, saying, If we should diligently trace thee, we should find thee in the steps of the false prophets, through fancied words, through covetousness, making merchandise of souls, loving the wages of unrighteousness.' To which Bunyan replied; 'Friend, dost thou speak this as from thy own knowledge, or did any other tell thee so? However, that spirit that led thee out this way, is a lying spirit; for though I be poor, and of no repute in the world as to outward things, yet through grace I have learned, by the example of the apostle, to preach the truth, and also to work with my hands, both for mine own living, and for those that are with me, when I have opportunity. And I trust that the Lord Jesus, who hath helped me to reject the wages of unrighteousness hitherto, will also help me still, so that I shall distribute that which God hath given me freely, and not for filthy lucre sake.'¹⁸⁷ Thus had he

¹⁸⁷ Vol. ii., p. 201.

learned of the apostle to 'make the gospel of Christ without charge' (1 Cor 9:18); and upon this subject they strangely agreed. The same agreement existed between them upon the necessity of inward light from the Holy Spirit; without which they both considered the Bible to be a dead letter. The peculiar principle which separates the Quaker from every other Christian community, has nothing to do with the light within. Upon that subject all evangelical sects are agreed. The substantial difference is whether our Lord intended the work of the ministry to be exclusively a work of benevolence, charity, and love, binding all who are capable of using the talent intrusted to them, to do it without worldly reward. Surely every man may be satisfied in his own mind upon such a subject, without quarrelling with, or anathematizing each other. Bunyan and Burrough agreed, without knowing it, in the sentiments of their illustrious and learned cotemporary, John Milton, as to the ministry being without charge; and had they, when offended, followed their Master's rule, 'If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him along' (Matt 18:15), had they met, and on their knees before the throne of grace, sought from heaven wisdom and charity in defending Divine truth,

we can easily imagine that the approbation of God would have been manifested, by sending them on their important work in peaceful unity. They had been immersed in the same deep and solemn regeneration, and their ardent object was the same—to spread the influence of the kingdom of Christ.

When Christians of various denominations meet in prayer, how it melts down their sectarian bitterness. In this controversy, mention is made of a total abstinence movement in the time of the commonwealth, a germ which has put forth its mighty efforts in our more peaceful and happy times. A cloud now hovered over Bunyan, and threatened him with troubles of a very different kind to those of religious controversy. It will startle many of our readers to hear that, under the government of Cromwell, Bunyan was persecuted for his religious opinions and practices. Mr. Jukes, in his interesting *History of Bunyan's Church*, thus refers to it: 'Soon after he had resigned the office of deacon in 1657, the hand of persecution was raised against him; for at a meeting of the church, held on the 25th day of the twelfth month, in the same year (Feb. 1658), it was agreed that the 3d day of the next month be set apart to seek God in the behalf of our brother Wheeler,

who hath been long ill in body, whereby his ministry hath been hindered; and also about the church affairs, and the affairs of the nation; and for our brother Whitbread, who has long been ill; and also for counsel what to do with respect to the indictment of brother Bunyan at the assizes, for preaching at Eaton.’¹⁸⁸

Although persecution for religious opinions assumed a milder form under the Commonwealth, the great principles of religious freedom and equality were neither known nor practiced. The savage barbarities perpetrated upon Prynne, Bastwick, Burton, Leighton, and others, by Charles I and his archbishop, Laud, were calculated to open the eyes of the nation to the wickedness and inutility of sanguinary or even any laws to govern the conscience, or interfere with Divine worship. Alas! even those who suffered and survived became, in their turn, persecutors. The great object of persecution was the book of Common Prayer, the use of which was rigorously prohibited. The clergy were placed in an extremely awkward predicament. No sooner was the Act of Parliament passed ordering the Directory to be used and the Prayer-book to be laid aside, than the king, by

¹⁸⁸ P. 16.

his royal proclamation, issued from Oxford, November 13, 1645, ordered the Directory to be set aside, and the Common Prayer to be used in all the churches and chapels. Both these orders were under very severe penalties.

The Act against atheistical opinions, which passed August 9, 1650, illustrates the extraordinary state of the times. The preamble states that, 'Divers men and women have lately discovered themselves to be most monstrous in their opinions, and loose in all wicked and abominable practices.' It then enacts that—'Any one, *not being mad*, who pretends to be God Almighty, or who declares that unrighteousness, uncleanness, swearing, drunkenness, and the like filthiness and brutishness, or denying the existence of God, or who shall profess that murder, adultery, incest, fornication, uncleanness, filthy or lascivious speaking, are not wicked, sinful, impious, abominable, and detestable, shall be imprisoned, and, for a second offence, be transported.'¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ It is difficult to describe the state of those times. James Naylor rode into Bristol, a multitude accompanying him, strewing their scarfs, handkerchiefs, and garments on the ground for his horse to tread on, and singing, Hosanna in the highest; holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Israel. He was addressed as the everlasting son of righteousness, and prince of peace.

One of the Acts that affected Bunyan was passed April 26, 1645, cap. 52—‘None may preach but ordained ministers, except such as, intending the ministry, shall, for trial of their gifts, be allowed by such as be appointed by both houses of Parliament.’ This was amended by ‘an ordinance appointing commissioners for approbation of public preachers,’ March, 1653. In this Dr. Owen, Goodwin, Caryl, and many others are named, who were to judge of the candidate’s fitness to preach.¹⁹⁰ The Act which

His brain was bewildered with adulation. Women kissed his feet, and called him Jesus the Son of God. To stop the tumult, he was apprehended, and had he been simply subjected to the discipline of a mad-house, like Mr. Brothers of a later period, his blood would soon have recovered from its agitation. Instead of this, a grand parade was made by trying him before a Committee of the House of Commons, and, upon a report of the whole house, he was convicted of ‘horrid blasphemy,’ and it was by the small majority of fourteen that his life was spared. His cruel sentence was whipping, pillory, his tongue bored through with a red hot iron, a large letter B burnt into his forehead, and to be imprisoned during the pleasure of Parliament. By his followers he was considered a martyr; but the infatuation soon subsided. After his release, he was mercifully restored to his senses, and became a useful Quaker.

¹⁹⁰ These commissioners were called ‘triers,’ and, being high Calvinists, were nick-named Dr. Absolute, chairman, Mr. Fatality, Mr. Fri-babe, Mr. Dam-man, Mr. Narrow-grace, Mr. Indefectible, Mr. Dubious, and

more seriously touched Bunyan was that of May 2, 1648, which enacts that any person saying, 'that man is bound to believe no more than by his reason he can comprehend, or that the baptizing of infants is unlawful, or such baptism is void, and that such persons ought to be baptized again, and, in pursuance thereof, shall baptize any person formerly baptized, shall be imprisoned until he gives security that he will not publish or maintain the said error any more.'¹⁹¹ It was these intolerant

others. They turned out of their livings those clergymen who were proved to be immoral in their conduct, and others who did not come up to the orthodox standard. Of these, Mr. Walker, in his account of the sufferings of the clergy, gives a long list.

¹⁹¹ This Act or ordinance of Parliament involved some of our excellent ancestors in trouble. Hansard Knollys, Wm. Kiffin, Mr. Lamb, and many others, were imprisoned for short periods; Edward Barbour for eleven months. To avoid the informers, adult baptism was performed at midnight; for this Henry Denne suffered imprisonment. That gracious and valuable minister, Vavasor Powel also suffered a short imprisonment during the Protectorate; his life was afterwards sacrificed by a tedious imprisonment in the following reign. He was taken, with his flock, at a midnight meeting; and for safe custody they were locked up in the parish church, and there he preached without molestation. When conveyed to the justice's house, while waiting his worship's leisure, he again preached. When this magistrate arrived, he was

proceedings that led Milton to publish a poem *On the New Forcers of Conscience*, beginning with these lines—

‘Dare ye, for this, adjure the civil sword,
To force our consciences that Christ set free.’

This last-mentioned ungracious and uncalled-for Act against the Baptists, led some violent spirits to print a paper, entitled, ‘The Second Part of England’s new Chains Discovered,’ this was read in many Baptist meeting-houses, and the congregations called upon to subscribe it: fortunately, they were peaceably disposed, and denounced it to the House of Commons in a petition, dated April 2, 1649. Mr. Kiffin and the others were called in, when the Speaker returned them this answer—‘The House doth take notice of the good affection to the Parliament and public you have expressed, both in this petition and otherways. They have received satisfaction thereby, concerning your disclaiming that pamphlet, which gave such just offence to the Parliament, and also concerning your

violently enraged that his house should have been turned into a conventicle. He would have committed them at once to prison, but two of his daughters were so affected with the sermon, that, at their intercession, after severe threatenings, the preacher and his friends were set at liberty.

disposition to live peaceably, and in submission to the civil magistracy; your expressions whereof they account very Christian and seasonable. That for yourselves and other Christians, walking answerable to such professions as in this petition you make, they do assure you of liberty and protection, so far as God shall enable them, in all things consistent with godliness, honesty, and civil peace.¹⁹² Whether it was in consequence of this good understanding having remained between the Baptists and the Parliament, or from some application to the Protector, or from some unknown cause, the persecution was stayed;¹⁹³ for the indictment does not appear to have been tried, and Bunyan is found to have been present, and to have taken a part in the affairs of the church, until the 25th day of the 2d Month, 1660 (April), when 'it was ordered, according to our agreement, that our brother, John Bunyan, do prepare to speak a word at the next church meeting and that our brother Whiteman fail not to speak to him of it.'¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² From the original, in the editor's possession.

¹⁹³ Cotton Mather says that these laws were never carried to extremity, and were soon laid entirely by. *Hist. of America*.

¹⁹⁴ Jukes' *History of Bunyan's Church*, p. 16.

This invitation was very probably intended to introduce him to the congregation, with a view to his becoming an assistant pastor, but before it took place, he again appeared before the public as an author. The second production of his pen is a solemn and most searching work, founded upon the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, under the title of *A Few Sighs from Hell, or the Groans of a Damned Soul; by that poor and contemptible Servant of Jesus Christ, John Bunyan, 1658*. His humility led him to seek the patronage of his pastor; and Mr. Gifford, under the initials of J. G., wrote a preface of thirty-eight pages, but he dying before it reached the second edition, that preface was discontinued, and the title somewhat altered. The only copy of this first edition yet discovered is in the royal library at the British Museum. It appears to have belonged to Charles II, who, with more wit than decorum, has bound it up, as a supplement, to an extremely licentious book, as if it was intended to say, 'Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chamber of death'; or that a licentious life endeth in 'sighs from hell.'

Mr. Gifford, in this preface, after strongly recommending the work, speaks of the author in the most respectful and affectionate terms,

showing that his zeal, and energy, and great usefulness had excited the envy of many who ought to have encouraged him as one taught by the Spirit, and used in his hand to do souls good—‘divers have felt the power of the Word delivered by him; and I doubt not but that many more may, if the Lord continues him in his work’; and he gives this as a reason ‘why the archers have shot so sorely at him’; and then scripturally proves that no objection should be made to his valuable services from his want of human learning. As the whole of this interesting preface is accurately reprinted with the book, the reader is referred to it without further extracts.¹⁹⁵ The Editor’s introduction to these *Sighs* was written under very solemn feelings, produced by reading this searching treatise. The rich man is intended to personify those who, neglecting salvation, die in their sins, while Lazarus personates all those who humbly receive salvation as the gift of God; who, however they may suffer in this world, retain their integrity to death. In this parable, a voice is heard from the place of torment—the cry is a ‘drop of water,’ the slightest relief to unutterable woes; and that a messenger may be sent to warn his relatives,

¹⁹⁵ *Works*, vol. iii., p. 667; especially pp. 672, 673.

lest they should be plunged into the same torment. The impassable gulf defies the vain request, while the despised Christian reposes in everlasting and indescribable enjoyment. This little volume was very popular; nine editions were printed and sold in the author's lifetime, besides pirated copies. Bunyan's feelings and mode of preaching are well described in the *Grace Abounding*,¹⁹⁶ and will be felt by every attentive reader of his *Sighs from Hell*:—'When I have been preaching, I thank God, my heart hath often, with great earnestness, cried to God that he would make the Word effectual to the salvation of the soul. Wherefore I did labour so to speak the Word, as that thereby, if it were possible, the sin and person guilty might be particularized by it.'

'And when I have done the exercise, it hath gone to my heart, to think the Word should now fall as rain on stony places; still wishing from my heart, O! that they who have heard me speak this day, did but see as I do, what sin, death, hell, and the curse of God is; and also what the grace, and love, and mercy

¹⁹⁶ No. 280-317, vol. i., p. 42-46.

of God is, through Christ, to men in such a case as they are who are yet estranged from him.

‘For I have been in my preaching, especially when I have been engaged in the doctrine of life by Christ, without works, as if an angel of God had stood by at my back to encourage me.’

Such feelings are not limited to Bunyan, but are most anxiously felt by all our pious ministers. How fervently ought their hearers to unite in approaches to the mercy-seat, that the Divine blessing may make the Word fruitful.

In those days it was not an uncommon thing for the hearers, at the close of the sermon, to put questions to the preacher, sometimes to elicit truth, or to express a cordial union of sentiments, or to contradict what the minister had said. Upon one occasion, Mr. Bunyan, after his sermon, had a singular dispute with a scholar. It is narrated by Mr. C. Doe, who was a personal friend and great admirer of our author, and who probably heard it from his own mouth, and will be found in the *Struggler*, inserted vol. iii., p. 767.

It is the common taunt of the scorner, and sometimes a stone of stumbling to the

inquirer, that, while the Christian believes in the intensity of the Saviour's sufferings, and that God was made flesh that he might offer himself as an atonement to redeem mankind, yet few are saved, in comparison with those who are lost—broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many walk therein, while few attempt the narrow way to life; that four sorts of hearers are described by the Saviour, only one receiving the truth; as if the doleful realms of darkness and misery would be more thickly peopled than those of light and happiness, and Satan prove stronger than Christ. Such cavilers forget that the far greater portion of mankind die in infancy, purified by the Saviour's sufferings, and enter heaven in the perfection of manhood. As Mr. Toplady justly observes, what a vista does this open to the believer through the dreary gloom of the infidel! They forget, also, that all those who gain the narrow path, once helped to throng the road to destruction; and that the hearers, whose hardened deceitful hearts rejected the gospel under one sermon, may, by mercy, have them opened to receive it under another. And who dares to limit the Almighty? The power that prepared the spirit of the thief, when upon the cross, even in his last moments, for the pure enjoyments of heaven, still exists. Is the

arm of the Lord shortened that he cannot save? The myriads of heaven will be found countless as are the sands upon the sea-shore, and the harmony of their worship shall swell like the voice of many waters and mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluja, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.' What! Satan stronger than the Almighty Redeemer? Perish the thought. Still how common is the question, which one of the disciples put to his master, 'Lord, are there few that be saved?' How striking the answer! 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate' (Luke 13:23). Encumber not thy mind with such needless inquiries, but look to thine own salvation.

Another very singular anecdote is related, which proves that the use of the churches was not then limited to any one sect. 'Being to preach in a church in a country village (before the restoration of king Charles) in Cambridgeshire, and the people being gathered together in the church-yard, a Cambridge scholar, and none of the soberest of 'em neither, enquired what the meaning of that concourse of people was, it being upon the week day, and being told, That one Bunyan, a tinker, was to preach there, he gave a boy twopence to hold his horse, saying, He was resolved to hear the tinker prate; and so went into the church to hear him. But God met with

him there by his ministry, so that he came out much changed, and would, by his good will, hear none but the tinker for a long time after, he himself becoming a very eminent preacher in that county afterwards. This story I know to be true, having many a time discoursed with the man, and, therefore, I could not but set it down as a singular instance of the power of God that accompanied his ministry.¹⁹⁷

Bunyan's veneration for the Scriptures, as the *only* source and standard of religious knowledge, led him into frequent controversies. In common with the Christian world, he wholly depended upon the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit to impress the Divine truths of revelation upon the mind, and also to illustrate, open, and apply the sacred writings to the heart of man. Unable to read the Bible in the original languages in which it was written, he wisely made use of every aid that might enable him to study its contents with the greatest advantage. It was his habit to examine the two translations then in common use. The present authorized version, first published in 1611, is that to which he usually refers; comparing it with the favourite Puritan version made by the refugees

¹⁹⁷ *Life and Death of Mr. J. Bunyan*, 1700, p. 27.

at Geneva, and first printed in 1560. He sometimes quotes the Genevan, and so familiar were the two translations, that in several instances he mixes them in referring from memory to passages of holy writ.

Upon one of his journeys, being upon the road near Cambridge, he was overtaken by a scholar, who concluded that he was an itinerant preacher, whether from having heard him, or observing his serious deportment, or his Bible reading, does not appear, although the latter was probably the reason. But the student determined to have a brush with him, and said, 'How dare you preach from the Bible, seeing you have not the original, being not a scholar?' Then said Mr. Bunyan, 'Have you the original?' 'Yes, said the scholar.' 'Nay, but,' said Mr. Bunyan, 'have you the very self-same original copies that were written by the penmen of the Scriptures, prophets and apostles?' 'No,' said the scholar, 'but we have the true copies of these originals.' 'How do you know that?' said Mr. Bunyan. 'How?' said the scholar. 'Why, we believe what we have is a true copy of the original.' 'Then,' said Mr. Bunyan, 'so do I believe our English Bible is a true copy of the original.' Then away rid the

scholar.¹⁹⁸ As neither persecution nor railing, nor temptations, nor the assaults of Satan, produced any effect upon Bunyan to prevent his preaching, but rather excited his zeal and energy, means of a more deadly nature were resorted to, to injure or prevent his usefulness. As Mr. Gifford said, 'The archers shot sorely at him' by the most infamous and unfounded slanders, which he thus narrates:—

‘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

¹⁹⁸ Vol. iii., p. 767.

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, yea, two wives at once, and the like. Now these slanders, with the others, 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.”

‘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, they shall be ashamed that falsely accuse my good conversation in Christ. 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. I rejoice in reproaches for Christ’s sake. My foes have missed their mark in this their shooting at me. I am not the man. If all the fornicators and adulterers in England were

hanged by the neck till they be dead, John Bunyan, the object of their envy, would be still alive and well. I know not whether there be such a thing as a woman breathing under the copes of the whole heaven, but by their apparel, their children, or by common fame, except my wife.

‘And in this I admire the wisdom of God, that he made me shy of women from my first conversion until now. When I have seen good men salute those women that they have visited, I have made my objection against it; and when they have answered, that it was but a piece of civility, I have told them, it is not a comely sight. Some indeed have urged the holy kiss; but then I have asked why they made baulks, why they did salute the most handsome, and let the ill-favoured go. Not that I have been thus kept, because of any goodness in me, more than any other, but God has been

merciful to me, and has kept me, to whom I pray that he will keep me still, not only from this, but every evil way and work, and preserve me to his heavenly kingdom. Amen.'¹⁹⁹

Notwithstanding all Mr. Bunyan's care to avoid the slightest appearance of evil, yet being over-persuaded to an act of humanity and civility to one of his female members, he was most unjustly calumniated. The circumstances which gave rise to this slander are narrated in James's *Abstract of God's dealings with Mrs. Agnes Beaumont*, of which an abridged account will be found in a note to the *Grace Abounding*.²⁰⁰ It exhibits in a remarkable manner how easily such reports are raised against the holiest men.

Another still more extraordinary and unnatural charge was made against Bunyan. He lived at a period when witchcraft, witches, and wizards were in the height of fashion. Any poor woman who had outlived or had become a burden to her natural protectors, and whose temper was soured by infirmities, especially if her language was vulgar and her appearance

¹⁹⁹ *Grace Abounding*, vol. i., p. 46.

²⁰⁰ See Note, vol. i., p. 45.

repulsive, ran the risk of being defamed as a witch. If in her neighbourhood a murrain seized the cattle, or a disease entered a family which baffled the little knowledge of the country practitioners—such as epilepsy, St. Vitus' dance, or St. Anthony's fire—it was ascribed to witchcraft, and vengeance was wreaked upon any reputed witch. In many parts of England she was tried by a kind of Lynch law, in a very summary manner. Her hands and feet being bound together, she was thrown into deep water; if she sank, and was drowned, she was declared innocent; if she swam, it was a proof of guilt, and a little form of law condemned her to the stake or halter. In Scotland, they were treated with greater barbarity; they were awfully tortured—thumb-screws, the boots to crush their knees, pricking them with needles or awls night and day, to prevent a moment's rest, were persevered in—until a confession was extorted, to be followed by a frightful death. The ignorance that prevailed may account for the faith of the vulgar in witchcraft; but that learned divines, and even the enlightened Judge Hale, should fall into the delusion, is most surprising. The charge against Bunyan was, that he had circulated some paper libeling a most respectable widow, a Quakeress, as a witch.

This paper cannot now be discovered; but the story is so perfectly ridiculous as to render it quite improbable that Bunyan had any knowledge of it. The account is contained in a rare pamphlet of four leaves, preserved in the very curious library of the Society of Friends at Devonshire House, Bishopsgate. It is entitled, 'A lying wonder discovered, and the strange and terrible news from Cambridge proved false; which false news is published in a libel, concerning a wicked slander cast upon a Quaker; but the author of the said libel was ashamed to subscribe his name to it. Also, this contains an answer to John Bunion's paper, touching the said imagined witchcraft, which he hath given forth to your wonderment, as he saith; but it is also proved a lie and a slander by many credible witnesses hereafter mentioned.'²⁰¹ It narrates that Margaret Pryor, of Long Stanton, indicted, on the 28th July, 1659, the widow Morlin, a Quaker lady, for having, on the 29th November, 1657, took her out of bed from her husband in the night, put a bridle in her mouth, and transformed her into a bay mare, and with a Quaker, William Allen, rode upon her to Maddenly House, a distance

²⁰¹ 4tp. London, 1659. A MS copy is in the editor's possession.

of four miles; that they made her fast to the latch of the door, while she saw them partake of a feast of mutton, rabbits, and lamb [lamb in November!!]; that they shone like angels, and talked of doctrine, and that she knew some of the guests; that her feet were a little sore, but not her hands, nor was she dirty. In examining her, the judge elicited that she made no mention of the story for a year and three-quarters, and that her deposition then was that some evil spirit changed her into a bay-horse; that her hands and feet were lamentably bruised, and changed as black as a coal; that she had her chemise on, which was all bloody, from her sides being rent and torn with the spurs. All this was unknown to her husband; nor had she accounted for her chemise so strangely fitting a horse or mare. It was proved that the complainant had received money for bringing the charge, and pretended to have burnt some of her hair with elder-bark, as a counter-charm to prevent it happening again. The judge summed up with observing that it was a mere dream or phantasy, and that the complainant was the sorceress, by practicing incantations in burning her hair and bark. The jury found a verdict of—not guilty; and thus two innocent persons were saved by an enlightened judge from an ignominious death.

It is almost incredible that, even after the trial, priests and magistrates who had promoted the prosecution professed to believe that the charge was true. This singular narrative, in defence of the poor persecuted Quakeress, is signed James Blackley, an alderman, George Whitehead, and three others. No one can believe that John Bunyan gave credit to such a tale, or mentioned it to the injury of the parties accused. His reply was, that these slanders were devised by the devil and his instruments—‘God knows that I am innocent.’ The probability is, that the pamphlet called *Strange News from Cambridge* had been sent to him, and that he gave it to some Quaker to answer.

Considering the almost universal belief in witchcraft in those days—that Baxter, Cotton Mather, Clarke, and many of our most eminent divines, believed in it—and that Bunyan received the Scriptures in our authorized translation with the deepest reverence, it becomes an interesting inquiry how far he believed in witchcraft, possessions, incantations, and charms. He was persuaded that Satan could appear to mankind in the shape of animals, and in the human form. Had any one doubted the possibility of these appearances, he would at that time have been

called an atheist and an unbeliever in the existence of God and of separate spirits. Thus he argues, that 'If sin can make one who was sometimes a glorious angel in heaven now so to abuse himself as to become, *to appearance*, as a filthy frog, a toad, a rat, a cat, a fly, a mouse, or a dog, to serve its ends upon a poor mortal, that it might gull them of everlasting life, no marvel if the soul is so beguiled as to sell itself from God and all good for so poor a nothing as a momentary pleasure.'²⁰² When speaking of the impropriety of excluding a pious person from the Lord's table, because of a difference of opinion as to water baptism, he says, 'Do you more to the openly profane—yea, to all wizards and witches in the land?'²⁰³ In quoting Isaiah 13, he, taught by the Puritan version, puts the key in the margin—'Wild beasts of the desert shall be there and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures. And owls shall dwell there, and satyrs [that is, the hobgoblins, or devils] shall dance there.'²⁰⁴ He gave no credence to the appearance of departed spirits, except in the hour of death; and then, while between time and eternity, he thought that in some rare cases spiritual sight was

²⁰² Vol. i., p. 683.

²⁰³ Vol. iii., p. 445.

²⁰⁴ Vol. iii., p. 48.

given to see objects otherwise invisible.²⁰⁵

He fully believed in the power of Satan to suggest evil thoughts to the pious Christian, and to terrify and punish the wicked, even in this life; but never hints, through all his works, at any power of Satan to communicate to man any ability to injure his fellows. What a contrast is there between the *Pilgrim of Loretto*, with its witch and devil story, mentioned in the introduction to the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and Bunyan's great allegorical work! Conjurors and fortune-tellers, or witches and wizards, were vagabonds deserving for their fraudulent pretensions,²⁰⁶ punishment by a few months' imprisonment to hard labour, but not a frightful death. In all these things this great man was vastly in advance of his age. He had studied nature from personal observation and the book of revelation. In proportion as the laws of nature are understood, the crafty pretensions of conjurors and witches become exposed to contempt. Bunyan never believed that the great and unchangeable principles which the Creator has ordained to govern nature could be disturbed by the freaks of poor old crazy women, for purposes trifling and

²⁰⁵ Vol. ii., p. 635.

²⁰⁶ Vol. iii., p. 680.

insignificant. No, such a man could never have circulated a report that a woman was turned into a bay mare, and her chemise into a horse-cloth and saddle! Unbridled sectarian feeling perverted some remark of his, probably made with the kindest intention, into a most incredible slander.

Among the many singularities of that very interesting period, one was the number of religious tournaments or disputations that were held all over the country. The details of one of these, between Fisher, a Jesuit, and Archbishop Laud, occupy a folio volume. In these wordy duels the Baptists and Quakers bore a prominent part. To write a history of them would occupy more space than our narrow limits will allow. Bunyan entered into one of these controversies with the Quakers at Bedford Market-cross,²⁰⁷ and probably held others in the church, those buildings being at times available under the Protectorate for such purposes. Bunyan was met by the son of thunder, Edward Burrough, who was also assisted by Anne Blackly, a remarkably pious woman and an able disputant. Bunyan pressed them with the Scriptures, and dealt such

²⁰⁷ See postscript to *The True Faith of the Gospel of Peace*, British Museum.

severe blows that Mrs. Blackly, in the public assembly, bid him throw away the Scriptures. To which he answered, 'No, for then the devil would be too hard for me.' The great controversy was as to Christ within his saints. Bunyan proved, by the holy oracles, that Christ had ascended, and was at the right hand of God; to which Mrs. Blackly answered, that he preached up an idol, and used conjuration and witchcraft. To the charge of spiritual conjuration and witchcraft he made no reply, it being unworthy his notice; but called upon her to repent of her wickedness in calling Christ an idol. With regard to his presence in his saints, he reminded her, that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.²⁰⁸ As a matter of course, both parties claimed the victory; and although the hearers were puzzled, doubtless much good was effected.

These were comparatively happy days for God's fearers—much valuable seed was sown, and the light of divine truth penetrated into many a benighted town and village. At length dark and portentous clouds rolled over the horizon. The Protector had entered into rest; his son was wholly incapable of taking the helm of public affairs. The exiled king, Charles

²⁰⁸ Vol. ii., p. 201.

II, declared his determination to publish an amnesty for all political offences; and from Breda issued his proclamation for liberty of conscience, and the kingdom was cajoled and sold. The king was scarcely seated on his throne, and armed with power, when he threw off the mask. Men who had faithfully performed very painful duties under the authority of Acts of Parliament were put to death, others imprisoned and transported, and uniformity in religion was re-enacted under ferocious penalties. Bunyan was to endure a cruel imprisonment, with all the fears of an ignominious death. 'Now,' he says, 'as Satan laboured by reproaches and slanders, to make me vile among my countrymen, that if possible my preaching might be made of none effect, so there was added hereto a long and tedious imprisonment, that thereby I might be frightened from my service for Christ, and the world terrified and made afraid to hear me preach, of which I shall in the next place give you a brief account.'²⁰⁹

THE FIFTH PERIOD. BUNYAN SUFFERS PERSECUTION, AND A

²⁰⁹ Vol. i., p. 46.

**LONG AND DANGEROUS
IMPRISONMENT, FOR REFUSING TO
ATTEND THE COMMON PRAYER
SERVICE, AND FOR PREACHING.**

—‘O happie he who doth possesse
Christ for his fellow prisoner, who doth
gladde
With heavenly sunbeams, goales that are
most sad.’

*(Written by William Prynne, on his Prison
wall, in the Tower.)*

The men who arraign their fellows before any standard of orthodoxy, or claim the right of dictating forms of belief or modes of worship under pains or penalties, are guilty of assuming the prerogative of the Most High, and of claiming, for their frail opinions, infallibility. Such are guilty of high treason against the Majesty of heaven—and all their machinations have a direct tendency to destroy human happiness—the wealth of the nation, and that universal good-will among men which the gospel is intended to establish. Such men present to us the various features of antichrist, the dread enemy of mankind.

The duty of every intelligent creature is to

watch the operations of nature, that he may be led to just perceptions of the greatness of the Creator, and the goodness of his immutable laws. Soon he finds his perceptions dim, and is conscious of evil propensities, which baffle all his efforts at sinless perfection. He finds nothing in nature to solve the solemn inquiry how sin is to be pardoned, and evil thoughts and habits to be rooted out. The convinced sinner then feels the necessity of a direct revelation from God; and in the Bible alone he finds that astounding declaration, which leaves all human philosophy at an immeasurable distance—‘Ye must be born again.’ God only can effect the wondrous change—man, priest, prophet, or magi, can do him no good—his terror-stricken conscience drives him to his Creator, and faith in the Redeemer causes consolation to abound.

In every kingdom of the world, the Christian inquirer is met by the opposition of antichrist, in some form or other, attempts will be made to limit his free-born spirit to human inventions and mediations in seeking Divine mercy. He feels that he is bound, by all his hopes of happiness, here and hereafter, to obey God rather than man, in everything pertaining to spiritual religion. In his simple obedience to the Word of God, he braves all dangers, sure of

the Divine blessing and support while encountering obloquy, contempt, allurements, and persecution, in its varied polluted forms and appalling cruelties.

After the decease of Oliver Cromwell, it soon became apparent that the exiled king would be restored. In the prospect of that event, Charles II promised a free pardon to all his subjects, excepting only such persons as should be excepted by parliament; and 'we do declare a liberty to tender consciences, and that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matters of religion, which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom.' Who could imagine, that, in the face of this solemn declaration, acts, the most oppressive and tyrannical, would be passed—compelling pretended uniformity in belief and real uniformity in the mode of public worship—driving the most pious and useful clergymen from their pulpits and livings—preventing them from becoming tutors or schoolmasters—and not suffering them to live within five miles of a city or town. Ruinous penalties were inflicted, not only on every minister, but upon every hearer, who met to worship God in private houses or in the fields and woods. Christians, convinced of the wickedness of such laws, strove, by every

possible means, to evade the penalties, with a stern determination to worship God in the way that their conscience led them. They met their beloved ministers in private places, and at the most unseasonable hours. It is said that Bunyan, to avoid discovery, went from a friend's house disguised as a carter; with his white frock, wide-awake cap, and his whip in his hand, to attend a private meeting in a sheltered field or barn. To prevent these meetings, severe and almost arbitrary penalties were enforced, a considerable part of which went to the informers—men of debauched habits and profligate principles. With all their vigilance, these prohibited meetings could not be prevented. In some cases, the persecuted disciples of a persecuted Lord took houses adjoining each other, and, by opening internal communications, assembled together. In some cases, the barn or room in which they met, had a door behind the pulpit, by which the preacher could escape. A curious letter, preserved in the archives at Devonshire House, states, that when a Christian assembly was held near Devonshire Square, while the minister was in his sermon, the officers and trained bands entered the meeting-house. The preacher immediately ceased preaching, and gave out the lines of a hymn, which the

congregation joined in singing, and the officers waited till the devotional exercise was ended. The preacher, taking advantage of their hesitation, made his escape by a door at the back of the pulpit; 'thus,' says the quaint Quaker, 'he choked the informers off with his hymn.' In the *Life of Badman* are some illustrative anecdotes relating to informers and their violent ends, with an interesting cut of a religious meeting in the fields. One informer is in a neighbouring tree, to identify the meeters; while in the distance, another is running for the officers, with this verse under the print:—

'Informer, art thou in the tree?
Take heed, lest there thou hanged be:
Look likewise to thy foot-hold well;
Lest, if thou slip, thou fall to hell.'

In many cases the justices considered a field preacher to be equally guilty with a regicide.²¹⁰ One of the informers, named W. S., was very diligent in this business; 'he would watch a-nights, climb trees, and range the woods a-days, if possible to find out the meeters, for then they were forced to meet in the fields.' At length he was stricken by the hand of God, and died a most wretched

²¹⁰ Macaulay's *History of England*, vol. i.

object.²¹¹ The cruelties that were inflicted upon Dissenters are scarcely credible. Penn, the Quaker, gives this narrative of facts:—The widow's mite hath not escaped their hands; they have made her cow the forfeit of her conscience, not leaving her a bed to lie on, nor a blanket to cover her; and what is yet more barbarous, and helps to make up this tragedy, the poor helpless orphan's milk, boiling over the fire, was flung away, and the skillet made part of their prize; that, had not nature in neighbours been stronger than cruelty in informers and officers, to open her bowels for their relief, they must have utterly perished.²¹² One of these infamous, hard-hearted wretches in Bedford, was stricken, soon after, with death; and such had been his notorious brutality, that his widow could not obtain a hearse, but was obliged to carry his body to the grave in a cart.

It is gratifying to leave these horrors—these stains upon our national history—for a moment, to record an event which took place about fifty years back. The Rev. S. Hillyard, the pastor of Bunyan's church, thus writes:—'When our meeting-house was lately repaired,

²¹¹ *Life of Badman.*

²¹² Penn's *England's Interest*, 4to, 1676, p. 2.

we were allowed, by the Lord Lieutenant and the justices, to carry on our public worship, for a quarter of a year in the town-hall, where, if it had been standing in Mr. Bunyan's time, he must have been tried and committed to jail for preaching.' How different our position from that of our pilgrim forefathers.

The justices, if the law had allowed them, would, from the first, have prevented Bunyan's preaching. When they had the power, he possessed nothing to excite the cupidity of an informer: this, with the caution of his friends, saved him, for some months, from being apprehended; they met privately in barns, milk-houses, and stables, or in any convenient place in which they were not likely to be disturbed. In addition to these services, every opportunity was embraced to visit his friends—praying with them, and administering consolation, arming them with a steady resolve to be patient in suffering, and to trust in God for their safety and reward. At length an information was laid, and he was caught in the very act of worshipping God with some pious neighbours. Bunyan's account of this event is deeply interesting; but the want of sufficient space prevents my giving more than an abstract of it, referring the reader to his *Grace Abounding* for fuller details.

On November 12, 1660, as the winter was setting in, having been invited to preach at Samsell, in Bedfordshire, he prepared a sermon upon these words—‘Dost thou believe in the Son of God?’ (John 9:35); from which he intended ‘to show the absolute need of faith in Jesus Christ, and that it was also a thing of the highest concern for men to inquire into, and to ask their own hearts whether they had faith or no.’²¹³ He had then been a preacher of the glorious gospel of Christ for five or six years, without any interruption; for, although indicted, he had continued his useful career, and through grace had received great encouragement and eminent proofs of the Divine blessing.

Francis Wingate, a neighbouring justice of the peace, having heard of the intended meeting, issued his warrant to bring the preacher before him. The intention of the magistrate was whispered about, and came to Bunyan’s ears before the meeting was held, probably to give him an opportunity of escape. His friends, becoming alarmed for his safety, advised him to forego the opportunity. It was a trying moment for him; he had a beloved wife to whom he had not been long married, and

²¹³ Vol. ii., p. 593.

four dear children, one of them blind, depending upon his daily labour for food. If he escaped, he might continue his stolen opportunities of doing good to the souls of men. He hesitated but for a few minutes for private prayer; he had hitherto shown himself hearty and courageous in preaching, and it was his business to encourage the timid flock. 'Therefore, thought I, if I should now run and make an escape, it will be of a very ill savour in the country; what will my weak and newly converted brethren think of it? If I should run, now there was a warrant out for me, I might, by so doing, make them afraid to stand when great words only should be spoken to them.' He retired into a close, privately, to seek Divine direction, and came back resolved to abide the will of God. It was the first attempt, near Bedford, to apprehend a preacher of the gospel, and he thus argued with himself—'If God, of his mercy, should choose me to go upon the forlorn hope, 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 should follow after. And I thought that the world thereby would take occasion at my cowardliness, to have blasphemed the

gospel.’²¹⁴ These considerations brought him to the noble resolution of fulfilling his duty, under all its difficulties and dangers. In these reasonings the same honourable decision of mind animated him which impelled Daniel, and the three Hebrew youths, to violate the wicked laws of the nation in which they lived, because these laws were opposed to the will of God. He and they, as well as the apostles, judged for themselves, and opposed statutes or ancient customs which, in their opinion, were contrary to the Divine law by which they were to be judged at the solemn and great day. Nor did they, in the prospect of the most dread personal sufferings, hesitate to follow the convictions of their minds. Some laws are more honoured in the breach than in the observance of them. The law of Pharaoh to destroy the male children of the Israelites, in ancient times, and the present Popish laws of Tuscany, that the Bible shall not be read, are laws so contrary to common sense, and the most sacred duties of man, that ‘God dealt well’ with those who broke them in Egypt, as he has ever dealt with those who have thus honoured him. The millions of prayers that were offered up for a blessing upon the confessors, Madiai,

²¹⁴ Vol. i., p. 51.

have been answered. Had they perished in the prisons of Tuscany, they would have joined the noble army of martyrs before the throne of God, to witness his judgments upon that persecuting church which has shed so much holy blood.

When Bunyan was advised to escape by dismissing the meeting, which consisted of about forty persons, he replied, 'No, by no means; I will not stir, neither will I have the meeting dismissed. Come, be of good cheer, let us not be daunted; our cause is good, we need not be ashamed of it; to preach God's Word is so good a work, that we shall be well rewarded if we suffer for that.'²¹⁵ All this took place about an hour before the officers arrived. The service was commenced with prayer at the time appointed, the preacher and hearers had their Bibles in their hands to read the text, when the constable and his attendants came in, and, exhibiting the warrant, ordered him to lave the pulpit and come down; but he mildly told him that he was about his Master's business, and must rather obey his Lord's voice than that of man. Then a constable was ordered to fetch him down, who, coming up and taking hold of his coat, was about to

²¹⁵ Vol. i., p. 51.

remove him, when Mr. Bunyan fixed his eyes steadfastly upon him; having his Bible open in his hand, the man let go, looked pale, and retired; upon which he said to the congregation, 'See how this man trembles at the Word of God.' Truly did one of his friends say, 'he had a sharp, quick eye.' But being commanded in the king's name, he went with the officer, accompanied by some of his friends, to the magistrate's residence. Before they left, the constable allowed him to speak a few words to the people of counsel and encouragement. He declared that it was a mercy when called to suffer upon so good an account; that it was of grace that they had been kept from crimes, which might have caused their apprehension as thieves and murderers, or for some wickedness; but by the blessing of God it was not so, but, as Christians, they were called to suffer for well-doing; and that we had better be persecuted than the persecutors. The constable took him to the justice's house, but as he was from home, to save the expense and trouble of charging a watch to secure his prisoner, he allowed him to go home, one of his friends undertaking to be answerable for his appearance the next day. On the following morning they went to the constable and then to the justice. The celebrated Quaker, John

Roberts, managed an affair of that kind better. There was plenty of time to have held and dismissed the meeting before the constable arrived, and then he might have done as Roberts did—made the best of his way to the magistrate's house, and demanded, 'Dost thou want me, old man?' and when asked whether or not he went to church, his ready reply was, 'Yes, sometimes I go to the church, and sometimes the church comes to me.'²¹⁶

When Bunyan and the constable came before Justice Wingate, he inquired what the meeters did, and what they had with them; suspecting that they met armed, or for treasonable practices: but when the constable told him that they were unarmed, and merely assembled to preach and hear the Word, he could not well tell what to say. Justice Wingate was not the only magistrate who had felt difficulties as to the construction of the persecuting acts of 35 Eliz. and 15 Chas. II. Had he taken an opinion, as one of the justices at that time did, it might have saved him from the infamy and guilt of punishing an innocent man. The case was this:—'Two persons of insolent behaviour, calling themselves

²¹⁶ This very interesting Memoir was published by the Society of Friends, 1825.

informers, demanded, on their evidence of having been present, without summons or hearing in presence of the accused, that a fine of £100 should be levied; they were at the meeting and heard no Common Prayer service.' The opinion was that there must be evidence showing the intent, and that the meeting was held under *colour and pretence* of any exercise of religion to concoct sedition.²¹⁷ Mr. Wingate asked Bunyan why he did not follow his calling and go to church? to which he replied, that all his intention was to instruct and counsel people to forsake their sins, and that he did, without confusion, both follow his calling and preach the Word. At this the angry justice ordered his commitment to jail, refusing bail, unless he would promise to give up preaching. While his mittimus was preparing, he had a short controversy with an old enemy of the truth, Dr. Lindale, and also with a persecuting justice, Mr. Foster, who, soon after, sorely vexed the people of God at Bedford. They tried their utmost endeavours to persuade him to promise not to preach; a word from him might have saved his liberty; but it was a word which would have sacrificed his

²¹⁷ *Case and Opinion*, under the head 'Conventicles,' British Museum. There is also a rare Tract, to prove that the Persecuting Acts expired Oct. 24th, 1670.

religious convictions, and these were dearer to him than life itself. This was a trying moment, but he had been forewarned of his danger by the extraordinary temptation *to sell Christ* narrated in his *Grace Abounding*. His feelings, while they were conducting him to the prison, were so cheering as to enable him to forget his sorrows; he thus describes them—‘Verily, as I was going forth of the doors I had much ado to forbear saying to them, that I carried the peace of God along with me; and, blessed be the Lord, I went away to prison with God’s comfort in my poor soul.’²¹⁸

Tradition points out the place in which this eminently pious man was confined, as an ancient prison, built with the bridge over the river Ouse, supported on one of the piers near the middle of the river.²¹⁹ As the bridge was only four yards and a half wide, the prison

²¹⁸ Vol. i., p. 54. How unspeakable the mercy, that the persecutor cannot plunge his implements of torture into the spirit, nor prevent its intercourse with heaven! A very deeply interesting narrative of all the particulars of this examination and form of trial, was recorded by the sufferer. See vol. i., p. 50.

²¹⁹ There were three prisons in Bedford—the county jail, the bridewell, and the tower jail. No decisive evidence has been discovered as to which prison Bunyan was committed. Two views of the bridge and prison are given in the plate at p. 63, vol. i.

must have been very small. Howard, the philanthropist, visited the Bedford prison, that which was dignified as the county jail about 1788, and thus describes it:—‘The men and women felons associate together; their night-rooms are two dungeons. Only one court for debtors and felons; and no apartment for the jailer.’²²⁰ Imagination can hardly realize the miseries of fifty or sixty pious men and women, taken from a place of public worship and incarcerated in such dens or dungeons with felons, as was the case while Bunyan was a prisoner. Twelve feet square was about the extent of the walls; for it occupies but one pier between the center arches of the bridge. How properly does the poor pilgrim call it a certain DEN! What an abode for men and women who had been made by God kings and priests—the heirs of heaven! The eyes of Howard, a Dissenter, penetrated these dens, these hidden things of darkness, these abodes of cruelty. He revealed what lay and clerical magistrates ought to have published centuries before, that they were not fit places in which to imprison any, even the worst of criminals. He denounced them, humanity shuddered at the

²²⁰ Howard’s *Account of Lazarettos*, &c. 4to, 1789, p. 150.

discovery, and they were razed to their foundations. In this den God permitted his honoured servant, John Bunyan, to be incarcerated for more than twelve years of the prime of his life. A man, whose holy zeal for the salvation of sinners, whose disinterested labours, whose sufferings for Christ prove his apostolical descent much better than those who claim descent from popes, and Wolsey or Bonner—those fiends in human shape.

Bedford bridge was pulled down in the year 1811, when the present handsome bridge was built. One of the workmen employed upon the ruins found, among the rubbish, where the prison had stood, a ring made of fine gold, bearing an inscription which affords strong presumptive evidence that it belonged to our great allegorist. Dr. Abbot, a neighbouring clergyman, who had daily watched the labours of the workmen, luckily saw it, and saved it from destruction. He constantly wore it, until, drawing near the end of his pilgrimage, in 1817, he took it off his own finger and placed it upon that of his friend Dr. Bower, then curate of Elstow,²²¹ and at present the dean of

²²¹ Elstow is a perpetual curacy or vicarage, worth at that time only £35 per annum! forming one of the discreditable anomalies of the church, in the division of its immense revenues.

Manchester, charging him to keep it for his sake. This ring must have been a present from some person of property, as a token of great respect for Bunyan's pious character, and probably from an indignant sense of his unjust and cruel imprisonment. By the kind permission of the dean, we are enabled to give a correct representation of this curious relic.²²²²²³

²²² He has favoured us with the following description of it:—'The ring is of fine gold, very like in colour to that which has been brought into this country from California. The head is, I think, engraven, but the letters have not that sharpness about them which indicates the engraving tool; and the I. B. are undoubted indents made after the ring was finished.' It is not the usual emblem of a mourning gift, for that would have the cross-bones under the skull; it was more probably given as a special mark of esteem. Three things are certain—1st, That it so valuable a gift excited the poor man's pride, its loss must have been a serious annoyance to one whose family was dependent upon his daily labour. 2^d, His preaching talent must have been highly appreciated, before he was known as the author of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, to have brought him so valuable a token of respect. But the most pleasing and remarkable reflection, is the surprising progress of good-will among men of various denominations, that a ring, worn by a despised and persecuted Nonconformist of a former age, is now highly prized and worn, from respect to his memory, by a dignified clergyman of the Established church.

²²³ This was not his only ring; he left, *inter alia*, all his

Bunyan was thirty-two years of age when taken to prison. He had suffered the loss of his pious wife, whose conversation and portion had been so blessed to him. It is not improbable that her peaceful departure is pictured in Christiana's crossing the river which has no bridge. She left him with four young children, one of whom very naturally and most strongly excited his paternal feelings, from the circumstance of her having been afflicted with blindness. He had married a second time, a woman of exemplary piety and retiring modesty; but whose spirit, when roused to seek the release of her beloved husband, enabled her to stand unabashed, and full of energy and presence of mind, before judges in their courts, and lords in their mansions. When her partner was sent to jail, she was in that peculiar state that called for all his sympathy and his tenderest care. The shock was too severe for her delicate situation; she became dangerously ill, and, although her life was spared, all hopes had fled of her maternal feelings being called into exercise. Thus did one calamity follow another; still he preserved his integrity.²²⁴

rings to his wife. See. p. lxxii.

²²⁴ After he had lain in jail five or six days, an application was made to a liberal justice at Elstow, named

Bunyan was treated with all the kindness which many of his jailers dared to show him. In his times, imprisonment and fetters were generally companions. Thus he says—‘When a felon is *going to be tried*, his fetters are still making a noise on his heels.’²²⁵ So the prisoners in the Holy War are represented as being ‘brought in chains to the bar’ for trial. ‘The prisoners were handled by the jailer so severely, and loaded so with irons, that they died in the prison.’²²⁶ In many cases, prisoners for conscience’ sake were treated with such brutality, before the form of trial, as to cause their death. By Divine mercy, Bunyan was saved from these dreadful punishments, which have ceased as civilization has progressed, and now cloud the narratives of a darker age.

After having lain in prison about seven weeks, the session was held at Bedford, for the county; and Bunyan was placed at the bar, indicted for devilishly and perniciously abstaining from coming to church to hear Divine service, and as a common upholder of

Crumpton, to release him on bail; but he declined, fearing to give offence. He, however, so felt for this persecuted servant of Christ, as to sell him an edifice and barn, which, upon his release, was converted into a large meeting-house.

²²⁵ Vol. ii., p. 107.

²²⁶ Vol. iii., p. 341, 366.

several unlawful meetings and conventicles, to the great disturbance and distraction of the good subjects of this kingdom, contrary to the laws of our sovereign lord the king. In this indictment Bunyan is not described as 'of Elstow' but 'of Bedford.' Probably he had removed to Bedford soon after he joined Gifford's church. The bench was numerous, and presided over by Justice Keelin.²²⁷ If this was Sergeant Kelynge who, the following year, was made Lord Chief-Justice, he was a most arbitrary tyrant, equaled or excelled only by Judge Jeffreys. It was before him that some persons were indicted for attending a conventicle; but it being only proved that they had assembled on the Lord's-day with Bibles in their hands without prayer-books, and there being no proof that their meeting was only under colour or pretence of religion, the jury acquitted them. Upon this he fined each of the jury-men one hundred marks, and imprisoned them till the fines were paid. Again, on a trial for murder, the prisoner being under suspicion of Dissent, was one whom the judge had a great desire to hang, he fined and imprisoned all the jury because, contrary to his direction,

²²⁷ From his autograph, in the editor's possession, he spelt his name John Keling.

they brought in a verdict of manslaughter! Well was it said, that he was more fit to charge the Roundheads under Prince Rupert than to charge a jury. After a short career, he fell into utter contempt.²²⁸ He entered into a long argument with the poor tinker, about using the liturgy of the Church of England, first warning him of his danger if he spake lightly of it. Bunyan argued that prayer was purely spiritual, the offering of the heart, and not the reading of a form. The justice declared—‘We know the Common Prayer-book hath been ever since the apostles’ time, and is lawful to be used in the church!!’ It is surprising that such a dialogue was ever entered upon; either Keling was desirous of triumphing over the celebrated tinker, or his countenance and personal appearance commanded respect. For some cause he was treated with great liberality for those times; the extent of it may be seen by one justice asking him, ‘Is your God Beelzebub?’ and another declaring that he was possessed with the devil! ‘All which,’ says Bunyan, ‘I passed over, the Lord forgive them!’ When, however, the justice was worsted in argument, and acknowledged that he was not well versed in Scripture, he demanded the

²²⁸ Lord Campbell’s lives of the Chief Justices.

prisoner's plea, saying, 'Then you confess the indictment?' 'Now,' says Bunyan, 'and not till now, I saw I was indicted; and said—"This I confess, we have had many meetings together, both to pray to God, and to exhort one another; and that we had the sweet comforting presence of the Lord among us for our encouragement (blessed be his name!); therefore I confess myself guilty, and no otherwise.'" This was recorded as a plea of guilty, and Keling resumed his natural ferocity. 'Then,' said he, 'hear your judgment. You must be had back again to prison, and there lie for three months following; and then, if you do not submit to go to church to hear Divine service, and leave your preaching, you must be banished the realm; and after that, if you shall be found in this realm without special license from the king, you must stretch by the neck for it. I tell you plainly'; 'and so he bid my jailer have me away.' The hero answered—"I am at a point with you: if I were out of prison to-day, I would preach the gospel again to-morrow, by the help of God.'²²⁹

²²⁹ Vol. i., p. 57. This forcibly reminds us of Greatheart's reply to Giant Maul—"I am a servant of the God of heaven; my business is to persuade sinners to repentance; if to prevent this be thy quarrel, let us fall to it as soon as thou wilt," vol. iii., p. 210. Southey

The statutes, by virtue of which this awful sentence was pronounced, together with the legal form of recantation used by those who were terrified into conformity, are set forth in a note to the *Grace Abounding*.²³⁰ Bunyan was, if not the first, one of the first Dissenters who were proceeded against after the restoration of Charles II; and his trial, if such it may be called, was followed by a wholesale persecution. The king, as head of the Church of England, wreaked his vengeance upon all classes of Dissenters, excepting Roman Catholics and Jews.

The reign of Charles II was most disgraceful and disastrous to the nation, even the king being a pensioner upon the French court. The Dutch swept the seas, and threatened to burn London; a dreadful plague depopulated the metropolis—the principal part

attempts to vindicate the justices in condemning Bunyan, and grossly mis-states the facts; deeming him to be unreasonable and intolerant; that preaching was incompatible with his calling, and that he ought not to have sacrificed his liberty in such a cause! The poet-laureate makes these assertions, knowing the vast benefits which sprung from the determined piety and honesty of the persecuted preacher. Would not By-ends, Facing-both-ways, and Save-all, have jumped to the same conclusion?

²³⁰ Vol. i., p. 56.

of which was, in the following year, with its cathedral, churches, and public buildings, destroyed by fire; plots and conspiracies alarmed the people; tyranny was triumphant; even the bodies of the illustrious dead were exhumed, and treated with worse than savage ferocity; while a fierce persecution raged throughout the kingdom, which filled the jails with Dissenters.

In Scotland, the persecution raged with still more deadly violence. Military, in addition to civil despotism, strove to enforce the use of the Book of Common Prayer. The heroic achievements and awful suffering of Scottish Christians saved their descendants from this yoke of bondage.²³¹

A short account of the extent of the sufferings of our pious ancestors is given in the Introduction to the *Pilgrim's Progress*²³²—a narrative which would appear incredible did it not rest upon unimpeachable authority. It would be difficult to believe the records of the brutal treatment which the sufferers underwent had they not been handed down to us in the State Trials, and in public registers,

²³¹ Every Christian should read the appalling account of these sufferings, recently published under the title of *Ladies of the Covenant*.

²³² Vol. iii., p. 17.

over which the persecuted had no control. Two instances will show the extreme peril in which the most learned and pious men held their lives. John James, the pastor of a Baptist church in Whitechapel, was charged, upon the evidence of a perjured drunken vagabond named Tipler, a pipe-maker's journeyman, who was not present in the meeting, but swore that he heard him utter treasonable words. Notwithstanding the evidence of some most respectable witnesses, who were present during the whole service, and distinctly proved that no such words were used, Mr. James was convicted, and sentenced to be hung. His distracted wife saw the king, presented a petition, and implored mercy, when the unfeeling monarch replied, 'O! Mr. James; he is a sweet gentleman.' Again, on the following morning, she fell at his feet, beseeching his royal clemency, when he spurned her from him, saying, 'John James, that rogue, he shall be hanged; yea, he shall be hanged.' And, in the presence of his weeping friends, he ascended from the gibbet to the mansions of the blessed. His real crime was, that he continued to preach after having been warned not to do so by John Robinson, lieutenant of the Tower,

properly called, by Mr. Crosby,²³³ a devouring wolf, upon whose head the blood of this and other innocent Dissenters will be found. Another Dissenting minister, learned, pious, loyal, and peaceful, was, during Bunyan's time, marked for destruction. Thomas Rosewell was tried before the monster Jeffreys. He was charged, upon the evidence of two infamous informers, with having doubted the power of the king to cure the kings' evil, and with saying that they should overcome their enemies with rams' horns, broken platters, and a stone in a sling. A number of most respectable witnesses deposed to their having been present; that no such words were uttered, and that Mr. Rosewell was eminent for loyalty and devoted attachment to the Government. Alas! he was a Dissenting teacher of high standing, of extensive acquirements, and of great earnestness in seeking the salvation of sinners; and, under the direction of that brutal judge, the venal jury found him guilty, and he was sentenced to be hung. This frightful sentence would have been executed but from a singular interposition of Providence. Sir John Talbot was present during the trial, and a

²³³ *History of Baptists*, vol. ii., p. 172. Robinson was a nephew of Archbishop Laud, and appeared to inherit his evil spirit.

stranger to Mr. Rosewell; but he was so struck with the proceedings, that he hastened to the king, related the facts, and added, 'that he had seen the life of a subject, who appeared to be a gentleman and a scholar, in danger, upon such evidence as he would not hang his dog on.' And added, 'Sire, if you suffer this man to die, we are none of us safe in our own houses.' At this moment Jeffreys came in, gloating over his prey, exulting in the innocent blood he was about to shed, when, to his utter confusion, the king said, 'Mr. Rosewell shall not die'; and his pardon was issued under the great seal.²³⁴ Every Englishman should read the state trials of that period, recording the sufferings of Richard Baxter, William Penn, Sir H. Vane, and many others of our most pious forefathers; and they must feel that it was a miracle of mercy that saved the life of Bunyan, and gave him leisure to write not only his popular allegories, but the most valuable treatises in the English language upon subjects of the deepest importance.

When he entered the prison, his first and prayerful object was to levy a tax upon his affliction—to endeavour to draw honey from

²³⁴ Wilson's *History of Dissenting Churches*, and the Trial of Rosewell.

the carcass of the lion. His care was to render his imprisonment subservient to the great design of showing forth the glory of God by patient submission to His will. Before his commitment, he had a strong presentiment of his sufferings; his earnest prayer, for many months, was that he might, with composure, encounter all his trials, even to an ignominious death. This led him to the solemn consideration of reckoning himself, his wife, children, health, enjoyments, all as dying, and in perfect uncertainty, and to live upon God, his invisible but ever-present Father.

Like an experienced military commander, he wisely advises every Christian to have a *reserve* for Christ in case of dire emergency. 'We ought to have a reserve for Christ, to help us at a dead lift. When profession and confession will not do; when loss of goods and a prison will not do; when loss of country and of friends will not do; when nothing else will do, then willingly to lay down our lives for his name.'²³⁵ In the midst of all these dread uncertainties, his soul was raised to heavenly contemplations of the future happiness of the saints of God.

It is deeply impressive to view a man, with

²³⁵ Vol. i., p. 198; and *Grace Abounding*, No. 326.

gigantic intellect, involved in the net which was laid to trammel his free spirit, disregarding his own wisdom; seeking guidance from heaven in earnest prayer, and in searching the sacred Scriptures; disentangling himself, and calmly waiting the will of his heavenly Father. Still he severely felt the infirmities of nature. Parting with his wife and children, he described as ‘the pulling the flesh from the bones. I saw I was as a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children; yet, thought I, I must do it.’²³⁶ His feelings were peculiarly excited to his poor blind Mary.²³⁷ ‘O! the thoughts of the hardships my poor blind one might go under, would break my heart in pieces.’ It is one of the governing principles of human nature, that the most delicate or afflicted child excites our tenderest feelings. ‘I have seen men,’ says Bunyan, ‘take most care of, and best provide for those of their children that have been most infirm and helpless; and our Advocate “shall gather his lambs with his arms, and carry *them* in his bosom.”’²³⁸ While in this state of distress, the promise came to his relief—‘Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them

²³⁶ Vol. i., p. 48.

²³⁷ Baptized at Elstow, July 20, 1650.

²³⁸ Vol. i., p. 168.

alive; and let thy widows trust in me.' He had heard of the miseries of those banished Christians who had been sold into slavery, and perished with cold and calamities, lying in ditches like poor, forlorn, desolate sheep.

At the end of three months he became anxious to know what the enemies of the cross intended to do with him. His sentence was transportation and death, unless he conformed. To give up or shrink from his profession of Christ, by embracing the national forms and submitting his conscience to human laws, he dared not. He resolved to persevere even at the sacrifice of his life. To add to his distress, doubts and fears clouded his prospects of futurity; 'Satan,' said he, 'laid hard at me to beat me out of heart.' At length he came to the determination to venture his eternal state with Christ, whether he had present comfort or not. His state of mind he thus describes—'If God doth not come in (to comfort me) I will leap off the ladder, even blindfold, into eternity, sink or swim, come heaven, come hell. Lord Jesus, if thou wilt catch me, do; I will venture all for thy name.' From this time he felt a good hope and great consolation.

The clerk of the peace, Mr. Cobb, was sent by the justices to persuade him to conform, and had a very long and interesting conference

with him in the prison. This shows that the magistrates were well convinced that he was a leader in nonconformity, who, if brought over, would afford them a signal triumph. In fact, he was called, by a beneficed clergyman, 'the most notorious schismatic in all the county of Bedford.'²³⁹ It is perhaps to the arguments of Cobb that he refers in his *Advice to Sufferers*. 'The wife of the bosom lies at him, saying, O do not cast thyself away; if thou takest this course, what shall I do? Thou hast said thou lovest me; now make it manifest by granting this my *small* request—Do not still remain in thine integrity. Next to this come the children, which are like to come to poverty, to beggary, to be undone, for want of wherewithal to feed, and clothe, and provide for them for time to come. Now also come kindred, and relations, and acquaintance; some chide, some cry, some argue, some threaten, some promise, some flatter, and some do all to befool him for so unadvised an act as to cast away himself, and to bring his wife and children to beggary for such a thing as religion. These are sore temptations.'²⁴⁰ It was during this period of his imprisonment that the mad attempt was made,

²³⁹ Vol. ii., p. 279.

²⁴⁰ Vol. ii., p. 733.

by Venner and his rabble, to overturn the government. This was pressed upon Bunyan as a reason why he should not hold meetings for religious exercises, but rely upon his more private opportunities of exhorting his neighbours. In reply to this, Mr. Cobb is reminded of Bunyan's well-known loyalty, which would become useful in proportion to his public teaching. It was a pleasing interview, which, while it did not for a moment shake his determination, led him to thank Mr. Cobb for his civil and meek discourse, and to ejaculate a heartfelt prayer—'O that we might meet in heaven.'²⁴¹ The whole of it is reprinted at the end of the *Grace Abounding*, and it shows that God gave him favour even with his persecutors. It is not surprising that such a prisoner should have won the good opinion of his jailer, so that he was permitted the consolation of seeing his relatives and friends, who ministered to his comforts.

When the time arrived for the execution of the bitterest part of his sentence, God, in his providence, interposed to save the life of his servant. He had familiarized his mind with all the circumstances of a premature and appalling death; the gibbet, the ladder, the

²⁴¹ Vol. i., p. 60.

halter, had lost much of their terrors; he had even studied the sermon he would then have preached to the concourse of spectators. At this critical time the king's coronation took place, on April 23, 1661. To garnish this grand ceremony, the king had ordered the release of numerous prisoners of certain classes, and within that description of offences was that for which Bunyan was confined. The proclamation allowed twelve months' time to sue out the pardon under the great seal, but without this expensive process thousands of vagabonds and thieves were set at liberty, while, alas, an offence against the church was not to be pardoned upon such easy terms. Bunyan and his friends were too simple, honest, and virtuous, to understand why such a distinction should be made. The assizes being held in August, he determined to seek his liberty by a petition to the judges. The court sat at the Swan Inn,²⁴² and as every incident in the life of this extraordinary man excites our interest, we are gratified to have it in our power to exhibit

²⁴² The cut, copied from an old drawing of the house taken before its entire demotion, at the end of last century, exhibits its quaint characteristics. The bridge foot is to the spectator's right; the church tower behind is that of St. Mary's, also seen in our view of the jail, which would, of course, be seen from the bow-windows of the old inn, in which the Judges met.

the state of this celebrated inn at that time.

Having written his petition, and made some fair copies of it, his modest, timid wife determined to present them to the judges. Her heroic achievements—for such they deserve to be called—on behalf of her husband, are admirably narrated by Bunyan, the whole of which is reprinted in our first volume,²⁴³ and deserves a most attentive perusal. Want of space prevents us repeating it here, or even making extracts from it. She had previously traveled to London with a petition to the House of Lords, and entrusted it to Lord Barkwood, who conferred with some of the peers upon it, and informed her that they could not interfere, the king having committed the release of the prisoners to the judges. When they came the circuit and the assizes were held at Bedford; Bunyan in vain besought the local authorities that he might have liberty to appear in person and plead for his release. This reasonable request was denied, and, as a last resource, he committed his cause to an affectionate wife. Several times she appeared before the judges; love to her husband, a stern sense of duty, a conviction of the gross injustice practiced upon one to whom she was

²⁴³ Vol. i., p. 60.

most tenderly attached, overcame her delicate, modest, retiring habits, and forced her upon this strange duty. Well did she support the character of an advocate. This delicate, courageous, high-minded woman appeared before Judge Hale, who was much affected with her earnest pleading for one so dear to her, and whose life was so valuable to his children. It was the triumph of love, duty, and piety, over bashful timidity. Her energetic appeals were in vain. She returned to the prison with a heavy heart, to inform her husband that, while felons, malefactors, and men guilty of misdemeanours were, without any recantation or promise of amendment, to be let loose upon society to *grace the coronation*, the poor prisoners for conscience' sake were to undergo their unjust and savage sentences. Or, in plain words, that refusing to go to church to hear the Common Prayer was an unpardonable crime, not to be punished in any milder mode than recantation, or transportation, or the halter. With what bitter feelings must she have returned to the prison, believing that it would be the tomb of her beloved husband! How natural for the distressed, insulted wife to have written harsh things against the judge! She could not have conceived that, under the stately robes of Hale, there was a heart affected

by Divine love. And when the nobleman afterwards met the despised tinker and his wife, on terms of perfect equality, clothed in more glorious robes in the mansions of the blessed, how inconceivable their surprise! It must have been equally so with the learned judge, when, in the pure atmosphere of heaven, he found that the illiterate tinker, harassed by poverty and imprisonment, produced books, the admiration of the world. As Dr. Cheever eloquently writes—‘How little could he dream, that from that narrow cell in Bedford jail a glory would shine out, illustrating the grace of God, and doing more good to man, than all the prelates and judges of the kingdom would accomplish.’²⁴⁴

Bunyan was thus left in a dreary and hopeless state of imprisonment, in which he continued for somewhat more than twelve years, and it becomes an interesting inquiry how he spent his time and managed to employ his great talent in his Master’s service. The first object of his solicitude would be to provide for his family, according to 1 Timothy 5:8. How to supply his house with bare necessities to meet the expenses of a wife and four children, must have filled him with anxiety. The illness, death,

²⁴⁴ *Lectures on the Pilgrim’s Progress.*

and burial of his first beloved wife, had swept away any little reserve which otherwise might have accumulated, so that, soon after his imprisonment commenced, before he could resume any kind of labour, his wife thus pleaded with the judge for his liberty, 'My lord, I have four small children that cannot help themselves, of which one is blind, and have *nothing to live upon but the charity of good people.*' How inscrutable are the ways of Providence; the rich reveling in luxury while using their wealth to corrupt mankind, while this eminent saint, with his family, were dependent upon charity! As soon as he could get his tools in order he set to work; and we have the following testimony to his industry by a fellow-prisoner, Mr. Wilson, the Baptist minister, and of Charles Doe, who visited him in prison:—'Nor did he, while he was in prison, spend his time in a supine and careless manner, nor eat the bread of idleness; for there have I been witness that his own hands have ministered to his and his family's necessities, making many hundred gross of long tagged laces, to fill up the vacancies of his time, which he had learned to do for that purpose, since he had been in prison. There, also, I surveyed his

library, the least, but yet the best that e'er I saw—the *Bible* and the *Book of Martyrs*.²⁴⁵ And during his imprisonment (since I have spoken of his library), he writ several excellent and useful treatises, particularly *The Holy City*, *Christian Behaviour*, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, and *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.²⁴⁶ Besides these valuable treatises, Charles Doe states that, of his own knowledge, in prison Bunyan wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the first part, and that he had this from his own mouth.²⁴⁷ In addition to the demonstration of this important fact contained in the introduction to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, there ought to have been added, Bunyan's statement made in introducing his second part:—'Now, having taken up my lodgings in a wood about a mile off the place': no longer in 'a den,' but sheltered, in a wood, in a state of comparative, but not of perfect liberty, about a

²⁴⁵ This valuable set of books came into the possession of my old friend Mr. Wontner, of the Minories, London; it descended at his decease, to his widow, who resided on Camberwell Green, and from her to a daughter, married to Mr. Parnel, an orange merchant in Botolph Lane. He was tempted to sell it to Mr. Bohn, the bookseller, from whom it was bought for the Bedford library.

²⁴⁶ Charles Doe in *Heavenly Footman*, 2d edition, 1700.

²⁴⁷ *Introduction to the Pilgrim*, vol. iii., p. 6, 7.

mile distant from the den in which he wrote his first part. Whether this may refer to his former cottage at Elstow, of which there is great doubt, or to the house he occupied in Bedford after his release, they were equally about a mile from the jail. He certainly means that the two parts were not written in the same place, nor is there a shadow of a doubt as to the fact that in prison the great allegory was conceived and written. Well might Mr. Doe say, 'What hath the devil or his agents got by putting our great gospel minister in prison?' They prevented his preaching to a few poor pilgrims in the villages round Bedford, and it was the means of spreading his fame, and the knowledge of the gospel, by his writings, throughout the world. Thus does the wrath of man praise God. In addition to the works above enumerated, he also published some extremely valuable tracts, several editions of a work which ought to be read by all young Christians—*A Treatise on the Covenants of the Law and of Grace*; several editions of *Sighs from Hell; A Map of Salvation and Damnation; The Four Last Things*, a poem; *Mount Ebal and Gerizim, or, Redemption from the Curse*, a poem; *Prison Meditations*, a poem: the four last are single sheets, probably sold by his children or friends to assist him in obtaining

his livelihood: *Justification by Faith in Jesus Christ*, 4to; *Confession of His Faith and Reason of His Practice*. The most remarkable treatise which he published while in confinement, is on prayer, from the words of the apostle, 'I will pray with the spirit and with the understanding also.' His attention had been fixed on this subject when his free-born spirit was roused by the threat of Justice Keeling, 'Take heed of speaking irreverently of the *Book of Common Prayer*, for if you do you will bring great damage upon yourself.'

Bunyan had formed his ideas of prayer from heartfelt experience; it is the cry of the burthened, sinking sinner, 'Lord save us, we perish'; or adoration rising from the heart to the throne of grace, filled with hopes of pardon and immortality. In his estimation, any form of human invention was an interference with the very nature of prayer, and with the work of the Holy Spirit, who alone can inspire our souls with acceptable prayer.

In expressing his views upon this all-important subject, Bunyan was simply guided by a sense of duty. Fear of the consequences, or of offending his enemies, never entered his mind. He felt that they were in the hands of his heavenly Father, and that all their malice must be over-ruled for good. Notwithstanding his

solemn warning not to speak irreverently of the book, his refusal to use which had subjected him to severe privations and the fear of a halter, this Christian hero was not daunted, but gives his opinion of it with all that freedom and liberty which he considered essential to excite in his fellow-men inquiries as to its origin and imposition.

It is not my province to enter into the controversy whether in public worship a form of prayer ought to be used. Let every one be persuaded in his own mind; but to pass a law denouncing those that refuse to use a prescribed form as worthy of imprisonment, transportation, or death, is an attack upon the first principles of Christianity. To punish those who spoke irreverently of it, was almost an acknowledgment that it would not bear investigation. To speak of the book as in his serious judgment it deserved, was not that mark of sectarianism which Romaine exhibited when he called the beautiful hymns of Dr. Watts, which are used so much in public worship among Dissenters, 'Watts' jingle,' and 'Watts' whims!'²⁴⁸ No answer appears to have

²⁴⁸ Psalmody Edit., 1775, p. 137. George Whitefield, in recommending the works of Bunyan, says, 'Ministers never write or preach so well as when under the cross; the Spirit of Christ and of glory shall rest upon them'

been published to Bunyan's extremely interesting volume until twelve years after the author's death, when a reply appeared under the title of *Liturgies Vindicated by the Dissenters, or the Lawfulness of Forms of Prayer proved against John Bunyan and the Dissenters*. 1700. This is a very rare and curious volume. The author, as usual in such controversies, deals wholesale in invective, and displays all the ability of a sophist.

The Christian world is indebted to Dr. Cheever for a beautiful picture of Bunyan's devotional exercise in his cell. 'It is evening; he finishes his work, to be taken home by his dear blind child. He reads a portion of Scripture, and, clasping her small hands in his, kneels on the cold stone floor, and pours out his soul to God; then, with a parting kiss, dismisses her to her mother. The rude lamp glimmers on the table; with his Bible, pen, and paper, he writes as though joy did make him write. His face is lighted as from the radiant jasper walls of the celestial city. He clasps his hands, looks

[Preface to Bunyan's Works, 1767]. Admiring the courage and honesty of Bunyan, when alluding to the Prayer-Book, we earnestly unite in his petition—'The Lord in mercy turn the hearts of his people, to seek more after the Spirit of prayer, and, in the strength of that, to pour out their souls before the Lord.'

upward, and blesses God for his goodness. The last you see of him—is alone, kneeling on the prison floor; he is alone with God.’

Charles Doe, who manifested most laudable anxiety to hand down the works of Bunyan to posterity, bears honourable testimony to his conduct while in prison. ‘It was by making him a visit in prison that I first saw him, and became acquainted with him; and I must profess I could not but look upon him to be a man of an excellent spirit, zealous for his master’s honour, and cheerfully committing all his own concernments unto God’s disposal. When I was there, there were about sixty Dissenters besides himself there, taken but a little before at a religious meeting at Kaistoe, in the county of Bedford; besides two eminent Dissenting ministers, Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Dun (both very well known in Bedfordshire, though long since with God²⁴⁹), by which means the prison was very much crowded; yet, in the midst of all that hurry which so many new-comers occasioned, I have heard Mr. Bunyan both preach and pray with that mighty spirit of faith and plerophory of divine assistance that has made me stand and

²⁴⁹ This was published in 1698.

wonder.’²⁵⁰ Here they could sing, without fear of being overheard; no informers prowling round. The world was shut out; and, in communion with heaven, they could forget their sorrows, and have a rich foretaste of the inconceivable glory of the celestial city. It was under such circumstances that Bunyan preached one of his most remarkable sermons, afterwards published under the title of *The Holy City or the New Jerusalem*, 1665. ‘Upon a certain first-day, being together with my brethren in our prison-chamber, they expected that, according to our custom, something should be spoken out of the Word for our mutual edification. I felt myself, it being my turn to speak, so empty, spiritless, and barren, that I thought I should not have been able to speak among them so much as five words of truth with life and evidence. At last I cast mine eye upon this prophecy, when, after considering awhile, methought I perceived something of that jasper in whose light you find this holy city descended; wherefore, having got some dim glimmering thereof, and finding a desire to see farther thereinto, I with a few groans did carry my meditations to the Lord Jesus for a blessing, which he did

²⁵⁰ *Heavenly Footman*, 2d edition, 1700, p. 126.

forthwith grant, and helping me to set before my brethren, we did all eat, and were well refreshed; and behold, also, that while I was in the distributing of it, it so increased in my hand, that of the fragments that we left, after we had well dined, I gathered up this basketful. Wherefore, setting myself to a more narrow search, through frequent prayer, what first with doing and then with undoing, and after that with doing again, I thus did finish it.'²⁵¹ To this singular event the religious public are indebted for one of Bunyan's ablest treatises, full of the striking sparkles of his extraordinary imagination. It was a subject peculiarly adapted to display his powers—the advent of New Jerusalem, her impregnable walls and gates of precious stones, golden streets, water of life, temple, and the redeemed from all nations flocking into it.²⁵²

In these times of severe persecution, two of the church members, S. Fenn and J. Whiteman, were ordained joint pastors. Fenn has just been delivered out of prison; yet they

²⁵¹ Vol. iii., p. 397, 398.

²⁵² This deeply interesting book is dedicated to four sorts of readers—the godly, the learned, the captious, and to the mother of harlots. To her he says, 'I have nothing here to please your wanton eye, or voluptuous palate; no paint for thy wrinkled face, nor crutch to support thy tottering kingdom.' It is a very amusing preface.

ventured to brave the storm, and in this year, although the lions prowled before the porch, a number were added to the church. Thus was their little Jerusalem built 'even in troublous times.'

Bunyan's popularity and fame for wisdom and knowledge had spread all round the country, and it naturally brought him visitors, with their doubts, and fears, and cases of conscience. Among these a singular instance is recorded in the *Life of Badman*. 'When I was in prison,' says the narrator, 'there came a woman to me that was under a great deal of trouble. So I asked her, she being a stranger to me, what she had to say to me? She said she was afraid she should be damned. I asked her the cause of those fears. She told me that she had, some time since, lived with a shopkeeper at Wellingborough, and had robbed his box in the shop several times of money, and pray, says she, tell me what I shall do? I told her I would have her go to her master, and make him satisfaction. She said she was afraid lest he should hang her. I told her that I would intercede for her life, and would make use of other friends to do the like; but she told me she durst not venture that. Well, said I, shall I send to your master, while you abide out of sight, and make your peace with him before he

sees you? and with that I asked her master's name. But all she said in answer to this was, pray let it alone till I come to you again. So away she went, and neither told me her master's name nor her own; and I never saw here again.'²⁵³ He adds, 'I could tell you of another, that came to me with a like relation concerning herself, and the robbing of her mistress.'

To his cruel imprisonment the world is indebted for the most surprising narrative of a new birth that has ever appeared. It was there that he was led to write the *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. He displays in the preface his deep interest in the spiritual welfare of those who had been born under his ministry. He rejoices in their happiness, even while he was 'sticking between the teeth of the lions in the wilderness. I now again, as before from the top of shenir and Hermon, so now from the lions' dens, from "the mountains of the leopards," do look yet after you all, greatly longing to see your safe arrival into the desired haven.'²⁵⁴ How natural it was that, while narrating his own experience, he should be led to write a guide to pilgrims through time to

²⁵³ Vol. iii., p. 610.

²⁵⁴ Vol. i., p. 4.

eternity, and that it should be dated from ‘the den!’

‘And thus it was: I writing of the way
And race of saints, in this our gospel-day,
Fell suddenly into an allegory
About their journey, and the way to glory.’²⁵⁵

Any one possessing powers of imagination, to whom the adventures of Christian are familiar, would, on reading the *Grace Abounding*, be continually struck with the likeness there drawn of the pilgrim—the more he contemplates the two pictures of Christian experience, so much the more striking is their similarity. The one is a narrative of facts, the other contains the same facts allegorized. Thus, by an irresistible impulse from heaven upon the mind of a prisoner for Christ, did a light shine forth from the dungeon on Bedford bridge which has largely contributed to enlighten the habitable globe. The *Pilgrim* has been translated into most of the languages and dialects of the world. The Caffrarian and Hottentot, the enlightened Greek and Hindoo, the remnant of the Hebrew race, the savage Malay and the voluptuous Chinese—all have the wondrous narrative in their own languages. Bunyan was imprisoned by bigots

²⁵⁵ Author’s Apology for the Pilgrim.

and tyrants, to prevent his being heard or known; and his voice, in consequence, reaches to the ends of the earth. Let every wretched persecutor contemplate this instance of God's over-ruling power. You will surely plunge the avenging sword into your own vitals if, by persecution, you vainly endeavour to wound the saints of the living God. You may make hypocrites throw off their disguise. The real Christian may be discouraged, but he perseveres. He feels the truth of Bunyan's quaint saying, 'the persecutors are but the devil's scarecrows, the old one himself lies quat'; while the eye of God is upon him to save the children of Zion.²⁵⁶ His otherwise dreary imprisonment was lightened, and the time beguiled by these delightful writings. His fellow-prisoners were benefited by hearing him read his pilgrim's adventures. But this has been so fully displayed in the introduction to the *Pilgrim* that any further notice is unnecessary.²⁵⁷

While busily occupied with his *Grace Abounding* and *Pilgrim's Progress*, he wrote a poetical epistle in answer to the kind inquiries of his numerous friends and visitors. After

²⁵⁶ Vol. i., p. 602.

²⁵⁷ Vol. iii., p. 7.

thanking them for counsel and advice, he describes his feelings in prison. His feet stood on Mount Zion; his body within locks and bars, while his mind was free to study Christ, and elevated higher than the stars. Their fetters could not tame his spirit, nor prevent his communion with God. The more his enemies raged, the more peace he experienced. In prison he received the visits of saints, of angels, and the Spirit of God. 'I have been able to laugh at destruction, and to fear neither the horse nor his rider. I have had sweet sights of the forgiveness of my sins in this place, and of my being with Jesus in another world.'²⁵⁸ If his ears were to be pierced in the pillory, it would be only 'to hang a jewel there.' The source of his happy feelings is well expressed in one of the stanzas:—

'The *truth* and I were both here cast
Together, and we do
Lie arm in arm, and so hold fast
Each other; this is true.'²⁵⁹

Yes, honest John Bunyan, the world at large now gives you credit for the truth of that saying.

How strange must it seem to the luxurious

²⁵⁸ *Grace Abounding*, No. 322.

²⁵⁹ Vol. i., p. 65.*

worldling, with his bed of down and splendid hangings, but aching heart, to hear of the exquisite happiness of the prisoner for Christ on his straw pallet! 'When God makes the bed,' as Bunyan says, 'he must needs be easy that is cast thereon; a blessed pillow hath that man for his head, though to all beholders it is hard as a stone.'²⁶⁰ In the whole course of his troubles, he enjoyed the sympathy of his family and friends. his food was brought daily, and such was the veneration in which his memory was embalmed, that the very jug in which his broth was taken to the prison has been preserved to this day.²⁶¹

In the midst of all his sufferings he murmurs not nor for a moment gives way to revenge; he leaves the persecutor in the hands of God. Stand off, Christian; pity the poor wretch that brings down upon himself the vengeance of God. Your pitiful arm must not strike him—no, stand by, 'that God may have his full blow at him in his time. Wherefore he saith avenge not yourself—"Vengeance is

²⁶⁰ Vol. i., p. 741.

²⁶¹ This jug is in possession of Mrs. Hillyard, widow of the late Mr. Hillyard, who was minister of the chapel for fifty years, and died in 1839. One tradition says the jug was used as noted in the text; another that his broth was brought to 'chapel' in it, for his Sunday dinner, in the vestry.

mine, saith the Lord." Give place, leave such an one to be handled by me.'²⁶²

'There are several degrees of suffering for righteousness—the scourge of the tongue, the ruin of an estate, the loss of liberty, a gaol, a gibbet, a stake, a dagger. Now answerable to these are the comforts of the Holy Ghost, prepared like to like, part proportioned to part, only the consolations are said to abound.'²⁶³ The mind of Bunyan was imbued with these sentiments; baptized into them, and consequently elevated far above the fear of what man could do unto him. Yes, he knew the power of God. 'He can make those things that in themselves are most fearful and terrible to behold, the most delightful and most desirable things. He can make a gaol more beautiful than a palace, restraint more sweet by far than liberty, and the

²⁶² Vol. ii., p. 737-739.

²⁶³ 2 Cor 1:5; vol. ii., p. 735.

reproach of Christ greater riches
than the treasures of Egypt.’²⁶⁴

The Bible, that heavenly storehouse, was opened to him: ‘I never had, in all my life, so great an inlet into the Word of God as now.’²⁶⁵ ‘I have had sweet sights of forgiveness and of the heavenly Jerusalem. I have seen here that which, while in this world, I shall never be able to express.’

About a year before he was set at liberty he received a very popular work, written by Edward Fowler, a Bedfordshire clergyman, who was soon after elevated to the see of Gloucester. It was entitled *The Design of Christianity*, and professed to prove that the object of the Saviour was merely to place man in a similar position to that of Adam before the fall. It is an extremely learned production, full of Greek and Latin quotations; but, in Bunyan’s estimation, it aimed a deadly blow at the foundations of Christianity. To restore man to Adam’s innocency, and then to leave him to cope with Satanic subtlety, was to cut off all hopes of salvation. It was brought to him in February 1672, and in the very short period of forty-two days, Fowler’s theory was most

²⁶⁴ Vol. ii., p. 700.

²⁶⁵ Vol. i., p. 47.

completely demolished by Bunyan's *Defence of the Doctrine of Justification*, 4to, dated from prison, the 27th of the 12th Month, 1671 (27th March, 1672). This was answered by a small 4to volume, entitled *Dirt Wiped Off*. Bunyan had used some harsh epithets; but the clergyman, or his curate, beat the tinker in abusive language. He had been by this time promoted to the rectory of Cripplegate. For an account of this controversy, the reader is referred to the introduction to Bunyan's work on *Justification*, and to that to the *Pilgrim's Progress*.²⁶⁶ The impression it made upon the public mind is well expressed in a rude rhyme, made by an anonymous author, in his *Assembly of Moderate Divines*:

'There's a moderate Doctour at Cripplegate
dwells,

Whom Smythes his curate in trimming
excells;

But Bunyan a tinker hath tickled his gills.'

The last work that he wrote in prison was the confession of his faith, and reason of his practice as to mixed communion, not with the world, but with saints of other denominations. As this plunged him into a fearful controversy with his Dissenting brethren (Baptists,

²⁶⁶ Vol. i., p. 278; and vol. iii., p. 13.

Independents, and Presbyterians), a notice of it will more properly be introduced in our account of that conflict. He had been incarcerated nearly twelve years, and had determined to suffer to the end. Here he found time 'to weigh, and pause, and pause again, the grounds and foundations of those principles for which he suffered,' and he was a Nonconformist still. 'I cannot, I dare not now revolt or deny my principles, on pain of eternal damnation,'²⁶⁷ are his impressive words. 'Faith and holiness are my professed principles, with an endeavour to be at peace with all men. Let they themselves be judges, if aught they find in my writing or preaching doth render me worthy of almost twelve years' imprisonment, or one that deserveth to be hanged or banished for ever, according to their tremendous sentence. If nothing will do unless I make of my conscience a continual butchery and slaughter-shop, unless putting out my own eyes, I commit me to the blind to lead me, I have determined, the Almighty God being my help and shield, yet to suffer, if frail life might continue so long, even until the moss shall grow over mine eye-brows, rather than to

²⁶⁷ Vol. ii., p. 593.

violate my faith and principles.’²⁶⁸ The allusion to moss growing on his eye-brows most probably referred to the damp state of his den or dungeon.

The continuation to the *Grace Abounding*, written by a friend, and published four years after his decease, divides his imprisonment into three periods; but as Bunyan makes it one continued imprisonment, there can be no doubt but that it was a long, dreary confinement; during which the testimony of his friend, Samuel Wilson, is, that it was ‘an uncomfortable and close prison, and sometimes under cruel and oppressive jailers.’ The division into three parts most probably alludes to the severity or liberality of his jailers. He had at times, while a prisoner, an extraordinary degree of liberty; like Joseph in Egypt, some of his jailers committed all to his hands. There can be little doubt but that he went from the prison to preach in the villages or woods, and at one time went to London to visit his admiring²⁶⁹ friends; but this coming to the ears of the justices, the humane jailer had

²⁶⁸ Vol. ii., p. 594.—Heroic man! British Christians are most deeply indebted to thee, and thy fellow-sufferers, for the high privileges they now enjoy. May thy name be had in everlasting remembrance.

²⁶⁹ Vol. i., p. 62.

well nigh lost his place, and for some time he was not permitted to look out at the door. When this had worn off, he had again opportunities of visiting his church and preaching by stealth. It is said that many of the Baptist congregations in Bedfordshire owe their origin to his midnight preaching.

Upon one occasion, having been permitted to go out and visit his family, with whom he intended to spend the night, long before morning he felt so uneasy that at a very late hour he went back to the prison. Information was given to a neighbouring clerical magistrate that there was strong suspicion of Bunyan having broke prison. At midnight, he sent a messenger to the jail, that he might be a witness against the merciful keeper. On his arrival, he demanded, 'Are all the prisoners safe?' the answer was, 'Yes.' 'Is John Bunyan safe?' 'Yes.' 'Let me see him.' He was called up and confronted with the astonished witness, and all passed off well. His kind-hearted jailer said to him, 'You may go out when you will, for you know much better when to return than I can tell you.'²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ It has been doubted whether he was justified in thus making excursions from the prison. This may be answered by the question—Was Peter justified in leaving the prison, and going to the prayer-meeting at

During these twelve terrible years, and particularly towards the end of his imprisonment, the members and elders of his church at Bedford suffered most severely, a very abridged account of which is given in the introduction to the *Pilgrim's Progress*.²⁷¹ The set time for his liberation was now drawing near, but the singular means by which it was accomplished must be reserved for our next chapter.

**PERIOD SIXTH. BUNYAN IS
DELIVERED FROM PRISON—
CONTROVERSY WITH THE
CHRISTIAN CHURCH ON THE
SUBJECT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER—
PUBLISHES THE PILGRIM'S
PROGRESS, AND MANY BOOKS, AND
BECOMES EXTREMELY POPULAR—
HIS DECEASE AND CHARACTER.**

As Charles II felt himself securely seated on his throne, his design to establish an absolute monarchy became more and more apparent.

Mary's house? Acts 12:7-19.

²⁷¹ Vol. iii., p. 19.

The adulation of his professed friends, and the noisy popularity with which he was greeted, appear to have fostered his crafty designs to rid himself of parliamentary government. His whole conduct was that of a Papist, who keeps no faith with Protestants; or of a statesman, whose religion, honour, and truthfulness, were wholly subservient to expediency. To further his object, he formed a council of five noblemen, two of whom were Roman Catholics, and the other three either careless as to religion or professed infidels. The first letter of their names formed the word CABAL. Aided by these he sought to extinguish liberty, and extirpate the Protestant faith.²⁷² To furnish himself with the means of indulging his unbridled passions, he, like a buccaneer, seized the Dutch merchantmen returning from India and Smyrna, without any declaration of war, and laid his hands upon all the money borrowed of his merchants which had been deposited in the exchequer. He then united himself with France to destroy Holland, the stronghold of liberty. To gratify the Roman Catholics, and conciliate the Dissenters, he issued a declaration in favour of liberty of conscience, the seal to which he afterwards

²⁷² Rapin.

broke with his own hands,²⁷³ but he could not prevent a considerable degree of religious liberty arising from such vacillating conduct.

Bunyan, who had secured the confidence and esteem of his jailer, now found his prison more like a lodging-house, and enjoyed great privileges. He frequently, if not regularly, attended the church meetings, and preached with some degree of publicity. The church at Bedford was at this time in want of a pastor, and their eyes were naturally fixed upon Bunyan to succeed to that important office. There were two weighty considerations that required Divine guidance in coming to a conclusion. One was, whether it might injuriously affect the prisoner's comforts, and the other was, the propriety of making choice of a Christian brother to be their ministering elder, while incarcerated in a jail. Feeling these difficulties, the church held several meetings on the subject, the minutes of which are very interesting. The first was held at Hawnes, on the 24th of the eighth month (October) 1671, when 'the improvement of the gifts of the church, and their disposal in an orderly way, were proposed to consideration, that God

²⁷³ For an accurate copy of this declaration, see vol. iii., p. 21.

might be sought for direction therein; and a time further to consider and debate thereof, was appointed this day seven-night, at evening, at Bedford, where the principal brethren were desired for that purpose to come together, at brother John Fenn's; and a church-meeting was appointed to be there that day week. The church was also minded to seek God about the choice of brother, Bunyan to the office of elder, that their way in that respect may be cleared up to them.' At a meeting held at Bedford, on the last day of the ninth month (November), there was appointed another meeting 'to pray and consult about concluding the affair before propounded, concerning gifts of the brethren to be improved, and the choice of brother Bunyan to office, at Gamlingay, on the 14th day, and at Hawnes, the 20th, and at Bedford, the 21st of the same instant, which it was desired might be a general meeting.' After all this jealous care, and these fervent applications to the throne of grace for divine guidance, the result was most gratifying. 'At a full assembly of the church at Bedford, the 21st of the tenth month,²⁷⁴ after much seeking God by prayer and sober conference formally had, the

²⁷⁴ The ecclesiastical year commenced in March. The tenth month means December.

congregation did at this meeting, with joynt consent, signified by solemn lifting up of their hands, call forth and appoint our brother John Bunyan to the pastoral office or eldership. And he accepting thereof, gave himself up to serve Christ and his Church, in that charge, and received of the elders the right hand of fellowship, after having preached fifteen years.’ The choice thus solemnly made, was ratified by the abundant blessings of heavenly union and great prosperity—no stranger or novice, but one whose preaching and writings had proved most acceptable to them for a series of years—on that had been owned and blessed of his God, and whom the church delighted to honour.

At the same church meeting, ‘The congregation having had long experience of the faithfulness of brother John Fenn in his care for the poor, did after the same manner solemnly choose him to the honourable office of a deacon, and committed their poor and purse to him, and he accepted thereof, and gave himself up to the Lord and them in that service.’ The church did also determine to keep the 26th inst. as a day of fasting and prayer, both here, and at Hawnes, and at Gamlingay, solemnly to commend to the grace of God brother Bunyan and brother Fenn, and to entreat his gracious assistance and presence

with them in their respective works, whereunto he hath called them.

The most extraordinary circumstance that took place at this time was, that while Bunyan was a prisoner in a wretched dungeon for preaching the glad tidings of salvation, or, in the mysterious legal jargon of the period, 'holding conventicles,' he received his Majesty's license to preach, and thus to hold conventicles—it was one of the first that was granted. His Majesty continued to keep him a prisoner for preaching more than six months after he had licensed him to preach!! At the same time that the permission to preach was granted to Bunyan, the house of Josiah Roughed, Bedford, was licensed by his Majesty's command, for the use of such as do not conform to the Church of England. In this John Bunyan was authorized to teach, or in any other licensed place.²⁷⁵ These were among the first licenses that were granted. The present highly-respected pastor of the church considers that this license does not refer to Roughed's private dwelling, but rather to 'an edifice or a barn, purchased of Robert Crompton, Esq., with a piece of ground adjoining it,' in the parishes of St. Paul and

²⁷⁵ For a copy of these licenses, see vol. iii., p. 24.

Cuthbert, for £50, in 1672, by Roughed, Bunyan, Fenn, and others, and which was released by Fenn to Bunyan and others, November 10, 1681, two days before Fenn's death. This building having been properly fitted up by voluntary contribution, became permanently occupied by the church as its place of meeting, until the old chapel was erected in 1707. From this we may conclude that Bunyan was engaged in his worldly occupation as a brazier, in the year that he obtained his release from prison, and to 1681.

How utterly contemptible does any Government become when they tamper with spiritual worship. At one period they punished Dissenters with imprisonment, transportation, and, to use Judge Keeling's elegant expression in his sentence on Bunyan, 'to stretch by the neck for it'; and anon, the very same Government, under the same king, gives them license to dissent! Human laws affecting religion can never be the standard of morality; to read the Bible is considered to be sin in Tuscany, and righteousness in Britain. The release of this great and pious man from his tedious imprisonment, has been hitherto involved in a cloud of mystery, which it will be our happiness to disperse, while we record that event in a clear, indisputable narrative of facts.

His earlier biographer, Mr. Doe, not having access to archives which the lapse of time has now rendered available, attributed his release to the influence of Bishop Barlow, by the interference of Dr. Owen. It is narrated in the life of Dr. Owen, published in 1721:—‘The doctor had some friends also among the bishops, Dr. Barlow, formerly his tutor, then bishop of Lincoln, who yet upon a special occasion failed him, when he might have expected the service of his professed friendship. The case was this, Mr. John Bunyan had been confined to a jail twelve years, upon an excommunication for Nonconformity. Now there was a law, that if any two persons will go to the bishop of the diocese, and offer a cautionary bond, that the prisoner shall conform in half a year, the bishop may release him upon that bond; whereupon a friend of this poor man desired Dr. Owen to give him his letter to the bishop in his behalf, which he readily granted. It was soon after the discovery of the Popish plot, when this letter was carried to the bishop, who having read it, desired “a little time to consider of it, and if I can do it, you may be assured of my readiness.” He was waited upon again in about a fortnight, and his answer was, “I would desire you to move the Lord Chancellor in the case, and, upon his

order, I will do it." To which it was replied, "this method would be chargeable, and the man was poor, not able to expend so much money; and, being satisfied he could do it legally, it was hoped his Lordship would remember his promise, there being no straining a point in the case. But he would do it upon no other terms, which at last was done, and the poor man released." And for this we are told that "Mr. Bunyan returned him his unfeigned thanks, and often remembered him in his prayers, as, next to God, his deliverer." The whole of this story, so far as it relates to Bunyan, is not only improbable, but utterly impossible. Bunyan was never excommunicated, and he was certainly released from prison two or three years previous to Dr. Barlow becoming a bishop. The critical times to which he alludes, refer doubtless to the Popish plot, which took place in 1678, Bunyan having been released in 1672. The probability is, that Dr. Owen did about 1678 apply to the bishop of Lincoln for the release of some poor prisoner under sentence of excommunication, it being his province to release such prisoners upon their making peace with the Church. If this person was a friend of Bunyan's, his prayers for the bishop, and acknowledgments for this act of kindness, are readily accounted

for. That Barlow had nothing to do with Bunyan's release is now perfectly clear; because all, even the minutest particulars relative to it, have been discovered. This is a very romantic history, and necessarily leads us back to the battle of Worcester. At this battle, the republicans were numerous, well disciplined, and led by experienced officers; the royal army was completely routed, and its leaders, who survived the battle, were subject to the severest privations. Charles found refuge at Boscobel House, and, disguised as a woodcutter, was hid in an oak. His adventures and hair-breadth escapes fill a volume:—the parliament offered one thousand pounds reward for his apprehension. At length, after wandering in various disguises forty days, he arrived at Brighton, then a small fishing town, and here his friends succeeded in hiring a fishing boat to take him to France. Numerous histories of this extraordinary escape were published, but no two of them agree, excepting that, to please the king, all the credit was given to Roman Catholics. Of these narratives, that by Dr. Lingard has the strangest blunder. When they left Shoreham, 'The ship stood with easy sail *towards the Isle of Wight*, as if she

were *on her way to Deal*, to which port she was bound'²⁷⁶—Deal being exactly in the contrary direction! Carte has the best account. The vessel was bound for Poole, coal-laden; they left Shoreham at seven a.m. under easy sail; and at five, being off the Isle of Wight, with the wind north, she stood over to France, and returned to Poole, no one discovering that they had been out of their course. A letter recently discovered among the archives of the Society of Friends at Devonshire House solves every difficulty. It is written by Ellis Hookes to the wife of George Fox, dated January, 1670—

‘Yesterday there was a friend (a quaker) wth the king, one that is John Groves mate, he was the may yt. was mate to the master of the fisher-boat yt carried the king away when he went from Worcester fight, and only this friend and the master knew of it in the ship, and the friend carried him (the king) ashoare on his shoulders. the king knew him again, and was very friendly to him, and told him he remembered him and of

²⁷⁶ 4to, vol. vii., p. 75.

severall tings yt was done in ye ship att the same time. the friend told him the reason why he did not come all this while was yt he was satisfied in yt he had peace and satisfaction in himself yt he did what he did to releiue a man in distresse and now he desired nothing of him (the king) but that he would sett friends at libertie who were great sufferers or to that purpose and told the king he had a paper of 110 that were premunired yt had lain in prison about 6 years and none can release ym but him. Soe the king took the paper and said there was many of ym and yt they would be in again in a monthes time and yt the country gentlemen complained to him yt they were so troubled wth the quakers. So he said he would release him six. but ye friend thinkes to goe to him again, for he had not fully cleared himselfe.'

This letter is endorsed by Fox himself, 'E

Hookes to M F of passages consering Richard Carver, that cared the King of his backe.’

E. Hooke’s next letter, addressed to George Fox, thus continues the narrative—

‘February, 1669-70.

‘Dear G. F. As for the friend that was with the King, his love is to thee. He has been with the King lately, and Thomas Moore was with him, and the King was very loving to them. He had a fair and free opportunity to open his mind to the King, and the King has promised to do for him, but willed him to wait a month or two longer. I rest thy faithful friend to serve thee,

‘E.H.’²⁷⁷

The captain of the fisher-boat was Nicholas Tattersall, whose grave, covered with a slab of black marble, is still to be seen in Brighton church-yard, with a long poetical inscription, now scarcely legible. On the Restoration, he applied for his reward, and was made a commander in the royal navy, with an annuity to him and his heirs for ever of £100. The

²⁷⁷ I am greatly indebted to J. P. Brown, Esq., James Street, Islington, for directing my attention to these letters.

family have recently become extinct. His fisher-boat was moored for a considerable time in the Thames, opposite Whitehall. Years had rolled on, but the Quaker mate who had so materially assisted the flying prince—by keeping the secret—arranging the escape with the crew, and when, in fear of danger from a privateer, rowing the prince ashore, and in shoal water carrying him on his shoulders to the land, near the village of Fecamp, in Normandy, yet he had not been with the king to claim any reward. This escape took place in 1651, and nearly twenty years had elapsed, ten of which were after the Restoration; so that in all probability the king, who with all his faults was not ungrateful, was agreeably surprised with his appearance at the palace. Whatever alteration the rough life of a sailor had made on his appearance, the king at once recognized him. All the progress he had made as to worldly prosperity was from being mate of a fisher-boat, under Tattersall, to becoming mate of a West Indiaman, under Captain Grove. His Majesty, who had passed his time more with courtiers than with Quakers, was doubtless astonished that a poor man, having such a claim on his bounty, should have been so many years without seeking his recompense. On asking the reason, the Quaker nobly answered

to this effect, That the performance of his duty in saving the life of the hunted prince, was only a moral obligation, for the discharge of which God had amply repaid him by peace and satisfaction in his mind and conscience. And now, Sire, I ask nothing for myself, but that your Majesty would do the same to my friends that I did for you—set the poor pious sufferers at liberty, that they may bless you, and that you may have that peace and satisfaction which always follows good and benevolent actions. The king attempted feebly to argue, that they would soon offend again, and that they were much complained of by the country gentlemen. How readily the sailor might have said to his sailor king, Alter the ship's articles, let *all* the crew fare alike as to their free choice in religion, and there will be no grumbling in your noble ship; every subject will do his duty. The king offered to release any six, and we may imagine the sailor's blunt answer, What, six poor Quakers for a king's ransom!! His Majesty was so pleased as to invite him to come again, when he introduced another member of the Society of Friends, Thomas Moore. At this period an amazing number of Friends, men and women, were in the jails throughout the kingdom, torn from their families, and suffering most severe privations, under which

great numbers had perished. The application for the release of the survivors, thus happily commenced, was followed up with zeal and energy, and crowned with great success. This narrative solves all those difficulties which rendered that remarkable event extremely mysterious. The question naturally arises why so debauched and dissolute a king should prefer such tight-laced Christians to be the peculiar objects of his mercy. The reason is perfectly obvious, he owed his life to one of their members, who, however poor as to this world, possessed those riches of piety which prevented his taking any personal reward for an act of duty. Shade of the noble sailor, thy name, Richard Carver, is worthy of all honour! And the more so, because thy gallant bearing has been studiously concealed in all the histories of these important transactions. Had he been a mischief-making Jesuit, like Father Huddleston, his noble deed would have been trumpeted forth for the admiration of the world in all ages. His name was left to perish in oblivion, because he was of a despised sect. It is an honour to Christianity that a labouring man preferred the duty of saving the life of a human being, and that of an enemy, to gaining so easily heaps of glittering gold. And when all the resources of royalty were ready munificently to

reward him, he, like Moses, preferred the rescue of his suffering friends to personal honours or emoluments—even to all the riches of England!

The efforts of Carver and Moore were followed by most earnest appeals for mercy by George Whitehead, who with Moore appeared before the king in council several times, until at length the royal word sanctioned this act of mercy. The Quakers were then appealed to by sufferers of other denominations, and advised them to obtain the permission of the king in council, that their names might be inserted in the deed; rendering them all the assistance that was in their power. Great difficulties were encountered in passing the cumbrous deed through the various offices, and then in pleading it in all parts of the country. The number of Quakers thus released from imprisonment was 471, being about the same number as those who had perished in the jails. The rest of the prisoners liberated by this deed were Baptists and Independents, and among the former was JOHN BUNYAN.

A very circumstantial narrative of these proceedings, copies of the minutes of the privy council, and other documents, will be found in

the introduction to *The Pilgrim's Progress*.²⁷⁸ One of these official papers affords an interesting subject of study to an occasional conformist. It is the return of the sheriff of Bedfordshire, stating that ALL the sufferings of Bunyan—his privation of liberty, sacrifice of wife, children, and temporal comforts, with the fear of an ignominious death—were for refusing to attend his parish church and hear the *Common Prayer* service.

When it is considered that Bunyan was very severe in his remarks upon the Quakers, the event reflects no ordinary degree of honour upon the Society of Friends, at whose sole charge, and entirely by their own exertions, this great deed of benevolence was begun, carried on, and completed. It is difficult to ascertain the exact duration of this sad imprisonment, because we cannot discover any record of the day of his release. His imprisonment commenced November 13, 1660, and his pardon under the great seal is dated September 13, 1672. As the pardon included nearly 500 sufferers, it occupied some time to obtain official duplicates to be exhibited at the assizes and sessions for the various counties. A letter from E. Hooks to

²⁷⁸ Vol. iii., pp. 21-29.

Mrs. Fox intimates that none were released on the 1st November 1672. Another letter shows that the Bedfordshire prisoners were discharged before January 10, 1673;²⁷⁹ confirming Bunyan's own account, published by him in the *Grace Abounding*, 1680, that his imprisonment lasted complete twelve years.²⁸⁰

During the latter period of his imprisonment, probably from the time of his receiving the royal license to preach, May 15, 1672, he enjoyed extraordinary liberty—visiting those who had been kind to his family, and preaching in the surrounding counties. An entry in the records of the city of Leicester proves that he was there, and claimed the liberty of preaching—'John Bunyan's license bears date the 15th of May 1672, to teach as a Congregational person, being of that persuasion, in the house of Josias Roughed, Bedford, or in any other place, room, or house, licensed by his Majestie's memorand. The said Bunyan shewed his license to Mr. Mayor, Mr. Overinge, Mr. Freeman, and Mr. Browne, being then present, the 6th day of October, 1672, that being about two months before his final release from jail.'²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ Vol. iii., p. 27.

²⁸⁰ Vol. i., p. 47; No. 319.

²⁸¹ Jukes' *History of Bunyan's Church*, p. 24.

His first object, upon recovering his liberty, appears to have been the proper arrangement of his worldly business, that he might provide for the wants of his family, a matter of little difficulty with their frugal habits. He, at the same time, entered with all his soul into his beloved work of preaching and writing, to set forth the glories of Immanuel. The testimony of one who was his 'true friend and long acquaintance,' is, that one of the first fruits of his liberation was to visit those who had assisted him and comforted his family during his incarceration, encouraging those who were in fear of a prison, and collecting means of assistance to those who still remained prisoners; traveling even to remote counties to effect these merciful objects.²⁸²

While the premises occupied by Mr. Roughed were being converted into a capacious meeting-house, the pastor was indefatigable in visiting the sick, and preaching from house to house, settling churches in the villages, reconciling differences, and extending the sacred influences of the gospel, so that in a very short time he attained the appellation of Bishop Bunyan—a title much better merited by him than by the downy prelates who sent

²⁸² Continuation of Life to *Grace Abounding*.

him to jail for preaching that which they ought to have preached.

He formed branch churches at Gamlingay, Hawnes, Cotton-end, and Kempston, in connection with that at Bedford. When he opened the new meeting-house, it was so thronged that many were constrained to stay without, though it was very spacious, every one striving to partake of his instructions. Here he lived, in much peace and quiet of mind, contenting himself with that little God had bestowed upon him, and sequestering himself from all secular employments to follow that of his call to the ministry.²⁸³ The word

²⁸³ It is generally believed at Bedford, that, after Bunyan was imprisoned, his family removed from Elstow to Bedford, in order that they might have more frequent access to him; and that, on his release, he made his abode there. His humble dwelling was much like that of his father at Elstow, most unassuming; just such a cottage as a poor wounded sinner would feel at home in when visiting his pastor for advice. The late Rev. J. Geard, of Hitchin, in his *Diary*, says—'July 17, 1774. I preached, for the first time, at Bedford, to the successors of good Mr. Bunyan's congregation, and the next day called at the house where he used to live, and went into the room that tradition reported was his study. This house, though it had been the habitation of so truly great a man, was now let for about 40s. per annum.' Allowing for the difference in the value of money, Bunyan would have now paid 16s. a-year rent for his humble abode. It will be always matter of

‘sequestering’ would lead us to conclude, that his business was continued by his family, under his care, but so as to allow him much time for his Christian duties, and his benevolent pursuits. His peaceful course was interrupted by a severe controversy with the Christian world upon the subject of communion at the Lord’s Table, which had commenced while he was in prison. He would admit none but those who, by a godly conversation, brought forth fruits meet for repentance, nor dared he to refuse any who were admitted to spiritual communion with the Redeemer. Every sect which celebrated the Lord’s Supper, fenced the table round with ritual observances, except the Baptist church at Bedford, which stood preeminent for non-sectarianism. A singular proof of this is, that the catechism called *Instruction of the Ignorant*, written and published by Bunyan, is admirably adapted for the use, not only of his own church, but of Christians of all denominations.

regret, that it was not purchased and preserved by the members of the ‘Old Meeting,’ when it was offered them before its destruction; we procured, however, a drawing of it, which is here engraved. The cottage was in the parish of St. Cuthbert, in the street opposite the meeting-house, and here Bunyan lived, while he was pastor, from 1681 to 1688.

His spirit was greatly refreshed by finding that his precept and example had been blessed to his son Thomas. On the 6th of the 11th month, 1673, he passed the lions, and was welcomed into the house called Beautiful, uniting in full communion with his father's church. There doubtless was, as Mercy expresses it, 'music in the house, music in the heart, and music also in heaven, for joy that he was here.'²⁸⁴ He afterwards became a village preacher.

Bunyan was by no means a latitudinarian. No one felt greater decision than he did for the truths of our holy faith. When his Lord's design in Christianity was, as he thought, perverted by a beneficed clergyman, then he sent forth from his prison an answer as from a son of thunder, even at the risk of his life. His love for the pure doctrines of the gospel was as decided as his aversion to sectarian titles. 'As for those factious titles of Anabaptists, Independents, Presbyterians, or the like, I conclude that they came neither from Jerusalem, nor from Antioch, but rather from hell and Babylon, for they naturally tend to divisions.'²⁸⁵ The only title that he loved was

²⁸⁴ *Pilgrim*, vol. iii., p. 198.

²⁸⁵ Vol. ii., p. 649.

that of Christian. 'It is strange to see how men are wedded to their own opinions, beyond what the law of grace and love will admit. Here is a Presbyter—here an Independent and a Baptist, so joined each man to his own opinions, that they cannot have that communion one with another as by the testament of the Lord Jesus they are commanded and enjoined.'²⁸⁶ The meaning which he attached to the word 'sectarian' is very striking—Pharisees are sectarians, they who in Divine worship turn aside from the rule of the written Word, and in their manner do it to be seen of men—these are sectaries.²⁸⁷ Bunyan was most decided as to the importance of baptism and the Lord's Supper. 'Do you think that love letters are not desired between lovers? Why these, God's ordinances, they are his love letters, and his love tokens, too. No marvel, then, if the righteous do so desire them. "More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb." Christ made himself known to his disciples in breaking of bread; who would not, then, that loves to know him, be present at such an ordinance? Ofttimes the Holy Ghost,

²⁸⁶ Vol. ii., p. 538.

²⁸⁷ Vol. ii., p. 219.

in the comfortable influence of it, has accompanied the baptized in the very act of administering of it.' His views of the fellowship of the saints were equally explicit—'Church fellowship, rightly managed, is the glory of all the world. No place, no community, no fellowship, is adorned and bespangled with those beauties, as is a church rightly knit together to their Head, and lovingly serving one another.'²⁸⁸ Such he admitted to the table of their common Lord; but, in his esteem, to communicate with the profane was all one with sacrificing to the devil.

All this liberality was accompanied by very strict notions of church fellowship, not allowing private judgment in the withdrawing of any member, if the church withheld its approbation. Mary Tilney had been cruelly robbed by the persecuting Justice Porter, for not attending the parish church. He carted away all her goods, beds, and bedding, even to the hangings of her rooms. She was a most benevolent widow, and was more troubled with the crying and sighing of her poor neighbours, than with the loss of her goods. Harassed by persecution at Bedford, she removed to London, and requested her dismissal to a

²⁸⁸ Vol. i., p. 757.

church of which her son-in-law was pastor, which was refused. As the letter announcing this to her is a good example of Bunyan's epistolary correspondence, it is carefully extracted from the church book.

'Our dearly-beloved sister
Tilney.

'Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, by Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

'I received your letter, and have presented it to the sight of the brethren, who, after due consideration of your motion, have jointly concluded to give you this answer. This for yourself (honoured sister), you are of high esteem with the church of God in this place, both because his grace hath been bestowed richly upon you, and because of your faithful fellowship with us; for you have been rightly a daughter of Abraham while here, not being afraid with any amazement. Your holy and quiet behaviour, also, while with patience and meekness, and in the gentleness

of Christ, you suffered yourself to be robbed for his sake, hath the more united our affections to you in the bowels of Jesus Christ. Yea, it hath begotten you reverence, also, in the hearts of them who were beholders of your meekness and innocency while you suffered; and a stinging conviction, as we are persuaded, in the consciences of those who made spoil for themselves; all which will redound to the praise of God our Father, and to your comfort and everlasting consolation by Christ, in the day he shall come to take vengeance for his people, and to be glorified in them that believe. Wherefore we cannot (our honoured sister) but care for your welfare, and increase of all good in the faith and kingdom of Christ, whose servant you are, and whose name is written in your forehead; and do therefore pray God and our Father, that he would direct your way, and open

a door in his temple for you, that you may eat his fat and be refreshed, and that you may drink the pure blood of the grape. And be you assured that, with all readiness, we will help and forward you what we can therein, for we are not ashamed to own you before all the churches of Christ.

‘But, our dearly beloved, you know that, for our safety and your profit, it is behoofful that we commit you to such, to be fed and governed in the Word and doctrines as, we are sufficiently persuaded, shall be able to deliver you up with joy at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints: otherwise we (that we say not you) shall receive blushing and shame before him and you; yea, and you also, our honoured sister, may justly charge us with want of love, and a due respect for your eternal condition, if, for want of care and circumspection herein, we should commit you

to any from whom you should receive damage, or by whom you should not be succoured and fed with the sincere milk of the incorruptible Word of God, which is able to save your soul. Wherefore we may not, neither dare give our consent that you feed and fold with such whose principles and practices, in matters of faith and worship, we, as yet, are strangers to, and have not received commendations concerning, either from works of theirs or epistles from others. Yourself, indeed, hath declared that you are satisfied therein; but, elect sister, seeing the act of delivering you up is an act of ours and not yours, it is convenient, yea, very expedient, that we, as to so weighty a matter, be well persuaded before. Wherefore we beseech you, that, for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, you give us leave to inform ourselves yet better before we grant your request; and that you also

forbear to sit down at the table with any without the consent of your brethren. You were, while with us, obedient, and we trust you will not be unruly now. And for the more quick expedition of this matter, we will propound before you our further thoughts.

1. Either we shall consent to your sitting down with brother Cockain, brother Griffith, brother Palmer, or other, who, of long continuance in the city, have showed forth their faith, their worship, and good conversation with the Word; 2.

Or if you can get a commendatory epistle from brother Owen, brother Cockain, brother Palmer, or brother Griffith, concerning the faith and principles of the person and people you mention, with desire to be guided and governed by, you shall see our readiness, in the fear of God, to commit you to the doctrine and care of that congregation. Choose you whether of these you will

consent unto, and let us hear of your resolution. And we beseech you, for love's sake, you show, with meekness, your fear and reverence of Christ's institution; your love to the congregation, and regard to your future good. Finally, we commit you to the Lord and the Word of his grace, who is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified. To God, the only wise, be glory and power everlasting. Amen.—Your affectionate brethren, to serve you in the faith and fellowship of the gospel.

'Sent from Bedford, the 19th of the Fourth Month, 1671.

As a farther illustration of Bunyan's sentiments on this subject, we give the following letter to the church at Braintree:—

'The 7th of the Twelfth Month, 1676 (Feb. 1677).

'The church of Christ in and about Bedford, to the church of Christ in and about Braintree, sendeth greeting,

'Holy and beloved—We,

fellow-heirs with you of the grace of life, having considered your request concerning our honoured and beloved brother, Samuel Hensman: that he shall be given up to you for your mutual edification, and his furtherance and joy of faith; and considering also, in the capacity he now standeth by reason of his habitation amongst you, his edification is to be from you, not from us—he being, by God's providence (by which he disposeth the world), placed at such a distance from us. And considering, also, the great end of Christ our Lord, in ordaining the communion of saints, is his glory in their edification, and that all things are to be done by his command to the edification of the body in general, and of every member in particular, and that this we oft (ought?) to design in our receiving him, and giving up to other churches, and not to please ourselves: do as before God and the elect angels,

grant and give up to you our elect brother, to be received by you in the Lord, and to be nourished, in the church at Braintree, with you as one that is dear to the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ; and this we the willinger do, because, as we are informed concerning you, beloved, you are not rigid in your principles, but are for communion with saints as saints, and have been taught by the Word to receive the brotherhood, because they are beloved, and received of the Father and the Son, to whose grace we commend you, with the brother of late a member with us, but now one of you. Grace be with you all. Written by the appointment of the church here, and subscribed, in her name, by your brethren, as followeth:—

John Bunyan

Sam. Fenn.

Oliver Stot

John Fenn. Thomas Cooper

Luke Astwood
John Croker

The late Mr. Kilpin of Bedford considered the whole of this letter to be entered in the minutes in Bunyan's hand-writing.

There is also in the church book the copy of a letter, in 1674, addressed to the 'church sometime walking with our brother Jesse,' refusing to dismiss to them Martha Cumberland, unless they were certified that they continued in the practice of mixed communion. In these sentiments Bunyan lived and died. His church remains the same to the present day. In the new, commodious, and handsome meeting-house, opened in 1850, there is a baptistery, frequently used. The present minister, the amiable and talented John Jukes, baptizes infants, and receives the assistance of a neighbouring Baptist minister to baptize adults.

Not only had Bunyan clear, well-defined, and most decided views of the ordinances of the gospel, but also of all its doctrines. His knowledge upon those solemn subjects was drawn exclusively from the sacred pages; nor dared he swerve in the slightest degree from the path of duty; still he belonged to no sect, but that of Christian, and the same freedom which had guided him in forming his

principles, he cheerfully allowed to others. Hitherto, water baptism had been considered a pre-requisite to the Lord's table by all parties. The Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Independents, had denounced the Baptists as guilty of a most serious heresy, or blasphemy, in denying the right of infants to baptism; not only did they exclude the Baptists from communion with their churches, but they persecuted them with extreme rigour. When the Independents made laws for the government of their colony in America, in 1644, one of the enactments was, 'That if any person shall either openly condemn, or oppose the baptizing of infants, or seduce others, or leave the congregation during the administration of the rite, they shall be sentenced to banishment.' The same year a poor man was tied up and whipped, for refusing to have his child baptized. 'The Rev. J. Clarke, and Mr. O. Holmes, of Rhode Island, for visiting a sick Baptist brother in Massachusetts, instead of being admitted to the Lord's table, they were arrested, fined, imprisoned, and whipped.' At this very time, the Baptists formed their colony at Rhode Island, and the charter concludes with these words, 'All men may walk as their consciences persuade them, every one in the name of his

God.' This is probably the only spot in the world where persecution was never known. The Baptists considered that immersion in water was the marriage rite between the believer and Saviour; that to sit at the Lord's table without it was spiritual adultery, to be abhorred and avoided, and therefore refused to admit any person to the Lord's table who had not been baptized in water upon a personal profession of faith in the Saviour. This was the state of parties when Bunyan, at the commencement of his pastorate, entered into the controversy. He had been promised a commendation to his book by the great, the grave, 'the sober' Dr. Owen, but he withdrew his sanction. 'And perhaps it was more for the glory of God, that truth should go naked into the world,' said Bunyan, 'than as seconded by so weighty an armour-bearer as he.'²⁸⁹ Bunyan denied that water could form a wedding garment, or that water baptism was a prerequisite for the Lord's table, or that being immersed in water was putting on our Lord's livery, by which disciples may be known. 'Away, fond man, do you forget the text, "By this shall all men know that ye are my

²⁸⁹ Vol. ii., 649.

disciples, if ye have love one to another.”²⁹⁰ And attempt was made to embroil Bunyan in a public disputation in London upon this subject, which he very wisely avoided.²⁹¹ This controversy will be found in our second volume, and is deeply interesting, making allowance for the *esprit de corps* manifested on all sides. A verse in the *emblems* is very pertinent upon the violence of this dispute:—

‘Our gospel has had here a summer’s day,
But in its sunshine we, like fools, did play;
Or else fall out, and with each other wrangle,
And did, instead of work, not much but
jangle.’²⁹²

After a lapse of nearly two centuries, Bunyan’s peaceable principles have greatly prevailed; so that now few churches refuse communion on account of the mode, in which water baptism has been administered. The Baptists are no longer deemed heretics as they formerly were. Dr. Watts aided this kindly feeling—‘A church baptized in infancy, or in adult age, may allow communion to those that are of the contrary practice in baptism.’²⁹³ Robert Robinson praises Bunyan’s work, and

²⁹⁰ Vol. ii., p. 638.

²⁹¹ Vol. ii., p. 641.

²⁹² Vol. iii., p. 758.

²⁹³ *Christian Church*, 8vo, 1747, p. 280.

advocates his sentiments upon the most liberal principles. One of his remarks is very striking:—‘Happy community! that can produce a dispute of one hundred and fifty years unstained with the blood, and unsullied with the fines, the imprisonments, and the civil inconveniences of the disputants. As to a few coarse names, rough compliments, foreign suppositions, and acrimonious exclamations, they are only the harmless squeakings of men in a passion, caught and pinched in a sort of logical trap.’²⁹⁴ To this time, Bunyan was only known as an extraordinarily talented and

²⁹⁴ *The General Doctrine of Toleration, applied to Free Communion*, p. 8. George Whitefield most warmly approved the communion of all God’s saints with each other. This, I must own, more particularly endears Mr. Bunyan to my heart. He was of a catholic spirit. The want of water (adult baptism), with this man of God, was no bar to outward Christian communion. And I am persuaded that if, like him, we were more deeply and experimentally baptized into the benign and gracious influences of the blessed Spirit, we should be less baptized into the waters of strife about circumstantials and non-essentials. For being thereby rooted and grounded in the love of God, we should necessarily be constrained to think and let think, bear with and forbear one another in love, and without saying, I am of Paul, Apollos, or Cephas; have but one grand, laudable, disinterested strife, namely, who should live, preach, and exalt the ever-loving, altogether-lovely Jesus most.

eloquent man, whose retentive memory was most richly stored with the sacred Scriptures. All his sermons and writings were drawn from his own mental resources, aided, while in prison, only by the Bible, the Concordance, and Fox's *Book of Martyrs*. Very emphatically he says, 'I am for drinking water out of my own cistern.' 'I find such a spirit of idolatry in the learning of this world, that had I it at command I durst not use it, but only use the light of the Word and Spirit of God.' 'I will not take of it from a thread even to a shoe latchet.'²⁹⁵ It must not be understood that he read no other works but his Bible and *Book of Martyrs*, but that he only used those in composing his various treatises while in confinement. He certainly had and read *The Plain Man's Pathway, Practice of Piety, Luther on the Galatians, Clarke's Looking-glass for Saints and Sinners, Dodd on the Commandments, Andrews' Sermons, Fowler's Design of Christianity, D'Anvers and Paul on Baptism*, and doubtless all the books which were within his reach, calculated to increase his store of knowledge.

About this time he published a small quarto tract, in which he scripturally treats the

²⁹⁵ Vol. iii., p. 398.

doctrine of eternal election and reprobation. This rare book, published for sixpence, we were glad to purchase at a cost of one guinea and a half, because a modern author rejected its authenticity! It is included in every early list of Bunyan's works, and especially in that *published by himself*, in 1688, to guard his friends from deception; for he had become so popular an author that several forgeries had been published under his initials. These few pages on election contain a scriptural treatise upon a very solemn subject, written by one whose mind was so imbued by the fear of God, as to have cast out the fear of man; which so generally embarrasses writers upon this subject. It was translated into Welsh, and is worthy an attentive perusal, especially by those who cannot see the difference between God's foreknowledge and his foreordination.

A new era was now dawning upon him, which, during the last ten years of his life, added tenfold to his popularity. For many years his beautifully simple, but splendid allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, lay slumbering in his drawer.²⁹⁶ Numerous had been his

²⁹⁶ He hesitated as to the propriety of publishing it, probably from the influence of the weighty opinion of Martin Luther. 'The people are greatly delighted with allegories and similitudes, and therefore Christ

consultations with his pious associates and friends, and various had been their opinions, whether it was serious enough to be published. All of them had a solemn sense of the impropriety of anything like trifling as to the way of escape from destruction, and the road to the celestial city. It appears strange to us, who have witnessed the very solemn impressions, in all cases, made by reading that book, that there could have been a doubt of the propriety of treating in a colloquial manner, and even under the fashion of a dream, those most important truths. Some said, 'John, print it'; others said, 'not so.' Some said, 'it might do good'; others said, 'no.' The result of all those consultations was his determination, 'I print it will,' and it has raised an imperishable monument to his memory. Up to this time, all Bunyan's popularity arose from his earlier

oftentimes useth them; for they are, as it were, certain pictures which set forth things as if they were painted before our eyes. Paul was a marvelous cunning workman in handling allegories, but Origen and Jerome turn plain Scriptures into unfit and foolish allegories. Therefore, to use allegories, it is oftentimes a very dangerous thing' [*Com. on Gal.* iv. 21]. Such instructions, from one he so much venerated, curbed his exuberant imagination, and made him doubly watchful, lest allegorizing upon subjects of such vast importance might 'darken counsel by words without knowledge.'

works, and his sermons. Leaving out of the question those most extraordinary books, *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Holy War*, his other writings ought to have handed down his name, with honour and popularity, to the latest posterity. While the logical and ponderous works of Baxter and Owen are well calculated to furnish instruction to those who are determined to obtain knowledge, the works of Bunyan create that very determination, and furnish that very knowledge, so blended with amusement, as to fix it in the memory. Let one illustration suffice. It is our duty to love our enemies, but it is a hard lesson; we must learn it from the conduct of the Divine Creator—'There is a man hates God, blasphemes his name, despises his being; yea, says there is no God. And yet the God that he carrieth it thus towards doth give me his breakfast, dinner, and supper; clothes him well, and, when night comes, has him to bed, gives him good rest, blesses his field, his corn, his cattle, his children, and raises him to high estate; yea, and this our God doth not only once or twice, but until these transgressors become old; his patience is thus extended years after years, that we might learn of him to do well.'²⁹⁷ All the

²⁹⁷ Vol. iii., p. 739.

works of Bunyan abound with such striking lessons, as to render them extremely valuable, especially to Sunday-school teachers and ministers, to enliven their addresses and sermons. But, in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the world has acknowledged one train of beauties; picture after picture, most beautifully finished, exhibiting the road from destruction to the celestial city; our only difficulty in such a display being to decide as to which is the most interesting and striking piece of scenery.²⁹⁸ The editor's introduction to that extraordinary book is intended to prove that it was written while the author was imprisoned for refusing to submit his conscience to human laws, and that it is a perpetual monument to the folly of persecution; the peculiar qualifications of the author are displayed in its having been a spontaneous effusion of his own mind, unaided by any previous writer; an analysis is given of all prior pilgrimages, in which, more especially in *The Pilgrims*, *The Pylgremage of the Soule*, *Grande Amoure*, and in *The Pilgrim of Loretto*,

²⁹⁸ Even Dean Swift, in his popular *Letter to a Young Divine*, says, 'I have been better entertained, and more informed by a few pages in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, than by a long discourse upon the will and the intellect, and simple and complex ideas.' Nothing short of extraordinary merit could have called for such a eulogy from so severe a critic.

the reader will find a faithful picture of some of the singularities of Popery drawn by itself; an account of the editions, forgeries, errors in printing, versions and translations of this wonderful book; the opinions of the learned and pious of its merits, principal scenes, and a synopsis. It has been the source of very numerous courses of lectures by ministers of all denominations; and has been turned into a handsome volume of hymns, adapted for public worship, by the late Mr. Purday, a friend of John Wesley's, and a laborious preacher for more than half a century.

Great efforts have been made by the most popular artists to enliven the scenes of the pilgrimage; but no colour glows like the enchanting words of Bunyan. No figures are so true to nature, and so life-like. Those eminent engravers, Sturt and Strut, Stothard and Martin, with the prize efforts excited by the Art Union of England, and the curious outlines by Mrs. M'Kenzie, the daughter of a British admiral, have endeavoured to exhaust the scenes in this inexhaustible work of beautiful scenery. The most elegant and correct edition is the large-paper, sumptuous volume by Mr. Bogue, admirably illustrated with new designs, engraved on wood in superior style—a volume worthy the drawing-room of queens and

emperors. The designs, also, of the late David Scott, recently published at Edinburgh, are new, and peculiarly striking. His entrance to the Valley of the Shadow of Death is mysteriously impressive, a fit accompaniment to Bunyan's description, which is not excelled by any thing in Dante, Spencer, or Milton. In both parts of *The Pilgrim's Progress* this scene is full of terrific sublimity. But we must be excused, if we most warmly recommend our own offspring—the present edition—as combining accuracy, elegance, and cheapness, with the addition of very numerous notes, which, we trust, will prove highly illustrative and entertaining.

The carping criticisms of Mr. Dunlop, in his *History of Fiction*, and of an author in the *Penny Encyclopedia*, are scarcely worth notice. The complaint is, want of benevolence in the hero of the tale. How singular it is, and what a testimony to its excellence, that an intelligent writer upon *fictions* should have been so overpowered with this spiritual narrative, as to confound it with temporal things. Christian leaves his wife and children, instead of staying with them, to be involved in destruction—all this relates to inward spiritual feelings, and to these only. Visited by compunctions of heart, Christian strives to inspire his wife and

children with the same, but in vain; he attends solitarily to his spiritual state, taunted by his family, while, as to *temporal* things, he becomes a better husband and father than ever he was—but this is not prominent, because it is entirely foreign to the author's object, which is to display the inward emotions of the new birth, the *spiritual* journey *alone*, apart from all temporal affairs. Multitudes read it as if it was really a dream, the old sleeping portrait confirming the idea. In the story, Christian most mysteriously embodies all classes of men, from the prince to the peasant—the wealthiest noble, or merchant, to the humbles mechanic or labourer—and it illustrates the most solemn, certain truth, that, with respect to the salvation of the soul, the poorest creature in existence is upon perfect equality with the lordly prelate, or magnificent emperor, with this word ringing in their ears, 'the POOR have the gospel preached to them.' The *Grace Abounding*, or Life of Bunyan, is a key to all the mysteries of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Holy War*.

Bunyan's singular powers are those of description, not of invention. He had lived in the city of destruction—he had heard the distant threatening of the awful storm that was shortly to swallow it up in unutterable ruin—

he had felt the load of sin, and rejoiced when it was rolled away before a crucified Saviour—he knew every step of the way, and before he had himself passed the black river, he had watched prayerfully over those who were passing, and when the gate of the city was opened to let them enter, he had strained his eyes to see their glory.

The purifying influence of *The Pilgrim's Progress* may be traced in the writings of many imaginative authors. How does it in several parts beautify the admirable tale of *Uncle Tom, and his Cabin*. In that inimitable scene, the death of the lovely Eva, the distressed negro, watching with intense anxiety the progress of death, says, 'When that blessed child goes into the kingdom, they'll open the door so wide, we'll all get a look in at the glory.' Whence came this strange idea—not limited to the poor negro, but felt by thousands who have watched over departing saints? It comes from the entrance of Christian and Hopeful into the celestial city—'I looked in after them, and, behold, the city shone like the sun; the streets, also, were paved with gold, and in them they walked with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises, which, when I had seen, I wished myself

among them.’²⁹⁹ How often has Bunyan’s wit sparkled in sermons, and even in speeches delivered in the senate. Recently, in a speech on the collation ministry, the following reference was introduced:—‘Mr. Facing-both-ways, of honest John Bunyan, is not a creature mankind can regard with any complacency; nor will they likely suffer any one to act with one party, and reserve his principles for another.’ It has also been strangely quoted in novel writing—thus in Bell’s *Villette*—visiting a *God-mother* in a pleasant retreat, is said ‘to resemble the sojourn of Christian and Hopeful, beside the pleasant stream, with green trees on each bank, and meadows beautified with lilies all the year round.’ It is marvelous that a picture of nature should have been so beautifully and strikingly described by an unlettered artisan, as to be used in embellishing an elegant novel, written nearly two centuries after his decease.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁹ Vol. iii., p. 166.

³⁰⁰ Within the Editor’s memory, polished writers hesitated to name our incomparable allegorist, on account of his humble name and education. Thus Cowper sang—

‘I name thee not, lest so despised a name
Should move a sneer at thy deserved fame.’

Now nearly all men find it difficult to do that name sufficient honour. One of the most splendid steamships in America is called after his name. A

The *Pilgrim* was followed by a searching treatise on *The Fear of God*. The value of this book led to its republication by the Tract Society, and 4000 copies have been circulated. It is a neat and acceptable volume, but why

magnificent ship, for the China trade, was built at Aberdeen by Walter Hood & Co., which so swiftly traversed the ocean as to have made the voyage from Canton to London in ninety-nine days, without any aid from steam. This beautiful and grand specimen of the perfection of naval architecture is named *The John Bunyan*. Roman Catholics have printed large editions of the *Pilgrim*, with slight omissions, for circulation among the young under the care of the nuns. Our English fanatics have committed a crime that would make a papist blush. A Rev. E. Neale has clumsily altered the *Pilgrim's Progress*, that Bunyan might appear to teach the things which Bunyan's righteous heaven-born soul abhorred. It is a piece of matchless self-conceit to think of mending that which has been admired by the wisest of the human race in all nations, and which has obtained an unbounded popularity. Such an attempt to alter it is an acknowledgment that all the boasted power of Oxford, Exeter, and Rome, are unable to invent a tale to supersede the matchless beauties of the work of our spiritually-minded, heavenly-assisted brazier. If Mr. Neale should, at any time, alter a deed and the punishment for that felony is transportation for life. A similar forgery was committed in a recent London edition of Dr. Cheever's *Hill Difficulty*. The Tractarians, doubtless, commit these scandalous outrages upon the Fathers, and all other writers, and deserve the contempt of every honest, upright mind.

altered? and a psalm omitted.³⁰¹ Bunyan says, 'Your great ranting, swaggering, roysters'; this is modernized into 'Your ranting boasters.'³⁰² Then followed, the *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*. This was frequently reprinted, and hundreds of thousands have been circulated to benefit the world. His popularity increased with his years; efforts were made, but in vain, to steal him from his beloved charge at Bedford. 'He hath refused a more plentiful income to keep his station,' is the language of his surviving friend, Charles Doe. It is not surprising that he was thus tempted to leave his poor country church, for we are told by the same biographer, that 'When Mr. Bunyan preached in London, if there were but one day's notice given, there would be more people come together to hear him preach, than the meeting-house could hold. I have seen to hear him preach, by my computation, about 1200 at a morning lecture, by seven o'clock, on a working day, in the dark winter time. I also computed about 3000 that came to hear him one Lord's-day, at London, at a town's end meeting-house, so that half were fain to go back again for want of room, and then himself

³⁰¹ Vol. i., p. 473.

³⁰² Vol. i., p. 480.

was fain at a back door to be pulled almost over people to get up stairs to his pulpit.' This took place in a large meeting-house, erected in Zoar Street, either on the site or near the Globe Theatre, Southwark.³⁰³ On this spot, the prince of dramatists amused and corrupted crowded houses; while in the immediate vicinity were the stews and bear garden, frequented by libertines of the lowest caste. One Sunday, in 1582, many were killed or miserably wounded while attending the brutal sport of bear-baiting. Here, in the heart of Satan's empire, the prince of allegorists attracted multitudes, to be enlightened by his natural eloquence, and to be benefited by the fruits of his prolific and vivid imagination, at all times curbed and directed by the holy oracles. It was a spacious building, covering about 2000 feet of ground (50 by 40), with three galleries, quite capable of holding the number computed by Mr. Doe. We have, from correct drawings, furnished our subscribers with the plan and elevation of this ancient meeting-house. Having preached with peculiar warmth and enlargement, one of his

³⁰³ Two views of this meeting-house, an exterior and interior, after its conversion into a workshop, are given in the Plate facing page i. of this Memoir. In the interior, part of the beams and pillars that supported the gallery still remain.

friends took him by the hand, and could not help observing what a sweet sermon he had delivered; 'Ay,' said he, 'you need not remind me of that, for the devil told me of it before I was out of the pulpit!'³⁰⁴ Amongst his hearers were to be found the learned and the illiterate. It was well known that Dr. John Owen, when he had the opportunity, embraced it with pleasure, and sat at the feet of the unlearned, but eloquent tinker. Charles II, hearing of it, asked the learned D.D., 'How a man of his great erudition could sit to hear a tinker preach?' to which the doctor replied, 'May it please your Majesty, if I could possess the tinker's abilities, I would gladly give in exchange all my learning.'

He now pictured the downward road of the sinner to the realms of death and darkness in the *Life of Badman*. This was published in 1680, and is written in a language which fraudulent tradesmen at that period could not misunderstand; using terms now obsolete or vulgar. It is full of anecdotes, which reveal the state of the times, as superlatively immoral, and profane. He incidentally notices that a labourer received eightpence or tenpence per

³⁰⁴ Toplady's *Works*, vol. iv., p. 463.

day.³⁰⁵ At that time, bread and all the necessaries of life, excepting meat, were dearer than they are at present. In fact, our days are much happier for the poor than any preceding ones in British history. Bunyan's notions of conscientious dealing, will make all traders who read them—blush.³⁰⁶

November 12, 1681, Bunyan's friend and fellow-labourer Samuel Fenn, was removed from this world, and in the following year persecution raged severely. The church was, for a season, driven from the meeting-house, and obliged to assemble in the fields. The Word of the Lord was precious in those days.

In 1682, while surrounded by persecution, he prepared and published his most profound

³⁰⁵ Vol. iii., p. 637.

³⁰⁶ One of his anecdotes is remarkable, as exhibiting the state of medical knowledge in his neighbourhood. A poor wretch, who had taught his son to blaspheme, was affected with a nervous twisting of the muscles of his chest. This was supposed to arise from a Satanic possession. One Freeman, a more than ordinary doctor, attempted the cure. They bound the patient to a form, with his head hanging down over the end; set a pan of coals under his mouth, and put something therein that made a great smoke, to fetch out the devil. There they kept the man till he was almost smothered, but no devil came out of him [Vol. iii., p. 605]. The death-bed scene of the broken-hearted Mrs. Badman, is delicately and beautifully drawn.

and beautiful allegory, *The Holy War*, made by Shaddai upon Diabolus, for the Regaining of the Metropolis of the World; or, *The Losing and Taking again the Town of Mansoul*.³⁰⁷ The frontispiece is the most accurate likeness of Bunyan that is extant; it is engraved by White, from a drawing, also by him, now preserved in the print department of the British Museum. From this drawing, carefully compared with the print, we have furnished the expressive likeness which forms the frontispiece to this volume. It has also a correct whole-length portrait, with emblematical devices. This exceedingly beautiful and most finished allegory has never been so popular as *The Pilgrim's Progress*, for reasons which are shown in the introduction to *The Holy War*.³⁰⁸ The whole narrative of this wondrous war appears to flow as naturally as did that of the pilgrimage from the highly imaginative mind of the author. Man, in his innocence, attracts the notice and hatred of Apollyon. Nothing could be accomplished by force—all by subtlety and deceit. He holds a council of war—selects his officers—approaches—parleys, and gains admittance—then fortifies

³⁰⁷ Sutcliff's *History of Bunyan's Church*.

³⁰⁸ Vol. iii., p. 245.

the town against its king—Immanuel determines to recover it—vast armies, under appropriate leaders, surround the town, and attack every gate. The ear is garrisoned by Captain Prejudice and his deaf men. But he who rides forth conquering and to conquer is victorious. All the pomp, and parade, and horrors of a siege are as accurately told, as if by one who had been at the sacking of many towns. The author had learnt much in a little time, at the siege of Leicester. All the sad elements of war appear, and make us shudder—masses of armed men with their slings and battering-rams—clarions and shouts—wounded and slain, all appear as in a panorama. The mind becomes entranced, and when sober reflection regains her command, we naturally inquire, Can all this have taken place in my heart? Then the armies of Diabolus, with his thousands of Election Doubters, and as many Vocation Doubters, and his troops of Blood-men—thousands slain, and yet thousands start into existence. And all this in one man! How numberless are our thoughts—how crafty the approaches of the enemy—how hopeless and helpless is the sinner, unless Immanuel undertakes his recovery. The Holy War is a most surprising narrative of the fall and of the recovery of

man's soul, as accurate as it is most deeply interesting. It is one of the most perfect of allegories.³⁰⁹ There is as vast a superiority in Bunyan's Holy War over that by Chrysostom, as there is in the sun over a rush-light.

In 1684, he completed his *Pilgrim's Progress*, with the *Journey of a Female Christian, her Children, and the Lovely Mercy*; and now, as his invaluable and active life drew towards its close, his labours were redoubled. In his younger days, there appeared to have been no presentiment on his part that the longest term of human life would with him be shortened, but rather an expectation of living to old age, judging from an expression in his *Grace Abounding*. when he enjoyed a good hope, and bright anticipation of heavenly felicity, 'I should often long and desire that the last days were come. O! thought I, that I were fourscore years old now, that I might die quickly and be gone to rest.'³¹⁰ At that time he did not anticipate twelve years' imprisonment in a wretched jail, nor the consequent effects it

³⁰⁹ A beautiful satire is contained in the account of the traitors—tradition, human wisdom, and man's invention. This picture is drawn by an inimitable artist. Nor have we seen anything more admirably adapted to the present state of our Tractarian times. Vol. iii. 277.

³¹⁰ Vol. i., p. 22, No. 128.

must have upon his robust frame, well calculated to stand all weathers, but easily sapped and undermined by a damp dungeon. Symptoms of decay, after having enjoyed his liberty for about a year, led him to close his *Affectionate Advice to his Beloved Flock, on their Christian Behaviour*; with these words, 'Thus have I written to you, before I die, to provoke you to faith and holiness, and to love one another, when I am deceased, and shall be in paradise, as through grace I comfortably believe; yet it is not there, but here, I must do you good.'³¹¹ It is remarkable that Bunyan escaped all the dangers of the trying reign of James II, who, at times, was a persecutor, and at times endeavoured, in vain, by blandishments, to win the Nonconformists. his minions had their eyes upon our pilgrim, but were foiled in every attempt to apprehend him; all that he suffered was the occasional spoiling of his goods.³¹² Neither violence nor allurements induced him to deviate from his line of duty. No fear of man appeared to agitate his breast—he richly enjoyed that 'perfect love,' which 'casteth out fear' (1 John 4:18). James did all that an unprincipled man could

³¹¹ Vol. ii., p. 574.

³¹² *Life*, 1692.

do to cajole the Dissenters, that by their aid he might pull down the walls of Protestantism, and give full sway to the Papacy. He attempted, among many others, to bribe John Bunyan. He knew not how well he was read in the *Book of Martyrs*; how well he was aware that ‘the instruments of cruelty are in their habitations,’ and that the only advantage he could have received, would have been the same that Polypheme, the monstrous giant of Sicily, allowed to Ulysses, that he would eat his men first, and do him the favour of being eaten last. Mr. Doe states that ‘Regulators were sent into all cities and towns corporate to new-model the magistracy, by turning out some, and putting in others. Against this Bunyan expressed his zeal with great anxiety, as foreseeing the bad consequences that would attend it, and laboured with his congregation to prevent their being imposed on in this kind. And when a great man in those days, coming to Bedford upon some such errand, sent for him, as it is supposed, to give him a place of public trust, he would by no means come at him, but sent his excuse.’³¹³ He knew that in his flesh he possessed what he calls ‘Adam’s legacy, a

³¹³ *Grace Abounding* (continued), vol. i., p. 63, and *Life*, 1692.

conduit pipe, through which the devil conveys his poisoned spawn and venom,³¹⁴ and he wisely avoided this subtle temptation. He detested the ‘painted Satan, or devil in fine clothes.’³¹⁵ It was one of these hypocritical pretences to correct evil, while really meaning to increase it, and which Bunyan calls, ‘the devil correcting vice.’ He was watchful, lest ‘his inward man should catch cold,’³¹⁶ and every attempt to entangle him failed.

This godly jealousy led him to sacrifice worldly interests to an extent not justifiable, if *all* the facts appear. When told that a very worthy citizen of London would take his son Joseph apprentice without fee, and advance his interests, he refused, saying, ‘God did not send me to advance my family, but to preach the gospel.’

At this time he again manifested his lion heart, by writing and preparing for the press a fearless treatise on *Antichrist, and his Ruin*. In this he shows, that human interference with Divine worship, by penal laws or constraint, is ‘Antichrist’—that which pretends to regulate thought, and thus to reduce the kingdom of Christ to a level with the governments of this

³¹⁴ Vol. i., p. 505.

³¹⁵ Vol. i., p. 719.

³¹⁶ Vol. i., p. 753.

world. In this treatise, he clearly exhibits the meaning of that passage, so constantly quoted by the advocates of tyranny and persecution (Ezra 7:26), and shows that the laws interfered not with Divine worship, but that they upheld to the fullest extent the principle of voluntary obedience (v 13); so that any man putting constraint upon another in religious affairs, would be guilty of breaking the law, and subject him to extreme punishment. This was one of the last treatises which Bunyan prepared for the press, as if in his dying moments he would aim a deadly thrust at Apollyon. Reader, it is worthy your most careful perusal, as showing the certain downfall of Antichrist, and the means by which it must be accomplished.

Feeling the extreme uncertainty of life, and that he might be robbed of all his worldly goods, under a pretence of fines and penalties, he, on the 23d of December, 1685, executed a deed of gift, vesting what little he possessed in his wife. It is a singular instrument, especially as having been sealed with a silver twopenny piece. The original is in the church book, at Bedford:—

‘To all people to whom this
present writing shall com, J.
Bunyan of the parish of St.

Cuthbirt's, in the towne of Bedford, in the county of Bedford, Brazier send greeting. Know ye, that I the said John Bunyan as well for, and in consideration of the natural affection and loue which I have, and bear vnto my welbeloued wife, Elizabeth Bunyan, as also for divers other good causes and considerations, me at this present especially moneing, have given and granted, and by these presents, do give, grant, and conferme vnto the said Elizabeth Bunyan, my said wife, all and singuler my goods, chattels, debts, ready mony, plate, rings, household stuffe, apparel, vtensills, brass, peuter, beding, and all other my substance, whatsoever moueable and immoueable, of what kinde, nature, quality, or condition soever the same are or be, and in what place or places soever the same be, shall or may be found as well in mine own custodies, possession, as in the possession,

hands, power, and custody of any other person, or persons whatsoever. To have and to hold all and singular the said goods, chattels, debts, and all other, the aforesaid premises vnto the said Elizabeth, my wife, her executors, administerators, and assigns to her and their proper uses and behoofs, freely and quietly without any matter of challenge, claime, or demand of me the said John Bunyan, or of any other person, or persons, whatsoever for me in my name, by my means cavs or procurement, and without any mony or other thing, therefore to be yeielded, paid or done vnto me the said John Bunyan, my executors, administrators or assigns. And I, the said John Bunyan, all and singular, the aforesaid goods, chattels, and premises to the said Elizabeth my wife, her executors, administrators, and assignes to the vse aforesaid, against all people do warrant and forever

defend by these presents. And further, know ye, that I the said John Bunyan have put the said Elizabeth, my wife, in peaceable and quiet possession of all and singuler the aforesaid premises, by the delivrye vnto her at the ensealing hereof one coyned peece of silver, commonly called two pence, fixed on the seal of these presents.³¹⁷

‘In wittnes wherof, I the said John Bunyan have herevnto set my hand and seall this 23d day of December, in the first year of the reigne of our soueraigne lord, King James the Second of England, &c., in the year of our lord and saviour, Jesus Christ, 1685.

John Bunyan

Sealed and delivered in the presence of vs, whos names are here vnder written:—

John Bardolph

Willm Hawkes

Nicholas Malin

³¹⁷ Some of the wax remains, but the coin is lost.

Lewes Norman

It appears from this deed that Bunyan continued in business as a brazier, and it is very probable that he carried it on until his decease. This deed secured to his wife what little he possessed, without the trouble or expense of applying to the ecclesiastical courts for probate of a will.

Among other opinions which then divided the Christian world, was a very important one relative to the law of the ten commandments, whether it was given to the world at large, or limited to the Jews as a peculiar nation until the coming of Messiah, and whether our Lord altered or annulled the whole or any part of that law. This question involves the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. An awful curse is denounced upon those who do not continue in ALL things which are written in the book of the law to do them (Gal 3:10; Deut 27:26). When an innovation upon the almost universal practice of infant baptism had become an object of inquiry only to be answered from the New Testament, it is not surprising that the serious question, why God's Sabbath-day had been altered, should also be agitated with deep feeling. Generally, those who advocated the restoration of the Jewish Sabbath were decidedly of opinion that believers only were fit

subjects for baptism, and that the scriptural mode of administering it was by immersion; hence they were called Seventh-day Baptists—Sabbatarians, or Sabbath-keepers.

Bunyan entered with very proper and temperate zeal into this controversy. Popular feeling had no influence over him; nor could he submit to the opinions of the ancient fathers. His storehouse of knowledge was limited to the revealed will of God, and there he found ample material to guide his opinion. His work upon this subject is called, *Questions about the Nature and Perpetuity of the Seventh-day Sabbath; and proof that the First Day of the Week is the Christian Sabbath*. It is one of the smallest of his volumes, but so weighty in argument as never to have been answered.

We now arrive at the last year of his eventful and busy life, during which he published six important volumes, and left twelve others in manuscript, prepared for publication. A list of these will be found in *The Struggler*;³¹⁸ they are upon the most important subjects, which are very admirably treated. We notice among these, *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved, or Good News for the Vilest of Men*. It is

³¹⁸ Vol. iii., p. 763.

a specimen of preaching calculated to excite the deepest interest, and afford the strongest consolation to a soul oppressed with the sense of sin. Great sinner! thou art called to mercy by name. Arise! shoulder thy way into court through any crowd,—‘say, Stand away, devil; stand away all discouragements; my Saviour calls me to receive mercy.’ In this treatise, Bunyan has repeated from memory what he had read in some book when in prison, four and twenty years before. It is a curious legend, which he doubtless believed to be true, and it displays his most retentive memory.³¹⁹ His poetry, like his prose, was not written to gain a name, but to make a deep impression. One of his professed admirers made a strange mistake when he called them doggerel rhymes.³²⁰ His *Caution to Watch Against Sin* is full of solemn and impressive thoughts, the very reverse of doggerel or burlesque. his poem on the house of God is worthy of a most careful perusal; and thousands have been delighted and improved with his emblems. One rhyme in the *Pilgrim* can never be forgotten—

‘He that is down need fear no fall;
He that is low no pride;

³¹⁹ Vol. i., p. 81.

³²⁰ Mr. Philip, *Critique on Bunyan*, p. vi. and xvi.

He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide,' &c.

The careful perusal of every one of his treatises, has excited in my mind a much livelier interest than any other religious works which, in a long life, have come under my notice. In fact, the works of Bunyan to a country minister may be compared to a vast storehouse, most amply replenished with all those solemn subjects which call for his prayerful investigation; well arranged, ready of access, striking in their simplicity, full of vivid ideas conveyed in language that a novice may understand. They are all so admirably composed that pious persons, whether in houses of convocation or of parliament, or the inmates of a workhouse, may equally listen to them with increasing delight and instruction. No man ever more richly enjoyed the magnificent language of Job. He called it 'that blessed book.'³²¹ The deep interest that he took in its scenery may be traced through all his writings. His spirit, with its mighty powers, grasped the wondrous truths so splendidly portrayed in that most ancient book. The inspired writings, which so eminently give wisdom to the simple, expanded his mind,

³²¹ Vol. ii., p. 425.

while his mental powers were strengthened and invigorated by his so deeply drinking into the spirit of the inspired volume.

The time was drawing near when, in the midst of his usefulness, and with little warning, he was to be summoned to his eternal rest. He had been seriously attacked with that dangerous pestilence which, in former years, ravaged this country, called the sweating sickness, a malady as mysterious and fatal as the cholera has been in later times. The disease was attended by great prostration of strength; but, under the careful management of his affectionate wife, his health became sufficiently restored to enable him to undertake a work of mercy; from the fulfillment of which, as a blessed close to his incessant earthly labour, he was to ascend to his Father and his God to be crowned with immortality. A father had been seriously offended with his son, and had threatened to disinherit him. To prevent the double mischief of a father dying in anger with his child, and the evil consequence to the child of his being cut off from his patrimony, Bunyan again ventured, in his weak state, on his accustomed work, to win the blessings of the peace-maker. He made a journey on horseback to Reading, it being the only mode of travelling at that time, and he was rewarded

with success. Returning home by way of London to impart the gratifying intelligence, he was overtaken by excessive rains, and, in an exhausted state, he found a kindly refuge in the house of his Christian friend Mr. Strudwick, and was there seized with a fatal fever. His much-loved wife, who had so powerfully pleaded for his liberty with the judges, and to whom he had been united thirty years, was at a great distance from him. Bedford was then two days' journey from London. Probably at first, his friends had hopes of his speedy recovery; but when the stroke came, all his feelings, and those of his friends, appear to have been absorbed, by the anticipated blessings of immortality, to such an extent, that no record is left as to whether his wife, or any of his children, saw him cross the river of death. There is abundant testimony of his faith and patience, and that the presence of God was eminently with him.

He bore his trying sufferings with all the patience and fortitude that might be expected from such a man. His resignation was most exemplary; his only expressions were 'a desire to depart, to be dissolved, to be with Christ.' His sufferings were short, being limited to ten days. He enjoyed a holy frame of mind, desiring his friends to pray with him, and uniting

fervently with them in the exercise. His last words, while struggling with death, were, 'Weep not for me, but for yourselves. I go to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will, no doubt, through the mediation of his blessed Son, receive me, though a sinner; where I hope we ere long shall meet, to sing the new song, and remain everlastingly happy, world without end. Amen.' He felt the ground solid under his feet in passing the black river which has no bridge, and followed his pilgrim into the celestial city in August, 1688, in the sixtieth year of his age. There is some uncertainty as to the day of his decease: Charles Doe, in the *Strugler*, 1692, has August 31, and this has been copied in all his portraits. In the life appended to the *Grace Abounding*, 1692, his death-day is stated as August 12; and in the memoir appended to the third part of the *Pilgrim*, also in 1692, the date is August 17. The circumstances of his peaceful decease are well compared by Dr. Cheever to the experience of Mr. Standfast, when he was called to pass the river: the great calm—the firm footing—the address to by-standers—until his countenance changed, his strong man bowed under him, and his last words were, 'Take me, for I come to thee.' Then the joy among the angels while they welcomed the

hero of such spiritual fights, and conducted his wandering soul to the New Jerusalem, which he had so beautifully described as ‘the holy city’; and then his wonder and amazement to find how infinitely short his description came to the blissful reality.

The deep affliction that his church was plunged into led to several special meetings. Wednesday, the 4th of September, ‘was kept in prayer and humiliation for this heavy stroke upon us—the death of dear brother Bunyan; it was appointed also, that Wednesday next be kept in prayer and humiliation on the same account. At the meeting held on the 11th, it was appointed that all the brethren meet together on the 18th of this month, September, to humble themselves for this heavy hand of God upon us, and also to pray unto the Lord for counsel and direction what to do, in order to seek out for a fit person to make choice of for an elder. On the 18th, when the whole congregation met to humble themselves before God, by fasting and prayer, for his heavy and severe stroke upon us in taking away our honoured brother Bunyan by death, it was agreed by the whole congregation that care be taken to seek out for one suitably qualified to be chosen an elder among us, and *that* care was committed by the whole to the brethren at

Bedford.' Thus did the church manifest that they had improved in wisdom under his ministry by flying, in their extreme distress, to the only source of consolation.

The saddest feelings of sorrow extended to every place where he had been known. His friend, the Rev. G. Cockayn, of London, says, 'it pleased the Lord to remove him, to the great loss and inexpressible grief of many precious souls.' Numerous elegies, acrostics, and poems were published on the occasion of his decease, lamenting the loss thus sustained by his country—by the church at large, and particularly by the church and congregation at Bedford. One of these, 'written by a dear friend of his,' is a fair sample of the whole:—

A SHORT ELEGY IN MEMORY OF MR. JOHN BUNYAN, WRITTEN BY A DEAR FRIEND OF HIS.

The pilgrim traveling the world's vast stage,
At last does end his weary pilgrimage:
He now in pleasant valleys does sit down,
And, for his toil, receives a glorious crown.
The storms are past, the terrors vanish all,
Which in his way did so affrighting fall;

He grieves nor sighs no more, his race is run
 Successfully, that was so well begun.
 You'll say he's dead: O no, he cannot die,
 He's only changed to immortality—
 Weep not for him, who has no cause of tears;
 Hush, then, your sighs, and calm your
 needless fears.
 If anything in love to him is meant,
 Tread his last steps, and of your sins repent:
 If knowledge of things here at all remains
 Beyond the grave, to please him for his pains
 And suffering in this world; live, then,
 upright,
 And that will be to him a grateful sight.
 Run such a race as you again may meet,
 And find your conversation far more sweet;
 When purged from dross, you shall, unmix'd,
 possess
 The purest essence of eternal bliss
 'He in the pulpit preached truth first, and
 then
 He in his practice preached it o'er again.'

His remains were interred in Bunhill
 Fields, in the vault of his friend Mr. Strudwick,
 at whose house he died. His tomb³²² has been
 visited by thousands of pilgrims, blessing God

³²² Vol. iii., p. 766.

for his goodness in raising up such a man, so signally fitted to be a blessing to the times in which he lived. All the accounts of his decease, published at the time, agree as to his place of burial. The words of Mr. Doe, who probably attended the funeral, are, 'he was buried in the new burying-place, near the artillery ground, where he sleeps to the morning of the resurrection.'³²³ His *Life and Actions*, 1692, records that 'his funeral was performed with much decency, and he was buried in the new burying-ground by Moorfields.' *The Struggler* calls it 'Finsbury burying-ground, where many London Dissenting ministers are laid.'³²⁴ Bunhill Fields burying-ground for Dissenters was first opened in 1666. The inscription upon the tomb to his memory was engraven many years after his funeral. It is not contained in the list of inscriptions published in 1717. His widow survived him four years. He had six children by his first wife, three of whom survived him—Thomas, Joseph, and Sarah. His son Thomas joined his church in 1673, and was a preacher in 1692. He appears to have been usefully employed in visiting absent members until December 1718. My kind friend,

³²³ *Grace Abounding*, 1692.

³²⁴ No. 25, E.; 26, W.; 26, N.; 27, S.

the Rev. J. P. Lockwood, rector of South Hackney, recently discovered entries in the register of Kimbolton, in Huntingdonshire, probably of the descendants of this son, Thomas. November 26, 1698, John Bonion and Mary Rogers, married: she was buried, September 7, 1706; and he again married Anne, and buried her in 1712, leaving a son and two daughters. His death is not recorded. One of the descendants, Hannah Bunyan, died in 1770, aged seventy-six years, and lies in the burial-ground by the meeting-house at Bedford. John Bunyan's son, Joseph, settled at Nottingham, and marrying a wealthy woman, conformed to the Church. A lineal descendant of his was living, in 1847, at Islington, near London, aged eighty-four, Mrs. Senegar, a fine hearty old lady, and a Strict Baptist. She said to me, 'Sir, excuse the vanity of an old woman, but I will show you how I sometimes spend a very pleasant half-hour.' She took down a portrait on canvas of her great forefather, and propped it up on the table with a writing-desk, with a looking-glass by its side. 'There, Sir, I look at the portrait, and then at myself, and can trace every feature; we resemble each other like two pins.' 'Excepting the imperial and moustachios,' I replied; to which she readily assented. It was the fact that there was a

striking family likeness between the picture and her reflection in the looking-glass. Another descendant, from the same branch of the family, is now living at Lincoln. He was born in 1775, and possessed a quarto Bible, published by Barker and Bill in 1641, given by John Bunyan to his son Joseph. This was preserved in his family until the present year, when it came into the editor's possession, with the following relics, which were, and I trust will yet be preserved with the greatest care:— An iron pencase, made by Bunyan the brazier, with some stumps of old pens, with which it is said he wrote some of his sermons and books; the buckles worn by him, and his two pocket-knives, one of them made before springs were invented, and which is kept open by turning a ferrule; his apple-scoop, curiously carved, and a seal; his pocket-box of scales and weights for money, being stamped with the figures on each side of the coins of James and Charles I.³²⁵ These were given by Robert Bunyan, in 1839, then sixty-four years of age, to a younger branch of the family, Mr. Charles Robinson, of Wilford, near Nottingham (his sister's son), for safe custody. He died in 1852; while his aged

³²⁵ As matters of curious interest to all lovers of Bunyan, we insert, in the accompanying page, engravings of these relics, from drawings by Mr. Edward Offor.

uncle remains in good health, subject to the infirmities of his seventy-eighth year. On many of the blank spaces in the Bible are the registers of births and deaths in the family, evidently written at the time. Those relics are deposited in a carved oak box. They were sold with the late Mr. Robinson's effects, January, 1853, and secured for me by my excellent friend James Dix, Esq., of Bristol, who met with them immediately after the sale, on one of his journeys at Nottingham. They are not worshipped as relics, nor have they performed miracles, but as curiosities of a past age they are worthy of high consideration. Everything that was used by him, and that survives the ravages of time, possesses a peculiar charm; even the chair in which he at is preserved in the vestry of the new chapel, and is shown to those who make the pilgrimage to the shrine of Bunyan.³²⁶

In the same vestry is also a curious inlaid

³²⁶ The chair is engraved above, and it will be seen that it has suffered some little dilapidation since the last published engraving of it. The legs have been cut down to suit the height of one of his successors in the ministry!! With regard to the pulpit, an old resident in Bedford says—The celebrated John Howard presented a new pulpit in the room of the old one, which was cut up. Of part of the wood a table was made, which now belongs to Mrs. Hillyerd.

cabinet, small, and highly finished. It descended from Bunyan to a lady who lived to an advanced age—Madam Bithray; from her to the Rev. Mr. Voley; and of his widow it was purchased to ornament the vestry of Bunyan's meeting-house.

The personal appearance and character of our pilgrim's guide, drawn by his friend Charles Doe, will be found at the end of his *Grace Abounding*; to which is appended his *Dying Sayings*—‘of sin—afflictions—repentance and coming to Christ—of prayer—of the Lord's day, sermons, and week days: “Make the Lord's day the market for thy soul”—of the love of the world—of suffering—of death and judgment—of the joys of heaven—and the torments of hell.’

How inscrutable are the ways of God! Had Bunyan lived a month longer, he would have witnessed the glorious Revolution—the escape of a great nation. The staff and hope of Protestant Europe was saved from a subtle—a Jesuitical attempt—to introduce Popery and arbitrary government. The time of his death, as a release from the incumbrance of a material body, was fixed by infinite wisdom and love at that juncture, and it ought not to be a cause of regret. His interest in the welfare of the church ceased not with his mortal life. How swiftly

would his glorified spirit fly to see the landing of William, and hover with joy over the flight of the besotted James! He was now in a situation to prove the truth of that saying, 'the angels desire to look into' the truth and spread of the glad tidings. How he would prove the reality of his opinion, expressed in *The Holy War*, of the interest taken by the inhabitants of heaven in the prosperity of the church on earth. When Mansoul was conquered, the spirits that witnessed the victory 'shouted with that greatness of voice, and sung with such melodious notes, that they caused them that dwell in the highest orbs to open their windows, and put out their heads and look down to see the cause of that glory' (Luke 15:7-10).³²⁷ So may we imagine that the happy, happy, glorified spirit of Bunyan would look down rejoicing, when, a few years after he had yielded up his pastoral cares, the seed which he had been instrumental in sowing produced its fruit in such numbers, that the old meeting-house was pulled down, and in its place a large and respectable one was erected. And again, on the 20th February, 1850, with what joy would he look down upon the opening of a still larger, more commodious, and handsome

³²⁷ Vol. iii., p. 297.

meeting-house, bearing his name, and capable of holding 1150 worshippers. One of Bunyan's pungent, alarming sayings to the careless was, 'Once die, we cannot come back and die better.'³²⁸ If anything could tempt him, in his angelic body, to re-visit this earth, it would be to address the multitude at the new Bunyan Chapel with his old sermon on *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved, or Good News to the Vilest of Men*. But we have Moses and the prophets—Christ and his apostles; if we shut our ears to them, neither should we listen to a messenger from the New Jerusalem.

When it is recollected that Bunyan received the most imperfect rudiments of education in a charity school when very young, which were 'almost entirely' obliterated by bad habits—that he was a hard-working man through life, maintaining himself, a wife, and four children, by his severe labour as a brazier—and yet, by personal efforts, he educated himself and wrote sixty-two valuable religious treatises, numbering among them his inimitable allegories, *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Holy War*, made a Concordance to the Bible, and conducted important controversies. Preaching, while at liberty, almost innumerable sermons

³²⁸ Vol. i., p. 714.

on the Lord's-days and week-days, early in the morning and late at night. Visiting his flock with pastoral care—founding churches in the villages, and even in towns and cities far distant from his dwelling—constantly giving advice to promote peace and good will, and rendering benevolent aid by long journeys! His whole life presents to us a picture of most astonishing, energetic perseverance. Every moment of time must have been employed as if he valued it as a precious trust, which, if once lost, could never be regained. Who of us can compare our life with his last thirty years, and not blush with shame!

The finest trait in Bunyan's Christian character was his deep, heartfelt humility. This is the more extraordinary from his want of secular education, and his unrivalled talent. The more we learn, the greater is the field for research that opens before us, insomuch that the wisest philosophers have most seriously felt the little progress they have made. He acknowledged to Mr. Cockayn, who considered him the most eminent man, and a star of the first magnitude in the firmament of the churches,³²⁹ that spiritual pride was his easily besetting sin, and that he needed the thorn in

³²⁹ Vol. i., p. 686.

the flesh, lest he should be exalted above measure. A sense of this weakness probably led him to peculiar watchfulness against it. His self-abasement was neither tinctured with affectation, nor with the pride of humility. His humble-mindedness appeared to arise from his intimate communion with Heaven. In daily communion with God, he received a daily lesson of deeper and deeper humility. 'I am the high and lofty One, I inhabit eternity! verily this consideration is enough to make a broken-hearted man creep into a mouse-hole, to hide himself from such majesty! There is room in this man's heart for God to dwell.'³³⁰ 'I find it one of the hardest things that I can put my soul upon, even to come to God, when warmly sensible that I am a sinner, for a share in grace and mercy. I cannot but with a thousand tears say, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Ezra 9:15).'³³¹

The Revs. Messrs. Chandler and Wilson, bear the following testimony as eye-witnesses to his character:—'His fancy and invention were very pregnant and fertile. His wit was sharp and quick—his memory tenacious, it being customary with him to commit his

³³⁰ Vol. i., pp. 690, 691.

³³¹ Vol. ii., p. 261.

sermons to writing after he had preached them,' a proof of extraordinary industry. 'His understanding was large and comprehensive—his judgment sound and deep in the fundamentals of the gospel. His experience of Satan's temptations in the power and policy of them, and of Christ's presence in, and by his Word and Spirit to succour and comfort him, was more than ordinary; the grace of God was magnified in him and by him, and a rich anointing of the Spirit was upon him; and yet this great saint was always in his own eyes the chiefest of sinners, and the least of saints. He was not only well furnished with the helps and endowments of nature, beyond ordinary, but eminent in the graces and gifts of the Spirit, and fruits of holiness. He was from first to last established in, and ready to maintain, that God-like principle of having communion with saints as such, without any respect to difference in things disputable among the godly. His carriage was condescending, affable, and meek to all, yet bold and courageous for Christ. He was much struck at, in the late times of persecution; being far from any sinful compliance to save himself, he did cheerfully bear the cross.' Such was the character given of him by these two eminent divines, in 1693, while his memory, in its fullest fragrance, was

cherished by all the churches.

This humility peculiarly fitted him to instruct the young, of whom he was very fond—

‘Nor do I blush, although I think some may
Call me a baby, ‘cause I with them play;
I do ‘t to show them how each fingle fangle
On which they doating are, their souls
entangle;
And, since at gravity they make a tush,
My very beard I cast behind a bush.’³³²

He had friends among the rich as well as the poor. Of this his solid gold ring and handsome cabinet are proofs. From a letter in the *Ellis* correspondence, we learn that Bunyan had so secured the affections of the Lord Mayor of London, as to be called his chaplain.³³³

Among his religious friends and associates he must have been a pleasing, entertaining,

³³² Vol. iii., p. 748.

³³³ It is noticed, in a letter to the Secretary for Ireland, dated September 6, 1688—‘On teusday last died the Lord Mayor Sir J. Shorter. A few days before died Bunnian his lordship’s teacher or chaplain a man said to be gifted that way though once a cobbler’ [*Ellis’s Cor.*, vol. ii., p. 161]. We can excuse the sarcasm of a Roman Catholic, and with equal good nature, and more truth, remark, that the great and eminent pope, Sixtus V., was once a swineherd—not a bad school in which to study how to keep up a despotic sway over the Papacy.

lively companion. However solemn, nay awful, had been his experience when walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, yet when emerging from the darkness and enjoying the sunshine of Divine favour, he loved social intercourse and communion of saints. It is one of the slanders heaped upon Christianity to call it a gloomy, melancholy theme: though 'it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting,' yet the wisely pious man will endeavour, even at an elegant entertainment or a Lord Mayor's dinner, to drop useful hints. Whenever Bunyan describes a social party, especially a feast, he always introduces a wholesome dish; and it is singular, in the abundance of publications, that we have not been favoured with *John Bunyan's Nuts to Crack at Religious Entertainments*, or a *Collection of his Pious Riddles*. Thus, at the splendid royal feast given to Emmanuel, when he entered Mansoul in triumph, 'he entertained the town with some curious riddles, of secrets drawn up by his father's secretary, by the skill and wisdom of Shaddai, the like to which there are not in any kingdom.' 'Emmanuel also expounded unto them some of those riddles himself, but O how were they lightened! They saw what they never saw, they could not have thought that such

rarities could have been couched in such few and ordinary words. The lamb, the sacrifice, the rock, the door, the way.’³³⁴ ‘The second Adam was before the first, and the second covenant was before the first.’³³⁵ ‘Was Adam bad before he eat the forbidden fruit?’³³⁶ ‘How can a man say his prayers without a word being read or uttered?’³³⁷ ‘How do men speak with their feet?’ Answer, Proverbs 6:13.³³⁸ ‘Why was the brazen laver made of the women’s looking-glasses?’³³⁹ ‘How can we comprehend that which cannot be comprehended, or know that which passeth knowledge?’³⁴⁰ ‘Who was the founder of the state or priestly domination over religion?’³⁴¹ What is meant by the drum of Diabolus and other riddles mentioned in *The Holy War*?³⁴² The poetical riddles in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* are very striking—

‘A man there was, though some did count
him mad,
The more he cast away, the more he had.’

³³⁴ Vol. iii., p. 308.

³³⁵ *Law and Grace*, marg., vol. i., p. 524.

³³⁶ Vol. ii., p. 651.

³³⁷ Vol. i., pp. 634, 635.

³³⁸ Vol. ii., p. 653.

³³⁹ Vol. i., p. 647.

³⁴⁰ Vol. ii., p. 15.

³⁴¹ Vol. ii., p. 497.

³⁴² Vol. iii., p. 251.

How can 'evil make the soul from evil
turn.'³⁴³

Can 'sin be driven out of the world by
suffering?'³⁴⁴

'Though it may seem to some a riddle,
We use to light our candles at the middle.'³⁴⁵

'What men die two deaths at once?'³⁴⁶

'Are men ever in heaven and on earth at the
same time?'³⁴⁷

'Can a beggar be worth ten thousand a-year
and not know it?'³⁴⁸

He even introduced a dance upon the destruction of Despair, Mr. Ready-to-halt, with his partner Miss Much-afraid, while Christiana and Mercy furnished the music. 'True, he could not dance without one crutch in his hand; but I promise you he footed it well. Also the girl was to be commended, for she answered the music handsomely.' Is this the gloomy fanaticism of a Puritan divine? It is true, that promiscuous dancing, or any other amusement tending to evil, he had given up and discountenanced, but all his writings tend to

³⁴³ Emblem xiv., vol. iii., p. 751.

³⁴⁴ Christ is made known by the sufferings of his saints, vol. ii., p. 701, and note.

³⁴⁵ Vol. iii., p. 751, and note.

³⁴⁶ Vol. iii., p. 595.

³⁴⁷ Vol. ii., p. 22.

³⁴⁸ Vol. ii., p. 257.

prove that the Christian only can rationally and piously enjoy the world that now is, while living in the delightful hope of bliss in that which is to come.

Bunyan's personal appearance and character was drawn by his friend Mr. Doe. 'He appeared in countenance stern and rough, but was mild and affable; loving to reconcile differences and make friendships. He made it his study, above all other things, not to give occasion of offence. In his family he kept a very strict discipline in prayer and exhortations. He had a sharp, quick eye, and an excellent discerning of persons; of good judgment and quick wit. Tall in stature, strong-boned; somewhat of a ruddy face with sparkling eyes; his hair reddish, but sprinkled with gray; nose well set; mouth moderately large; forehead something high, and his habit always plain and modest.'

My determination in writing this memoir has been to follow the scriptural example, by fairly recording every defect discoverable in Bunyan's character; but what were considered by some to be blemishes, after his conversion, appear, in my estimation, to be beauties. His moral and religious character was irreproachable, and his doctrinal views most scriptural; all agree in this, that he was a

bright and shining light; unrivalled for his allegories, and for the vast amount of his usefulness. His friend, Mr. Wilson, says, 'Though his enemies and persecutors, in his lifetime, did what they could to vilify and reproach him, yet, being gone, he that before had the testimony of their consciences, hath now their actual commendation and applause.'³⁴⁹ To this we may add, that he was without sectarianism, a most decided Bible Christian. This reveals the secret of his striking phraseology. It was in the sacred pages of Divine truth that he learned grammar and rhetoric. Style, and all his knowledge of the powers of language—all were derived from the only source of his religious wisdom and learning. He lived, and thought, and wrote under the influence of the holy oracles, translated by the Puritans in 1560, compared with the version of 1611. This gives a charm to all his works, and suits them to every human capacity.

Reader, the object of biography is to excite emulation. Why should not others arise as extensively to bless the world as Bunyan did? The storehouses of heaven from which he was replenished with holy treasures, are

³⁴⁹ *Works*, folio, 1693.

inexhaustible. As he said, 'God has bags of mercy yet unsealed.' We have the same holy oracles, and the same mercy-seat. The time is past for merely challenging the right to personal judgment of religious truths. In Britain the lions are securely chained, and the cruel giants disabled. The awful crime of imprisoning and torturing man for conscience' sake, exists only in kingdoms where darkness reigns—

“Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy.’

We stand upon higher ground than our forefathers; we take our more solemn stand upon the imperative duty of personal investigation—that no one can claim the name of Christian, unless he has laid aside all national, or family, or educational prejudices, and drawn from the holy oracles alone all his scheme of salvation and rules of conduct. All the secret of Bunyan's vast usefulness, the foundation of all his honour, is, that the fear of God swallowed up the fear of man; that he was baptized into the truths of revelation, and lived to exemplify them. He was a bright and shining light in a benighted world; and of him it may be most emphatically said, 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow

them.'

GEORGE OFFOR.

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