THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS JOHN BUNYAN



EDITED BY CYNTHIA WALL

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A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

John Bunyan THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS



AN AUTHORITATIVE TEXT

CONTEXTS
CRITICISM

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Preface

When at the first I took my Pen in hand, Thus for to write; I did not understand That I at all should make a little Book In such a mode.....

—John Bunyan, The Author's Apology for His Book

John Bunyan-"the tinker," "the literary mechanick," "the people's Spenser," "the Bunyan of Parnassus," "the artist-philosopher" —seemed to have surprised himself as well as centuries of critics when he wrote his Calvinist allegory The Pilgrim's Progress, first published in 1678. Bunyan was of modest origins ("my fathers house being of that rank that is meanest, and most despised of all the families in the Land" [GA, paragraph 2; 255]).2 Born in 1628 in the village of Elstow in Bedfordshire, the son of Thomas Bunyan, a brazier or tinker (a maker and mender of metal utensils), he had little formal education, and by his own account he was a rather lazy loutish boy: "I was the very ring-leader of all the Youth that kept me company, into all manner of vice and ungodliness" (GA, paragraph 7; 256). And yet twelve editions of The Pilgrim's Progress had appeared before Bunyan's death in 1688, and it has since been translated into over two hundred different languages and dialects—over one hundred of them non-European. By the nineteenth century, "one could drink tea from a Bunyan cup while contemplating a portrait of Bunyan on the wall. Children could make Bunyan jigsaws while their parents displayed ever more elaborate and expensive volumes in their drawing rooms. Bunyan volumes became treasured family possessions and were passed down across several generations. One ardent Methodist landscaped his Cheshire garden to resemble a Bunyan theme park."3 Numerous sequels besides Bunyan's own emerged almost from the first day of publication; the work was turned into poetry (heroic couplets, Spenserian stanzas, ballads, epics), reworked prose (from the Johnsonian to the monosyllabic), drama, and opera; it has been rewritten as satire on the Industrial Age and Communist China; it has been theologically modified by John Wesley and experientially enacted by Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy.4 In the nineteenth century Thomas Babington Macaulay could confidently declare, "There is no ascent, no declivity, no resting

Phrases are from excerpts in this Norton Critical Edition: Macaulay (p. 383); Mr. Tindall in Leavis (p. 395); Disraeli in Scott (p. 380), Coleridge (p. 379), and Shaw (p. 390).

Page references to *Grace Abounding* in this Preface refer to this Norton Critical Edition.
 Isabel Hofmeyr, "How Bunyan Became English: Missionaries, Translation, and the Discipline of English Literature," *Journal of British Studies* 41 (January 2002), 90. (See p. 443 in this Norton Critical Edition.)

^{4.} Louisa May Alcott, Little Women (Boston: Roberts Bros., 1868).

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place, no turn-stile, with which we are not perfectly acquainted," and in the twentieth, C. S. Lewis asserted that the work "has been read and re-read by those who were indifferent or hostile to its theology."⁵

The Pilgrim's Progress is the story of the conversion journey of Christian, a man who, in anguish, leaves behind his wife and children in the City of Destruction because he is called to "Fly from the wrath to come" (12).6 Along the way he acquires a few worthy companions (Faithful and Hopeful) and a few worthless ones (Talkative and Ignorance); he falls into swamps, falls asleep, falls into prison; he fights lions and monsters and temptations; he visits museums and palaces; his best friend is burned at the stake; but in the end he crosses the river, goes in at the gate, and is transfigured with "Raiment . . . that shone like Gold" (124). The Slough of Despond, Vanity Fair, House Beautiful, Doubting Castle, the Delectable Mountains, the Celestial City—all these remain in our ordinary discourse, and yet, in the last fifty years or so, The Pilgrim's Progress has all but disappeared from both college classrooms and children's bookshelves. Indeed, as I was working on this edition in the British Library, a surprising number of people (some of whom I knew, and some complete volunteers) would pass by my desk and exclaim, "I hated that book in school!" The barely disguised English landscapes that were so familiar to Macaulay, and the wellloved characters and scenes structuring parts of Little Women, somehow shrank into something alien, chilly, and boring. Part of it could be its predestinarian theology (what C. S. Lewis calls "the flames of Hell . . . always flickering on the horizon," 407) in a post-sexual-revolution world; part of it could be its didacticism ("This Book will make a Travailer of thee, / If by its Counsel thou wilt ruled be" [Apology, 9]) in a psychologically laissez-faire world; part of it could be its sheer antiquity in a present-centrist world. In any case, we seem to have lost something once very much loved. This Norton Critical Edition proposes to show how Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress was read, why it was loved, and how and why it is both pleasurable and useful (to apply that favorite eighteenth-century dictum of dulce et utile) to bring it back into ordinary reading life.

As the Criticism section below maps out, the popularity of *The Pilgrim's Progress* was something separate from—and sometimes unrelated to—its theology, though never unrelated to its spirituality. Its experiential immediacy, its pungent vernacular, its psychological compassion, and perhaps most unexpectedly, its *wit*, are reiterated over and over by critics of every century.

The immediacy of *The Pilgrim's Progress* comes directly from Bunyan's own life, as he recounts in his vividly detailed autobiography (or technically speaking, conversion narrative), *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, first published in 1666. From his earliest childhood he feared he "did so offend the Lord" (with his love of bell-ringing and games, his swearing and lying) that "he did scare and affright me with fearful dreams, and did terrifie me with dreadful visions" (*GA*, paragraph 5; 256). Throughout his life he would feel alienated from God and very personally persecuted by Satan ("I have felt him behind me pull my cloaths" [*GA*, paragraph 87; 259]). In

^{5.} See pp. 383 and 402 in this Norton Critical Edition.

^{6.} Page references to The Pilgrim's Progress in this Preface refer to this Norton Critical Edition.

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The Pilgrim's Progress, Christian sees Despair in an Iron Cage, moaning bitterly: "God hath denied me repentance; his Word gives me no encouragement to believe; yea, himself hath shut me up in this Iron Cage; nor can all the men in the World let me out. O Eternity! Eternity! how shall I grapple with the misery that I must meet with in Eternity?" (30). Things got a little brighter—he behaved a bit better—when he got married at age twenty (in 1648) to "a Wife whose Father was counted godly" (GA, paragraph 11; 257), and though they were "poor as poor might be, (not having so much as a Dish or Spoon betwixt us both)" (GA, paragraph 11; 257), yet they seemed to be happy, reading aloud together the two books she brought as dowry: Arthur Dent's The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven (1601) and Lewis Bayly's The Practice of Piety (1612) (see below, 295-298 and 299-304). He began to think he was a good man after all—"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" (GA, paragraph 12; 257).

This was just before the English Civil War; "religion of the times" meant the Anglican Church, with its "Priest, Clerk, Vestments, Service, and what else" (GA, paragraph 12; 257). In 1649 Charles I was executed, the monarchy and the House of Lords was abolished, and Oliver Cromwell assumed the Protectorate of a "free commonwealth" (1653). Bunyan had earlier mustered in the parliamentary forces (1644-47), and during the 1650s he underwent several years of spiritual crisis. He became a member of John Gifford's Baptist congregation in Bedford, learning the doctrines of the predestination of each soul to salvation or reprobation, the supreme authority of the Scriptures, and the historical accuracy of the life and death of Jesus. (The Puritan sects also pulled away from Anglican "high church" display those vestments "and what else.") Bunyan began his own preaching in 1655; he published some of his early sermons as A Few Sighs from Hell in 1658. But he also continued to plunge into doubt and despair, until at last "did my chains fall off my Legs indeed, I was loosed from my affliction and irons, my temptations also fled away: so that from that time those dreadful Scriptures of God left off to trouble me; now went I also home rejoycing, for the grace and love of God" (GA, paragraph 184; 261). There were more temptations, more doubt, more despair, but he ends this narrative: "I never saw those heights and depths in grace, and love, and mercy, as I saw after this temptation: great sins do draw out great grace; and where guilt is most terrible and fierce, there the mercy of God in Christ, when shewed to the Soul, appears most high and mighty" (GA, paragraph 206; 262).

Spearing through this spiritual turbulence was familial and political upheaval: Bunyan's first wife died (1658); he married his second, Elizabeth, the next year (he had four children from his first wife, and three from his second). When Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660, the old Elizabethan laws against the Puritans were revived and intensified: the Act of Uniformity (1662) required everyone to conform to the new Anglican Book of Common Prayer; over one thousand nonconforming clergy ("Nonconformists" and "Dissenters") were ejected from the Church of England. Bunyan was arrested in November 1660 for preaching illegally; he was tried again in Bedford in 1661 and sentenced to three months in prison, but the three months stretched into twelve years, as he resolutely refused to give up the idea of preaching. The first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* was written

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in the Bedford prison: "As I walk'd through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a Denn; And I laid me down in that place to sleep: And as I slept I dreamed a Dream" (11).

The power of *The Pilgrim's Progress* lies as much in its language as in its evocations of doubt, despair, confusion, and joy. Bunyan's rhetorical abilities made their first appearance in his preaching. As his friend and first biographer Charles Doe recounts:

he was earnestly desired by the Congregation to Communicate to them those Spiritual Gifts with which God had Blessed him; he at first very modestly excused himself, out of a Sence of his own Weakness and Inability; but being further pressed unto it by them, he consented, but thro' his Bashfulness, did at first decline a Publick Assembly, and dispensed his Gift only in Private among Friends; but it was with so much Life and Power, and so exceedingly to their Edification, that they could not but give Thanks to the Father of Mercies for the great Grace he had bestowed upon him. (267)

He was an enormously popular preacher, able to reach and move and exhilarate and terrify and convert an audience. As Sir Charles Firth put it in 1898, Bunyan "addressed the unlettered Puritan in a speech which unlettered Puritans could understand . . . the every-day language of the seventeenth century workman or shopkeeper" (385). Coleridge called his language "the lowest style of English," yet meant it as a compliment: "If you were to polish it, you would at once destroy the reality of the vision. For works of imagination should be written in every plain language; the more purely imaginative they are the more necessary it is to be plain" (379). Scott commended the "homely bluntness of style" (381) and C. S. Lewis grants him "a perfect natural ear, a great sensibility for the idiom and cadence of popular speech" (405). They all mean, of course, such things like: "Tush, said Obstinate" (13); "So Pliable sat sneaking among them" (17); "Apollyon strodled quite over the whole breadth of the way" (48); "Pope . . . [was] grown so crazy, and stiff in his joynts, that he can now do little more then sit in his Caves mouth, grinning at Pilgrims as they go by, and biting his nails, because he cannot come at them" (53); "that Lock went damnable hard" (92); and my favorite, the Giant Despair listening to his wife Mrs. Diffidence as they talk comfortably in bed at night, as she counsels him to beat the prisoners' brains out: "And, sayest thou so, my dear" (91-92).

But this lively, earthy vernacular was not always fully appreciated; as *The Pilgrim's Progress* grew in popularity in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, more and more of the educated and mainstream classes sat up and took notice. And, along with Chaucer and Shakespeare and Donne, Bunyan began to seem a bit coarse, a bit vulgar, a bit in need of refinement. And so in 1683 we have the Rev. Thomas Sherman critiquing the "lightness and laughter" (as well as the lack of pictorial description) of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (333); in 1811 Joshua Gilpin moderating its "extreme coarseness" and grammatical imprecision (343); in 1834 Thomas Dibdin omitting its "long dialogues and disputations" (347); and a whole host of eighteenthand nineteenth-century adapters quietly dispensing with Mrs. Diffidence and the conjugal talks.

But rather like Huckleberry Finn, Bunyan's text survived all these attempts at refinement; *The Pilgrim's Progress* remained popularly in print

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while its imitators and improvers disappeared silently into the Slough of And-Who-Did-You-Think-You-Were,-Exactly? At the same time, it continued to generate what David Brewer calls "the afterlife of character" to a remarkable extent. One of the most astonishingly successful reworkings is Hawthorne's The Celestial Rail-Road (1843), reprinted completely here. Not included in the section on abridgements and adaptations are various chapbooks and handbills; a "painting book" (1958); Miss C. C. V. G.'s rendering of the text "into an Epic Poem" (1844); Christiana and Her Children, A Mystery Play by Mrs. Duncan Pearce to comfort and cheer Welsh sailors going off to World War I (with a preface by G. K. Chesterton): G. Winifred Taylor's Dramatic Impression in Fourteen Scenes (1935); and D. H. Barber's Pilgrim's Progress as 'Five to Ten' radio broadcasts from 1954. And of course there's Thackeray's Vanity Fair and Alcott's Little Women. What is included here is a sampling of adaptations with the focus on the scenes at Doubting Castle, with—and sometimes notably without—the redoubtable Mrs. Diffidence.

It seems to me that one of the reasons The Pilgrim's Progress has made such progress is that, as well as being spiritual and inspirational and all that, it is also quite simply funny. (It's all too easy to miss a sense of humor in "old" texts.) The marginal notes, for example (which as Maxine Hancock argues below "are points of intensely important intersection, operating in intermediate space between human, imaginative text and the sacred text of the Bible" [441]), rather frequently like to depart from their function as pointers to Scriptural text or signposts of events, and instead offer sarcastic commentary: "Talkatives fine discourse.... O brave Talkative.... O brave Talkative. . . . A good riddance" (61, 67); "Hopeful swaggers" (100); "He that sleeps is a loser" (36); and the certainly emblematic but also curiously diurnal account of Giant Despair's week and his personal habits: "On Thursday Giant Despair beats his Prisoners. . . . On Friday Giant Despair counsels them to kill themselves. . . . The Giant sometimes has fits" (89). The book is funny and poignant because it is so realistic, so human, so us. Everyone in the City of Destruction considers Christian a "Craz'd-headed Coxcomb" (13) for leaving home and family because of some weird voice he heard in his head; they hope sleep might "settle his brains" (11). Christian and Faithful meet when Christian catches up and calls out happily, "Ho, ho, So-ho" (53) and then immediately trips in his vainglorious excitement. Christian and Hopeful have occasional spats, as travelers can: Christian takes them out of the way along By-path Meadow, and Hopeful engages in a bit of I-told-you-so: "I was afraid on't at very first, and therefore gave you that gentle caution. I would have spoke plainer, but that you are older then I" (88), and later on, "Christian snibbeth his fellow for unadvised speaking" and Hopeful responds, "Why art thou so tart my Brother?" (99). By-Ends is "loth to tell his name," the Marginal Voice whispersbecause he knows his name will give him away in a world where everyone's name is iconic and revelatory. (He ends up insisting it's just a nickname

The characters may be allegorical and all add up as components of one human psyche (we're all sometimes ignorant and hopeful and obstinate

David A. Brewer, The Afterlife of Character, 1726–1825 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

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and pliable and worldly wise); yet each also sustains a resonant peculiarity and immediacy of his or her own. They have been admired through the centuries for their refusal to remain types or be captured within their own names. As U. Milo Kaufmann argues, the names "are adjectival in nature rather than substantival, and hence hint at attribute rather than essence." Old Honest, found sleeping under an oak, modestly demurs when he's identified: "Not Honesty in the *Abstract*, but *Honest* is my Name, and I wish that my *Nature* shall agree to what I am called" (194). Psychological characterization is thickened with physical details. Feeble-mind is nephew to Fearing, and the family resemblance shows in particulars, as Honest sees: "I am apt to believe also that you were related one to an other; for you have his whitely Look, a Cast like his with your Eye, and your Speech is much alike" (210). Mercy, we learn from her own mouth, has never had a suitor find fault with her person (178). We see real people and hear real conversations.

The landscapes of Parts I and II are also equally "real" and "allegorical." Macaulay had declared of Part I that "the steep hill and the pleasant arbour, the stately front of the House Beautiful by the wayside, the low green valley of Humiliation, rich with grass and covered with flocks, all are as well known to us as the sights of our own street" (383). In all sorts of ways, Part II is even more a familiar and more visualized space—easier for both characters and readers to inhabit for its comfortable domesticity. Unlike the first part, it was not written in a "Denn"; Bunyan had been freed from his twelve years in prison in 1672, and was licensed to preach under the Declaration of Indulgence. His Bedford church legally acquired its own barn for Congregational meetings. And in general by the 1680s, religious tolerance made for easier lives. The story itself is more communal and comforting, with Christiana, her four boys, and her young neighbor Mercy setting out from the City of Destruction together, with a unified will, unlike Christian who had to tear himself away from his family and trek across a largely hostile land on his own. And the community grows, with Greatheart being a pretty invincible conductor, the boys growing up to manhood and helping out in fights, their wives coming along, Old Honest joining up, and Fearing, Ready-to-halt, and Feeblemind bringing up the rear. Unlike Faithful's martyrdom, here the only brutal deaths occur against giants and their ilk (a rousing number of heads are put on pikes, and the bodies of the simple, the slothful, and the presumptuous swing on gibbets). The very weather seems to help them out: they have a good "sunshine morning"; they make "a shift to get staggeringly over" the steps in the Slough of Despond (147); they are contented rather than tormented in the green Vallev of Humiliation (186-187); they go through the Valley of the Shadow of Death in daylight (189). But most of all, they spend far more time indoors than Christian ever did, and have better things to eat.

Thus *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a religious allegory, but it is also, as critics have pointed out for two centuries, something like an early novel—"our first novel," as N. H. Keeble claims. Coleridge insisted that Bunyan's "piety was baffled by his genius, and the Bunyan of Parnassus had the better of

^{8.} U. Milo Kaufmann, The Pilgrim's Progress and Traditions in Puritan Meditation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 90.

^{9.} N. H. Keeble, Introduction to The Pilgrim's Progress (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1966), xxi.

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the Bunvan of the Conventicle" (379). But there is no reason in the world why we can't do a both/and reading as well as either/or, as C. S. Lewis points out. We have, he claims, "a pernicious habit of reading allegory as if it were a cryptogram to be translated; as if, having grasped what an image (as we say) 'means', we threw the image away and thought of the ingredient in real life which it represents" (404). That's the wrong way round, he insists. We must not go out of the book but into it; not figuring out representational significance, inserting equal signs in "a clumsy intellectual operation," as Dorothy Van Ghent says, but living in the green valley and realizing humility is "quite like that." Left to ourselves, most of us apparently read The Pilgrim's Progress the "right" way: from the inside. Lewis has claimed that he first read the book as a child without discovering or attaching the allegory to it at all (much like many readers first encounter his own Narnia books); Henri Talon agrees: "we forget [the allegory] over and over again."2 That argues, not a weakness in the allegory, but the strength of the narrative.

The Pilgrim's Progress has been many things to many people over the last three centuries. From a small advisory tale dropped tentatively into a local, working-class, seventeenth-century Baptist community (where its author was not sure of a welcome for this strange new fanciful genre: "May I not write in such a stile as this? . . . was not Gods Laws, / His Gospel-laws, in older time held forth / By Types, Shadows and Metaphors?" [Apology, 6, 7]), the book rippled wider and wider across class, gender, race, religion, nation, and age. It inflected literary genres from ballad to epic, parody to imitation, drama to novel. It is haunting and comforting, strange and familiar, funny and terrible, simple and powerful. It is a book for all religions and no religions. It can make readers of us all.

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Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novel: Form and Function (New York: Rinehart, 1953), 26.
 Henri Talon, John Bunyan: The Man and His Works (1948), trans. Barbara Wall (London: Rockliff, 1951), 162.

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A Note on the Text

The Pilgrim's Progress has two parts. The first—the story of the pilgrim Christian and his friends Faithful and Hopeful—was originally published in February 1678 by Nathaniel Ponder. It rapidly ran through twelve editions during John Bunyan's lifetime, averaging over one per year. The second and third editions featured significant additions; Bunyan inserted several lengthy passages into the text and introduced a host of new marginal notes. There were few substantive changes after this point. The first authentic edition of the second part—the story of Christian's wife Christiana, her children, and her friend Mercy—was published in 1684, partly in indignant response to the so-called Second Part of the Pilgrim's Progress published in 1682 by one "T. S.", the Baptist minister Thomas Sherman. There were only two editions of Bunyan's Part II published in his lifetime, and the second (1686) has few changes beyond the addition of a number of marginal notes.

This Norton Critical Edition takes the first editions of 1676 and 1684 as copy-text for both parts, but incorporates Bunyan's new passages from subsequent editions. This strategy best preserves the pungency of the first reading experience. In general, Bunyan's (or Ponder's) spelling, punctuation, italicization, and capitalization are, in the mode of their time, on the fluid, even erratic side (on the same page we can have "Miry Slow" and "Miry Slough," "Mercie" and "Mercy," the House or the Palace Beautiful), even with the thorough collation applied in J. B. Wharey and Roger Sharrock's inimitable scholarly Clarendon Press edition (1960). In the interests of preserving a visual sense of books of the past, and encouraging readers to push past the initial strangeness, I have retained original and archaic spellings in the "Contexts" material as well. I have made a few minor concessions to uniformity. In the first edition of Part I of The Pilgrim's Progress, for instance, the marginal notes were mostly marked by letters, with biblical citations marked by asterisks; given the introduction of so many new marginal notes in later editions, however, I have followed the second edition in using simple asterisks for all marked marginal notes. The page cross-references in the marginalia now refer to the pagination of this edition. The long "s" has been modernized. Spelling changes in authorial editions that appear to be corrections, and not corruptions, have also been silently incorporated; for example, the deletion of a doubled word, the replacement of "too" for the fairly common misspellings "to" or "two," or the substitution of "shouted" for "shooted" when the first meaning is the only reasonable one. Emendations of this last type have only been made following the lead of an authorial edition, however, and have been kept to a minimum. And all biblical citations have been checked against the Authorized King James Version (1611; Oxford University Press, 1960) for easier modern reference (Bunyan is believed to have used the Geneva "Dissenters" Bible, an early vigorous Protestant translation first published in full in 1560).

A limited historical collation of emendations and added marginal notes is included in a separate Appendix (245–252). All substantive changes to the text have been included, as well as the emendations to the biblical references, and a number of those typographical changes that have been considered as more minor by past editors. Following standard notation, textual variants are listed with the term as it appears in the current text, followed by a bracket, and then the variants as found in other editions, with the edition number of the variant following.

The Pilgrim's Progress is a complicated text to edit and contextualize in a number of ways. In the Biographical and Theological Contexts sections, for example, I would use whenever possible an edition available in Bunyan's day—not necessarily the first. The Table of Contents includes the date of the first edition (when known) followed by the date of the edition used; the headnote explains any relevant publishing history. When authors in the Criticism section supply page references to a particular edition of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, I have supplied cross-references to this edition. I have not interpolated cross-references in essays (often in the belletristic style) that prefer to allude more cosmically to scenes and characters.

In addition to Bunyan's marginal notes citing biblical references to scenes and places, The Pilgrim's Progress has many, many infolded allusions and echoes to the Old and New Testaments, as well as the ongoing allegorical underpinnings of seventeenth-century life in a Calvinist Bedfordshire meeting. Both have been thoroughly mined by historians and critics and are readily accessible, particularly in this Internet age. I have decided to keep such textual notes to a bare minimum, deliberately not privileging the particular religious allegory. As C. S. Lewis says, "Unless we are very hidebound we can re-interpret these grounds [Bunyan's own fundamentalist beliefs] in terms of our own, perhaps very different, outlook" (407)—as readers have done for three centuries and in hundreds of countries. Or as William Hazlitt said of children eyeing Spenser's Faerie Queene askance, "They look at it as a child looks at a painted dragon, and think it will strangle them in its shining folds. This is very idle. If they do not meddle with the allegory, the allegory will not meddle with them." Those who want to meddle with the allegory—or who are interested in the full textual story should see the definitive scholarly edition by James Wharey, as revised by Roger Sharrock for the Clarendon Press in 1960. All Bunyan scholars and editors remain eternally in their debt.

William Hazlitt, "Chaucer and Spenser," The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. P. P. Howe, 21 vols. (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1930), 5: 38. Thanks to Clare Kinney for the reference.

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