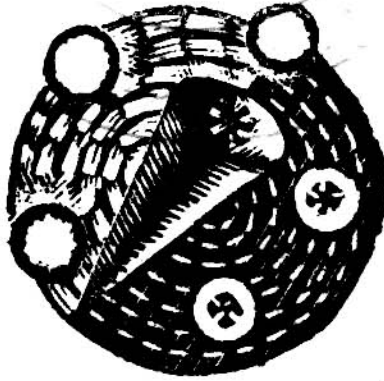


GRACE ABOUNDING
THE LIFE AND DEATH OF
MR. BADMAN



JOHN BUNYAN

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INTRODUCTION

IN the Bedford congregation which Bunyan joined in 1655 it was a rule that new members, before they were formally admitted into full fellowship, should make a public declaration of the workings of Grace in their souls. Many accounts of conversion and spiritual experience were recorded during the seventeenth century, and a number have survived in print; of these John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* is the best known. It was written in 1666 when Bunyan had already endured six years of imprisonment for his principles.

Apart from what Bunyan has told in *Grace Abounding*, some details of his early life survive. He was baptised in the parish church of Elstow, a village near Bedford, on 28 November, 1628, his father being Thomas Bunyan, a brazier; John Bunyan was the first child of his father's second marriage. In November 1644 he was imprested as a soldier in the Parliamentary army, and served until July 1647. In 1655 he joined the congregation which had been founded at Bedford by John Gifford some five years before.

John Gifford had been a major in the king's forces during the Civil War and had taken a prominent part in the desperate fighting at Maidstone in 1648. He was captured and condemned to death, but with the aid of his sister he managed to escape on the night before his execution. Thence he had made his way to Bedford, where he set up as a doctor. At first Gifford was noted for his dissolute living, but after some months he became converted, and was the leading spirit in bringing together into a small congregation of believers some of those at Bedford who shared his views. Only one relic of Gifford's teaching remains, the very beautiful letter which was copied into the *Church Book of Bunyan Meeting*; it shows that he was a man of high spiritual quality, and it is not surprising that he was a

considerable influence in Bunyan's life at its most critical period.¹

After Gifford's death the congregation began to keep a record of their doings in the *Church Book*, which is still preserved at Bunyan Meeting at Bedford. In the list of members therein recorded Bunyan's name is twenty-sixth. He is first mentioned on 28 June, 1657, and thereafter he takes a prominent part in the affairs of the congregation.

After joining the Bedford congregation Bunyan had quickly made himself felt and soon began to be well known locally as a preacher. In the following year (1656) he was disputing actively with the Quakers, which led him to publish his first book, *Some Gospel Truths Opened*. Two other books, which were founded on his sermons at this time, were published shortly afterwards, *A Few Sighs from Hell* (1658), and *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded* (1659).

With the death of Oliver Cromwell in September 1658 and the collapse of his system, the re-establishment of the monarchy seemed to be the only way to end a state of chaos. King Charles the Second was restored to the throne in May 1660, and, in the autumn following, the persecution of Nonconformists began. Considering the upheavals of the last twenty years, the Royalists were comparatively tolerant; in Bunyan's case, for instance, it is clear from his own account that he was given every opportunity of conforming; but it is not surprising that so staunch a believer should have refused the slightest compromise on principles, which might in any way weaken the faith of those whom he had converted by his preaching. For some months after his first appearance before the magistrate his name occurs in the entries in the *Church Book*, but after October 1661 it disappears for seven years. No meetings of the congregation are recorded between March 1664 and October 1668, when the persecutions were hottest.

Being thus prevented from preaching, Bunyan occupied himself with writing. He was released for some months in 1666 but soon rearrested as he persisted in preaching. It was at this time that he wrote *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.

¹ See *Grace Abounding*, § 77.

Such is a brief outline of Bunyan's life up to 1666 from external sources. Naturally there are many gaps, which can, to some extent, be filled from *Grace Abounding*; but *Grace Abounding* is not, and was not intended to be, an autobiography. Bunyan wrote the book as a record of his own spiritual experiences, to encourage his fellow-saints whose faith was weakening under persecution, and to show them that he too had endured temptations, far fiercer than theirs. Hence he was not so much concerned with the outward facts of his own life as with tracing the steps by which he came to be the spiritual father to the saints at Bedford. Much therefore is omitted which most readers would like to know.

Bunyan says nothing, for example, of his mother, and very little of his father; and yet to one or both of them must presumably have been due the religious ideas, which reappeared in the terrible dreams of his childhood, and those fundamental intuitions which enabled him to resist all the assaults of doubt and unbelief. He does not record the name of his first wife, nor her death, nor his second marriage. Yet both his wives appear to have been women of considerable character; and to the first, more than to any other human being, he owed his conversion.

Again, his military service which lasted for two and a half years was omitted altogether from the first edition of *Grace Abounding*, for the incident recorded in § 13 was added later as an afterthought.

These omissions and many others are due to Bunyan's purpose in writing the book. He was not writing about himself but about God's dealings with him, and, however much the biographer may regret Bunyan's silence, it is in the circumstances justified. To have recorded the multitude of incidents which made up his life would have been to reduce the magnitude of his spiritual struggles. This can be seen by comparing the later additions, telling of his trials and imprisonment, with the earlier account of his conversion. The conflict is on a lower plane; the worst threats of Mr. Wingate, or Judge Keeling, or the well-meant casuistry of Mr. Cobb were feeble compared with the audible assaults and promptings of Satan himself who had tormented Bunyan as he walked alone on the road between Elstow and Bedford.

Grace Abounding was published in 1666; other editions followed to which Bunyan made many additions, the most important being the account of his escapes from danger (§§ 12-14); the bell-ringing incident (§§ 32-6); the Ranters (§§ 43-5); Luther's *Commentary* on Galatians (§§ 129-31); and the indignant repudiation of the charges of immorality (§§ 301-17), probably added after certain venomous rumours had been circulated by his enemies in 1674. The *Continuation* of Bunyan's life (p. 130) was added in 1692; the *Relation* of his imprisonment (p. 103), usually printed with *Grace Abounding*, was not published till 1765.

Bunyan published nothing after *Grace Abounding* for five years. He remained nominally a prisoner between 1666 and 1672, but it is clear from the entries in the *Church Book* that he was allowed considerable liberty, and he was able to take the lead in the reorganisation of the congregation which had been scattered during the times of persecution.

At the end of 1671 the congregation elected him as their pastor. A few weeks later Charles the Second issued the Declaration of Indulgence, and Bunyan was formally licensed as a preacher in May 1672. He was now writing busily again; two works, important for the understanding of Bunyan's theology, appeared in 1675, *Light for them that sit in Darkness*, and *Instructions for the Ignorant*. These were followed by *The Straight Gate* and the first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In 1676, Bunyan had again been in prison for six months and during this time the Dream had come to him, but it was not published until 1678. The allegory was so enthusiastically received that two further editions, considerably enlarged, soon followed.

Bunyan was now forty, and *The Pilgrim's Progress* was his twenty-fourth book. Its success prompted him to show the opposite side of the picture in *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680).

Both *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Mr. Badman* largely owe their vitality to the fact that Bunyan was drawing on his own very vivid experiences of all sorts and conditions of men, but the contrast between the two books shows Bunyan's great skill as an artist. In the Pilgrim's passage

to the Heavenly City, experience is sublimated into allegory and symbol; in Mr. Badman's descent to destruction, Bunyan tells the story as an actual happening, and the excellence of the book lies in its vivid realism; "yet have I," says he, "as little as may be, gone out of the road of mine own observation of things."

Bunyan chose the dialogue form for *Mr. Badman*, in this following Arthur Dent's *Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* which had exercised considerable influence over him in the early stages of his conversion.¹ By choosing this form and telling the story as a conversation between Mr. Wiseman and Attentive, he was able to digress quite naturally to denounce those failings which were most conspicuous in his own congregation. Badman himself is a composite character, but many of his particular sins were not unknown to some of the individual members of Bunyan's flock as a study of the *Church Book* shows; and not only is the picture of Mr. Badman and his circle true to life, but the two speakers themselves illustrate very clearly the attitude of the believer towards the "carnally minded."

At first sight there is not much in common between *Grace Abounding* and *Mr. Badman*, yet the two books supplement each other. *Mr. Badman* being concerned with the temptations of the world and the flesh, *Grace Abounding* with the assaults of the devil. *Grace Abounding* is the record of the inner spiritual experience which turned an unlearned artificer into a leader of the saints, a true and steadfast "professor"—to use the word used by Bunyan and his fellow-believers; without such an experience Mr. Wiseman's attitude would have lacked all sincerity. *Mr. Badman* shows the professor faced by the ordinary problems and temptations of everyday life, and, as Bunyan very truly realised, the devil tries a man just as hard in his daily business as in his faith or his lusts, and not the least of the religious man's difficulties is to keep a high standard of honesty against unscrupulous competition. But even the professor is in some danger when he contemplates the sinner too closely, for, though neither Mr. Wiseman nor Attentive is likely to lapse with Mr. Badman,

¹ See *Grace Abounding*, § 15.

they are not always free from the fault of gloating over muck-heaps.

Mr. Badman has not been a favourite book with Bunyan's most zealous disciples, who are somewhat offended by its lurid truthfulness; but it is scarcely an exaggeration to call it the first modern English novel, and as a picture of the trader in a small county town it is invaluable.

After Bunyan had been elected pastor of his congregation at Bedford, and especially after *The Pilgrim's Progress*, his reputation both as a preacher and a writer spread widely. "When Mr. Bunyan preached in London," wrote Charles Doe, his first editor, "if there were but one day's notice given, there would be more people come together to hear him preach than the meeting-house would hold. I have seen to hear him preach, by my computation, about twelve hundred at a morning lecture, by seven o'clock on a working day in the dark winter time. I also computed about three thousand 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 was fain, at a back door, to be pulled almost over people to get upstairs to his pulpit."

Bunyan continued to write and to preach for the rest of his life. *The Holy War* was published in 1682, the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, telling how Christiana and her children followed Christian, in 1685, seven years after the first part. Bunyan died in London on 31 August, 1688, and was buried in Bunhill Fields.

Bunyan left over sixty books, some of which were published posthumously. Many have little interest to-day, though more of them are worth reading than is usually supposed. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is accepted among the dozen greatest books in the English language; and neither *Grace Abounding* nor *Mr. Badman* will be neglected by anyone who cares to understand English puritanism at its greatest. Nor must it be forgotten that, though few great English writers have been puritans, puritanism is one of the strongest and most fundamental traits in the English character. John Bunyan was both puritan and artist, and in both of the greatest.

G. B. HARRISON.

The following works were published during Bunyan's lifetime :

1656. Some Gospel Truths opened. 1657. A Vindication of the Book called Some Gospel Truths opened. 1658. A few Sighs from Hell; or the Groans of a Damned Soul. The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded. 1661. Profitable Meditations. 1663. I will pray with the Spirit . . . a Discourse touching Prayer. Christian Behaviour. The Four Last Things: Mount Ebal and Gerizim: Prison Meditations (verse pieces). 1665. The Holy City. The Resurrection of the Dead and Eternal Judgment. 1666. Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners. 1671. A Defence of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith. 1672. A Confession of Faith and Reason of my Practice. 1673. Difference in Judgment about Water-baptism no bar to Communion. 1674. Peaceable Principles and True Reprobation Asserted [authorship questioned]. 1675. Light for them that sit in Darkness. Instructions for the Ignorant. Saved by Grace. 1676. The Straight Gate. 1678. The Pilgrim's Progress [part i.]; second edition (much enlarged), 1678; third edition, 1679. There are innumerable modern editions of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, of which the facsimile of the first edition (Noel Douglas, 1928), and the reprint of the eleventh edition by J. Brown, 1911, may be mentioned. 1678. Come and welcome to Jesus Christ. 1679. A Treatise of the Fear of God. 1680. The Life and Death of Mr. Badman. 1682. The Holy War. The Barren Fig Tree. 1683. The Greatness of the Soul. A Case of Conscience resolved. 1684. A Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity. Seasonable Counsel. A Caution, to stir up to watch against Sin. 1685. The Pilgrim's Progress, the Second Part. A Discourse upon the Pharisee and Publican. Questions about the Nature and Perpetuity of the Seventh-day Sabbath. 1686. A Book for Boys and Girls. 1688. The Jerusalem Sinner saved. The Work of Jesus Christ as an advocate. A Discourse of the . . . House of God. The Water of Life. Solomon's Temple spiritualised. The acceptable Sacrifice.

Posthumously published :

1689. Mr. John Bunyan's Last Sermon at London. Printed in Doe's folio volume in 1692: An Exposition on the ten first chapters of Genesis; Of Justification by Imputed Righteousness; Paul's Departure and Crown; Of the Trinity and a Christian; Of the Law and a Christian; Israel's Hope encouraged; The Desires of the Righteous granted; The Saint's Privilege and Profit; Christ a complete Saviour; The Saints' Knowledge of Christ's Love; Of the House of the Forest of Lebanon; Of Antichrist and his Ruin. 1698. The Heavenly Postman. 1765. A Relation of the Imprisonment of Mr. John Bunyan.

COLLECTED WORKS: 1692. by Charles Doe (6th edition, 1771). 1853, 1862, by G. Offor. 1859, by H. Stebbing.

BIOGRAPHIES, COMMENTARIES, ETC.: A Life of John Bunyan, by Robert Southey, 1830. John Bunyan, by Lord Macaulay, 1850. Bunyan ("English Men of Letters"), by J. A. Froude, 1880. John Bunyan: His Life, Times and Works, by John Brown, 1885, etc.; edited, with addenda and notes, by F. Mott Harrison, 1928; the standard biography. John Bunyan, by E. Venables, 1888. John Bunyan, by C. H. Firth, 1911. John Bunyan, by Gwilym O. Griffith, 1927. John Bunyan: a Study in Personality, by G. B. Harrison, 1928. The Church Book of Bunyan Meeting has been reproduced in facsimile, 1928.

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**GRACE ABOUNDING TO THE
CHIEF OF SINNERS;**

**OR, A BRIEF RELATION OF THE EXCEEDING MERCY OF GOD
IN CHRIST, TO HIS POOR SERVANT, JOHN BUNYAN**

A PREFACE, OR BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE PUBLISHING OF THIS WORK

WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR THEREOF, AND DEDICATED TO
THOSE WHOM GOD HATH COUNTED HIM WORTHY TO
BEGET TO FAITH, BY HIS MINISTRY IN THE WORD

CHILDREN, grace be with you, Amen. I being taken from you in presence, and so tied up, that I cannot perform that duty that from God doth lie upon me to youward, for your further edifying and building up in faith and holiness, etc., yet that you may see my soul hath fatherly care and desire after your spiritual and everlasting welfare; I now once again, as before, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, so now from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards (Song iv. 8), do look yet after you all, greatly longing to see your safe arrival into the desired haven.

I thank God upon every remembrance of you; and rejoice, even while I stick between the teeth of the lions in the wilderness, at the grace, and mercy, and knowledge of Christ our Saviour, which God hath bestowed upon you, with abundance of faith and love. Your hungerings and thirstings also after further acquaintance with the Father, in his Son; your tenderness of heart, your trembling at sin, your sober and holy deportment also, before both God and men, is great refreshment to me; "For ye are my glory and joy" (1 Thess. ii. 20).

I have sent you here enclosed, a drop of that honey, that I have taken out of the carcase of a lion (Judges xiv. 5-9). I have eaten thereof myself also, and am much refreshed thereby. (Temptations, when we meet them at first, are as the lion that roared upon Samson; but if we overcome them, the next time we see them, we shall find a nest of honey within them.) The Philistines understand me not. It is something of a relation of the work of God upon my own

soul, even from the very first, till now; wherein you may perceive my castings down, and raisings up; for he woundeth, and his hands make whole. It is written in the Scripture (Is. xxxviii. 19), "The father to the children shall make known the truth of God." Yea, it was for this reason I lay so long at Sinai (Deut. iv. 10, 11), to see the fire, and the cloud, and the darkness, that I might fear the Lord all the days of my life upon earth, and tell of his wondrous works to my children (Ps. lxxviii. 3-5).

Moses (Num. xxxiii. 1, 2) writ of the journeyings of the children of Israel, from Egypt to the land of Canaan; and commanded also, that they did remember their forty years' travel in the wilderness. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no" (Deut. viii. 2). Wherefore this I have endeavoured to do; and not only so, but to publish it also; that, if God will, others may be put in remembrance of what he hath done for their souls, by reading his work upon me.

It is profitable for Christians to be often calling to mind the very beginnings of grace with their souls. "It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations" (Exod. xii. 42). "O my God," saith David (Ps. xlii. 6), "my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." He remembered also the lion and the bear, when he went to fight with the giant of Gath (1 Sam. xvii. 36, 37).

It was Paul's accustomed manner (Acts xxii.), and that when tried for his life (Acts xxiv), ever to open, before his judges, the manner of his conversion: he would think of that day, and that hour, in the which he first did meet with grace; for he found it support unto him. When God had brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea, far into the wilderness, yet they must turn quite about thither again, to remember the drowning of their enemies there (Num. xiv. 25). For though they sang his praise before, yet "they soon forgot his works" (Ps. cvi. 11-13).

In this discourse of mine you may see much; much, I say,

of the grace of God towards me. I thank God I can count it much, for it was above my sins and Satan's temptations too. I can remember my fears, and doubts, and sad months with comfort; they are as the head of Goliath in my hand. There was nothing to David like Goliath's sword, even that sword that should have been sheathed in his bowels; for the very sight and remembrance of that did preach forth God's deliverance to him. Oh, the remembrance of my great sins, of my great temptations, and of my great fears of perishing for ever! They bring afresh into my mind the remembrance of my great help, my great support from heaven, and the great grace that God extended to such a wretch as I.

My dear children, call to mind the former days, "and the years of ancient times: remember also your songs in the night; and commune with your own heart" (Ps. lxxvii. 5-12). Yea, look diligently, and leave no corner therein unsearched, for there is treasure hid, even the treasure of your first and second experience of the grace of God toward you. Remember, I say, the word that first laid hold upon you; remember your terrors of conscience, and fear of death and hell; remember also your tears and prayers to God; yea, how you sighed under every hedge for mercy. Have you never a hill Mizar to remember? Have you forgot the close, the milk house, the stable, the barn, and the like, where God did visit your soul? Remember also the Word—the Word, I say, upon which the Lord hath caused you to hope. If you have sinned against light; if you are tempted to blaspheme; if you are down in despair; if you think God fights against you; or if heaven is hid from your eyes, remember it was thus with your father, but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

I could have enlarged much in this my discourse, of my temptations and troubles for sin; as also of the merciful kindness and working of God with my soul. I could also have stepped into a style much higher than this in which I have here discoursed, and could have adorned all things more than here I have seemed to do, but I dare not. God did not play in convincing of me, the devil did not play in tempting of me, neither did I play when I sunk as into a bottomless pit, when the pangs of hell caught hold upon me; wherefore I may not play in my relating of them, but be plain and simple, and lay down the thing as it was. He that liketh

it, let him receive it; and he that does not, let him produce a better. Farewell.

My dear children, the milk and honey is beyond this wilderness. God be merciful to you, and grant that you be not slothful to go in to possess the land.

JOHN BUNYAN.

GRACE ABOUNDING TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS;

OR, A BRIEF RELATION OF THE EXCEEDING MERCY
OF GOD IN CHRIST, TO HIS POOR SERVANT
JOHN BUNYAN

1. In this my relation of the merciful working of God upon my soul, it will not be amiss, if, in the first place, I do, in a few words, give you a hint of my pedigree, and manner of bringing up; that thereby the goodness and bounty of God towards me, may be the more advanced and magnified before the sons of men.

2. For my descent then, it was, as is well known by many, 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. Wherefore I have not here, as others, to boast of noble blood, or of a high-born state, according to the flesh; though, all things considered, I magnify the heavenly Majesty, for that by this door he brought me into this world, to partake of the grace and life that is in Christ by the gospel.

3. But yet, notwithstanding the meanness and inconsiderableness of my parents, it pleased God to put it into their hearts to put me to school, to learn both to read and write; the which I also attained, according to the rate of other poor men's children; though, to my shame I confess, I did soon lose that little I learned, and that even almost utterly, and that long before the Lord did work his gracious work of conversion upon my soul.

4. 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