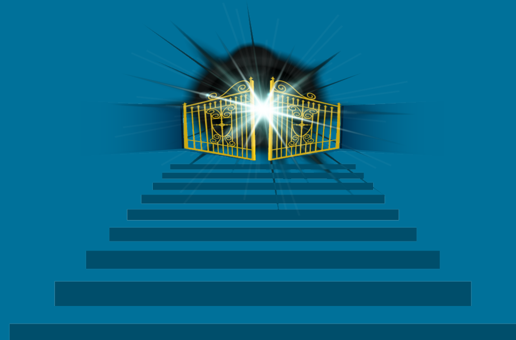

Pilgrim's Progress

Study Guide by Course Hero

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Book Basics

AUTHOR

John Bunyan

YEAR PUBLISHED

Part 1, 1678; Part 2, 1684

GENRE

Allegory, Religion

PERSPECTIVE AND NARRATOR

The Pilgrim's Progress is narrated as a dream witnessed in the first person by the author himself—though most of the action, narrated in the third person, concerns characters within the dream.

TENSE

The Pilgrim's Progress is told in the past tense by the narrator relating the dream. The characters speak to each other in the present tense, as they would in a drama.

ABOUT THE TITLE

Christian, the main character of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part 1, is a pilgrim in the original sense: a person who undertakes a journey for religious purposes. His outward progress to the Celestial City is matched by inward growth in wisdom and spiritual strength. Part 2 concerns the effect his efforts have on his wife and children, who follow his example.

In Context

The Pilgrim's Progress and Christian Allegory

The Pilgrim's Progress is perhaps one of the best-known English allegories—and certainly the most widely read and translated. The term *allegory*, whose Greek root roughly translates as "to speak in a different way," refers to any literary work whose characters, setting, and incidents point symbolically to a reality outside the text. Although even an individual object or character can be described as an allegory if it has a clear real-world meaning, the term is typically used for larger-scale stories or poems in which many metaphors or symbols fit together to express a broader point. Populated by hundreds of symbolically named characters and places, the world of *The Pilgrim's Progress* fully exemplifies this stricter definition.

John Bunyan was far from the first storyteller to use allegory and dream vision as a way of expressing religious ideas. As in other allegorical works, *The Pilgrim's Progress* is presented through personification, or the literary device by which "human characteristics are attributed to an abstract quality, animal, or

inanimate object." Ancient literature such as the epic poems of the *Iliad* (c. 750–650 BCE) and the *Odyssey* (c. 725–675 BCE) by Greek poet Homer (c. 8th century BCE) included personification. More significant to Bunyan's story is the philosophical writing of the Roman Christian Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (c. 470/75–524 CE), a scholar and philosopher whose *Consolation of Philosophy* (c. 524 CE) is presented as a dream in which the ladies Philosophy and Fortune appear to guide the prisoner. The 15th-century English morality play *Everyman* presents Everyman's soul in an attempt to come to terms with the inevitable approach of Death. In the dramatization, Everyman has been abandoned by companions Wealth, Beauty, and Strength, and only Good Deeds is brave enough to enter the grave with him on the promise to vouch for him at his final judgment. The playlet has proved popular over the years and is still produced even today.

It is clear from the many references to biblical text in *The Pilgrim's Progress* that Bunyan was thoroughly conversant with the books of both the New and Old Testaments. The Book of Revelation, the final book of the New Testament in most versions of the Bible, is attributed to St. John the Apostle. This supernatural allegory describes his vision of Christ and the coming of the end times through an elaborate pageant of vivid, violent imagery. It is likely that Bunyan drew heavily upon these dramatic elements to enliven his story .

Bunyan is often said to have read at least Book 1 of English poet Edmund Spenser's (c. 1552–99) great allegorical poem *The Faerie Queene* (1590). Close parallels can be drawn between the quests of the holy knights of this work and Christian's journey in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It should also be noted that *The Pilgrim's Progress* draws from many sources outside the literary and philosophical allegorical tradition. Among these, perhaps surprisingly, are the adventure stories Bunyan enjoyed in childhood. Sold in cheap editions called chapbooks, these tales were a little like the comic books or dime novels of their day. They often featured the same sort of exciting escapades seen in *The Pilgrim's Progress*: chivalric (and sometimes gory) combat, narrow escapes, and heroic quests. Read in the context of such works, *The Pilgrim's Progress* can be construed as an attempt to take images both from serious religious and philosophical writings and popular secular fiction and put them to a pious use.

The extent and directness of these influences are still a matter of critical debate. The Bible is frequently paraphrased in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. However, Bunyan goes further than simply referencing biblical text, as he deliberately and pointedly includes chapter-and-verse citations throughout by way of inviting the reader to look them up in their own Bibles for verification. Instead of relying upon a Catholic priest to provide biblical context in Latin to be passively accepted by the faithful, Protestant congregants took some pride in reading for themselves a vulgate (that is, written in a modern language like English, German, or Spanish instead of Latin) translation. This practice encouraged not only the education of boys in state-funded schools but also of girls, who were usually educated at home. This meant that a true Christian must take personal responsibility for understanding the Word of God, knowing the difference between right and wrong, and acting accordingly. Protestant congregants of Bunyan's time read and studied biblical text alone and in groups in order to find meaning for their own lives. In this way, *The Pilgrim's Progress* is very much like a sermon supported by self-study in the Bible. The author tells Christian's story as if it were a parable based upon his expansion of the Bible and supporting his statements by its passages, as if he were preaching to a congregation.

The Religious Climate of 17th-Century England

Given its extreme popularity, it is easy to forget that *The Pilgrim's Progress* was written by a member of a persecuted religious minority. Bunyan's Separatist beliefs were not endorsed—or even officially tolerated—in England during much of the time he lived and wrote. Rather, Bunyan's adult life can be thought of as bookended by two periods of relative tolerance for Puritanism, Separatism, and other forms of religious nonconformism. Before, between, and after these periods, those who dissented from established Church of England doctrines and practices did so at their own peril.

About a century before Bunyan was born, the Protestant Reformation reached England. On the European continent, German religious leader Martin Luther (1483–1546) had openly criticized contemporary Catholic practices with the 95 Theses in 1517, leading to an official denunciation of Luther (the Edict of Worms) in 1521. In the early 1530s King Henry VIII (1491–1547) seized upon the growing momentum of Reformation ideas in England to break with Rome and accomplish his divorce from Catherine of Aragon (1485–1536). From this break, the Church of England was eventually

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established with the king as its head. Initially quite close to Catholic teachings, the Church of England became more decidedly Protestant in doctrine and worship during the reigns of King Edward VI (1537–53) and Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603), the latter having been raised Protestant according to the wishes of her mother, Anne Boleyn (c. 1507–36). Catholicism was displaced and effectively outlawed as the Anglican faith consolidated its principles and established its own hierarchy.

Those who participated in these religious reforms were, however, never as perfectly uniform as the royal decrees might suggest. Some sought to retain the essentially Catholic flavor of the early Church of England, and indeed some remained actual Catholics, albeit often covertly. Others felt that the so-called Elizabethan Religious Settlement did not go far enough in distancing Anglicanism from Catholicism. Among the latter were Puritans, who sought to "purify" the Church of England, and their offshoot, the Separatists, who sought to break from it. The two groups were, and are still, often confused with one another because they were extremely close in their beliefs and practices, differing mainly in how they chose to express their dissent with mainstream Anglicanism.

In the early 17th century, Puritans comprised a significant minority of English Christians. Though they were seldom physically attacked by mainstream Anglicans, literary works of the time show that the predominant attitude was one of disapproval, even mockery. The popular plays of English writer Ben Jonson (1572–1637), for example, contain anti-Puritan caricatures in the form of Zeal-of-the-land Busy. This hypocritical preacher, who appears in *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), embodies the already prevalent stereotype of Puritans as fun-hating killjoys obsessed with finding the faults of others. By the time Bunyan came of age, however, the English Civil Wars (1642–51) were gathering momentum, with Puritans and their allies finding first tolerance and then later support under the Parliamentarian faction. The interregnum—the decade immediately following the reign of the deposed King Charles I (1600–49)—saw Puritans essentially put in charge of the English government.

This period of Puritan legitimation gave the young Bunyan the freedom first to discover, then to embrace and express, nonconformist religious ideas. With the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660, however, the situation reversed. Charles II (1630–85), the new king, privately wished for religious tolerance but found himself commanding a government and Church leadership with quite different goals. Many of his noblemen and ranking clergy wished to eradicate Puritanism, suppress Separatism, and enforce conformity to the sort of mainline Anglicanism officially recognized before the war. Thus, in 1661 the first of a series of repressive laws were passed, relegating religious nonconformists to the status of second-class citizens. Under one such law prohibiting public preaching in a nonconformist faith, the Bunyan was sentenced to a 12-year prison term.

The Penal Laws were relaxed in 1672 under the Declaration of Indulgence by King Charles II but were renewed a year later as the king, who was Anglican by faith, buckled under pressure from the nobility. Charles II died in 1685 without ever having achieved the officially sanctioned tolerance he wished for. His brother and successor, King James II (1633–1701), was a Catholic convert and had a more directly personal stake in the issue. During his brief reign (1685–88) some progress was made toward tolerance for Catholics and nonconformists; thus Bunyan, who died in 1688, spent his last years in what might be called a climate of optimism. The Glorious Revolution (1688–89), which saw James II deposed and his policies reversed, broke out in November 1688, mere months after Bunyan's death.

Personal Awakening

Bunyan's writings were not just the result of changes in England's religious politics. They were also the product of a personal religious conversion. Though he was exposed to Puritan ideas in the mid-1640s during his time as a Parliamentarian conscript, Bunyan was decisively converted to religious Separatism following his first marriage in 1649. His wife, poor as Bunyan himself was, had brought as her dowry only two Puritan tracts: *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and *The Practice of Piety*. Reading these sparked in Bunyan a crisis of faith that ultimately led to his embracing Puritan theology, joining a Separatist congregation in his hometown of Bedford, and becoming a preacher and religious author himself.

In his spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), Bunyan speaks of his life before Puritanism in terms familiar from religious conversion narratives. He describes himself as living, unawares, on a dunghill of filth and iniquity, from which only God's grace could lift him. This is not to say that Bunyan was irreligious before his conversion. He conformed to standard practices of the time, such as going to

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church twice a day. Once he began hearing voices, however, Bunyan no longer found it adequate to be a regular churchgoer while continuing to sin in other areas of his life.

The Puritanical nature of his conversion experience is evident in the specific behaviors that he shuns, such as dancing and playing games on the Sabbath. Neither of these was broadly considered to be sinful in Bunyan's time, except among nonconformists. Many of his neighbors considered themselves upright Christians and used the Sabbath as, in part, a day of recreation. Bunyan shows this to be true in his autobiographical book, *Grace Abounding*. In it he says that dancing and playing outdoor games on the Sabbath are popular pastimes among his neighbors, and Bunyan is considered the odd one out for his strict refusal to take part. The same people who go to church twice a day don't understand why Bunyan won't play tip-cat with them on Sundays. For him, however, the Sabbath is a day for reflection, Bible study, rest, and prayer. Amusing oneself is considered a waste of time; a break from useful work should be used only for self-edification, not enjoyment.

Bunyan's rejection of seemingly innocuous activities out of fear for his soul is reminiscent of Mr. Fearing, who appears in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part 2 and is, like the young Bunyan, afraid of offending God even by accident. That Bunyan later moderated his views can be seen in episodes from *The Pilgrim's Progress* where godly characters, such as Christiana, indulge in dancing and music during times of celebration.

Broadly, however, the convert's zeal Bunyan describes in *Grace Abounding* carries over to *The Pilgrim's Progress* and to the many nonfiction tracts that Bunyan wrote. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, glimpses of Bunyan's own conversion process are visible from the beginning as Christian becomes suddenly, overwhelmingly, convinced he is in danger.

This distressed man turns out to be Christian, who has been living in the City of Destruction. He vainly attempts to persuade his family and friends to leave with him before all is consumed by fire and to seek refuge in the Celestial City. But the way to refuge is long and perilous, so he sets out alone. These allegorical cities are, like all other locations in the book, symbolic. What is really at stake is Christian's soul. His position in a society unaware of its own damnation is reminiscent of what Bunyan must have felt when, in his early adulthood, he came to the conclusion that he must break with his "godly" neighbors. His struggles in the Slough of Despond are, likewise, a reimagining of Bunyan's own struggles with his sense of guilt and unworthiness. His description of a dangerous journey no doubt resonated with those nonconformists—specifically Puritans—who left the comforts and persecutions of England for the New World.

Bunyan is not the first writer to refer to allegorical locations. The Celestial City was described in detail, along with directions on how to reach it by shunning unbelief and embracing faith by St. Augustine (354–430), who described in detail the *City of God* (413–426) as belonging to the elect, while the damned were confined to The City of Man. Based upon this widely read religious book, the Medieval Italian French author Christine de Pizan (1364–1430) penned *The Book of the City of Ladies* in 1405. Instantly popular with readers in French, the book was translated into English in 1521, and it is unlikely that Bunyan would have been unaware of it. De Pizan not only presents herself as the main character who dreams the vision of how the City of Ladies is to be constructed but also relates to the reader how she is guided by the allegorically symbolic Ladies Reason (Part 1), Rectitude (Part 2), and Justice (Part 3).

Author Biography

Early Years

John Bunyan was born in the English village of Elstow, Bedfordshire, in 1628. His exact birth date is unknown, but he was baptized on November 30, almost certainly within a few weeks of his birth. His father was a traveling metalworker, variously described by biographers as a tinker (traveling repairer of pots and pans) or brazier (brass worker). Whatever the exact nature of the elder Bunyan's work, he passed down his craft—and not much else—to his son John. The younger Bunyan received a rudimentary education at his local grammar school, which, at that time in England, would have included such subjects as rhetoric, arithmetic, and Latin classics by rote memorization. Even after taking up his trade as a metalsmith, Bunyan read avidly from both popular fiction and religious literature.

Bunyan and his contemporaries lived during a period of bitter strife between adherents of the Anglican, or Church of England, faith and Protestant groups, which included Quakers, Puritans, and Separatists. These groups conjoined politically to

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enforce their agenda of ethical behavior through Parliament in opposition to the English monarchy, which was primarily Anglican. Frustrated by the inflexible attitude of King Charles I (1600–49) and his Royalists, Parliamentarian Separatists sought to remove the institution of the monarchy by force.

Bunyan's autobiography states that his youth was spent in enthusiastic pursuit of every vice available. He claims he ceased to read and write. In 1644 the now teenaged Bunyan was drafted or volunteered into the Parliamentary militia as part of the ongoing English Civil Wars (1642–51). The wars took place between the Royalists, who defended the monarchy, and Parliamentarians, who sought to overthrow the monarchy and install their own system of rule. This objective was decisively obtained in 1649 with the trial and execution of Charles I. Though he saw little combat from his post in northern Buckinghamshire, Bunyan was caught up in the spirit of religious diversity and dissent that had accompanied the war's outbreak. He was strongly influenced by Puritan thought, with its exhortations to self-denial and its condemnation of even seemingly innocuous pleasures.

Religious Awakening

Bunyan's true religious conversion, however, came after his first marriage in 1649. His first wife, whose name is speculatively thought to have been Mary (d. 1658), came, according to Bunyan's autobiography, from a poor but pious family. Together John and Mary had two daughters, Mary and Elizabeth; Mary was born blind. Although of the Anglican faith, Mrs. Bunyan brought two Puritan tracts as her dowry (the property traditionally bestowed on a husband by his wife or her family at the time of their wedding). These writings were *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and *The Practice of Piety*. Reading these books and being influenced by his wife's compassionate patience seems to have continued a process that had begun in 1651 when Bunyan met John Gifford (d. 1655), who adhered to the teachings of Protestant reformer and French theologian John Calvin (1509–64), the minister of a nonconformist Baptist congregation in Bedford. The two men had much in common. Gifford had also served in the military (although in the Royalist Army as a physician). He had been a "repulsive man of bad habits" until 1650, when Gifford encountered "the simple truths" expressed in *Mr. Bolton's Last and Learned Works of the Four Last Things—Death, Judgment, Hell and Heaven*. Bunyan revered Gifford as the "Holy Mr. Gifford" and converted in 1653. Soon Bunyan was preaching in his own right and attracting a considerable following. He often shared the pulpit with another Calvinist Baptist preacher, William Kiffin (1616–1701). This part of Bunyan's life is detailed further in his spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666).

Often called a Puritan himself, Bunyan can more accurately be described as a Puritan Separatist. The Puritan sect—and its Separatist offshoot—was composed of nonconformist English Protestants who rejected what they regarded as the excesses of the established Church of England. They particularly shunned the Anglican Church's ceremonial pomp and centralized hierarchy—both of which they viewed as holdovers from Catholicism. Social reform prohibited drunkenness, laces or colorful attire for men and women, and leisurely pastimes like dancing, attending plays (especially comedies), or playing card games (gambling). These prohibitions were especially enforced on the Sabbath (Sunday), which was a day devoted to rest, prayer, biblical studies, and church attendance. Separatists like Bunyan took this idea even further and believed the conscientious thing to do was to break off from the Church of England entirely, whereas Puritans sought to purify it from within. The nature of the social reforms based on religious ethical behavior proposed by the two groups is similar enough, however, that *The Pilgrim's Progress* can be, and has been, analyzed as a window into Puritan thought.

Prisoner and Author

Separatists, Puritans, and others who lay beyond the pale of the established Church enjoyed relative religious freedom during the Civil Wars and the interregnum. The interregnum was the period between monarchs (1649–60) after the well-attended public beheading of Charles I for treason and before his son, Charles II (1630–85), was brought from exile to be crowned in London. Political, religious, and social control was held by their dominance in Parliament and supported by military force. Transgressions such as drunkenness or prostitution were severely punished by incarceration or humiliating public display, during which the offender was ridiculed and pelted with rotten food (or worse) by passersby. Public executions by beheading or hanging for the most serious crimes were common. Reenactments of the beheading of Charles I were also frequently staged for the populace to remind everyone of the evils of the monarchy and to deter any

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support for Royalists who might attempt to restore the monarchy.

This situation was virtually reversed when Charles II assumed the throne in 1660, ushering in a period known as the English Restoration, referring to the restoration of the monarchy. Religious nonconformists of all kinds under the Restoration were prohibited from preaching publicly by a series of repressive acts known as the Clarendon Code, the first of which was passed in 1661. Bunyan, who refused to stop preaching, was arrested early that year and sent to the county jail, where he remained until 1672, when he was granted a royal pardon as part of a broad but temporary relaxation of the Penal Laws. He returned to his congregation and continued to preach and publish but was arrested again in 1675 following a reversal of royal policy toward nonconformists. Bunyan spent a further six months (December 1676–June 1677) in jail at Bedford before he was released through the help of patrons (notably the well-connected William Kiffin) in the English nobility, having spent 12 years altogether in prison. During this long imprisonment, he penned several religious works, of which *The Pilgrim's Progress* is by far the best known today.

The publication of Part 1 of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in 1678 was an instant success, sparking various imitators and unofficial sequels before the release of Part 2 in 1684. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is not the only religious commentary of Bunyan's time to gain popularity. Contemporary Englishman John Milton (1608–74) published his epic poem *Paradise Lost* in 1667, followed by *Paradise Regained* and *Sampson Agonistes*, which were published together in one book in 1671. These later works were more didactic than the vivid description of Satan's rebellion against God in *Paradise Lost*. Nonetheless, Milton, an outspoken Presbyterian and well-educated critic of "state sanctioned religion," is credited with managing to convey "a Christian idea of heroism."

With the accession of the Catholic James II (1633–1701) to the British throne in 1685, the country seemed poised for a revival and expansion of the religious tolerance briefly tested in the 1670s. James's initiatives—which benefited nonconformists as well as Catholics—were ultimately thwarted by the Glorious Revolution (1688–89). This transition was brought about by the deposition of James II and the installation of his daughter Mary II (1662–94), who ruled from 1689 to 1694 with her husband, the Dutch Prince of Orange, William III (1650–1702). Although Protestants, the joint monarchs attempted a unification between Catholics and Protestants, but the compromise left Dissenters banned from holding any government office or sitting in Parliament.

Bunyan, who died on August 31, 1688, did not live to see that devastating reversal. A few years after his death, Bunyan's known works were republished in folio. This paved the way for numerous translations, modernizations, and retellings—not to mention a few frauds and forgeries, such as the spurious "Part 3," which was included in editions of Bunyan's famous allegory for many years. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is his lasting contribution to English literature. Through the 19th century, it was found, next to the Bible, in every English home. Many American frontier households also contained a copy of Bunyan's book alongside the Bible and the works of English playwright William Shakespeare (1564–1616). Children memorized and recited passages from these books for guests and family members well into the early 1900s.

Characters

Christian

Christian, originally known as Graceless, is an inhabitant of the City of Destruction who leaves behind his wife and children in order to seek the Celestial City. He encounters many obstacles on his way to his destination, mirroring the temptations and trials faced by a Christian believer.

John Bunyan

John Bunyan includes himself in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, not only as the strong-voiced narrator but also appearing in the beginnings of Parts 1 and 2, both of which he frames in the context of his dreams.

Christiana

Christiana, Christian's wife, initially questions her husband's desire to go on a pilgrimage to the Celestial City and tries to stop him. When he sets out on his own, she remains in the City of Destruction with their four sons. In Part 2 she receives a summons from the king of the Celestial City (i.e., Christ) and

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sets out to answer it, accompanied by her sons and her neighbor Mercy.

Mercy

The aptly named Mercy is a pious and kindhearted young woman who cares for the poor. Despite not receiving a summons herself, she joins Christiana on a pilgrimage to the Celestial City, partly out of love for her friend and partly out of concern for her own soul. A maiden of marriageable age, she rejects worldly suitors before eventually wedding Christiana's son, Matthew.

Great-heart

Great-heart first appears early in Part 2 as a guide assigned to accompany Christiana and Mercy to the Celestial City. He is a knight-like figure who defends the other pilgrims against the assaults of thieves, bandits, and evil giants. These acts of physical bravery symbolize spiritual strength and the ability to resist temptation.

Faithful

Faithful is a fellow pilgrim who, in Part 1, sets out to escape the City of Destruction. He and Christian, his former neighbor, are reunited just after the Valley of the Shadow of Death and travel together awhile. They journey as far as the town of Vanity, where both are imprisoned and Faithful dies a martyr's death.

Hopeful

Hopeful, a former resident of Vanity, becomes a companion to Christian after being inspired by Faithful's pious example. He accompanies Christian all the way to the Celestial City. Hopeful is not an especially well-defined character apart from the trait that gives him his name; he seems to serve mainly as someone for Christian to talk to.

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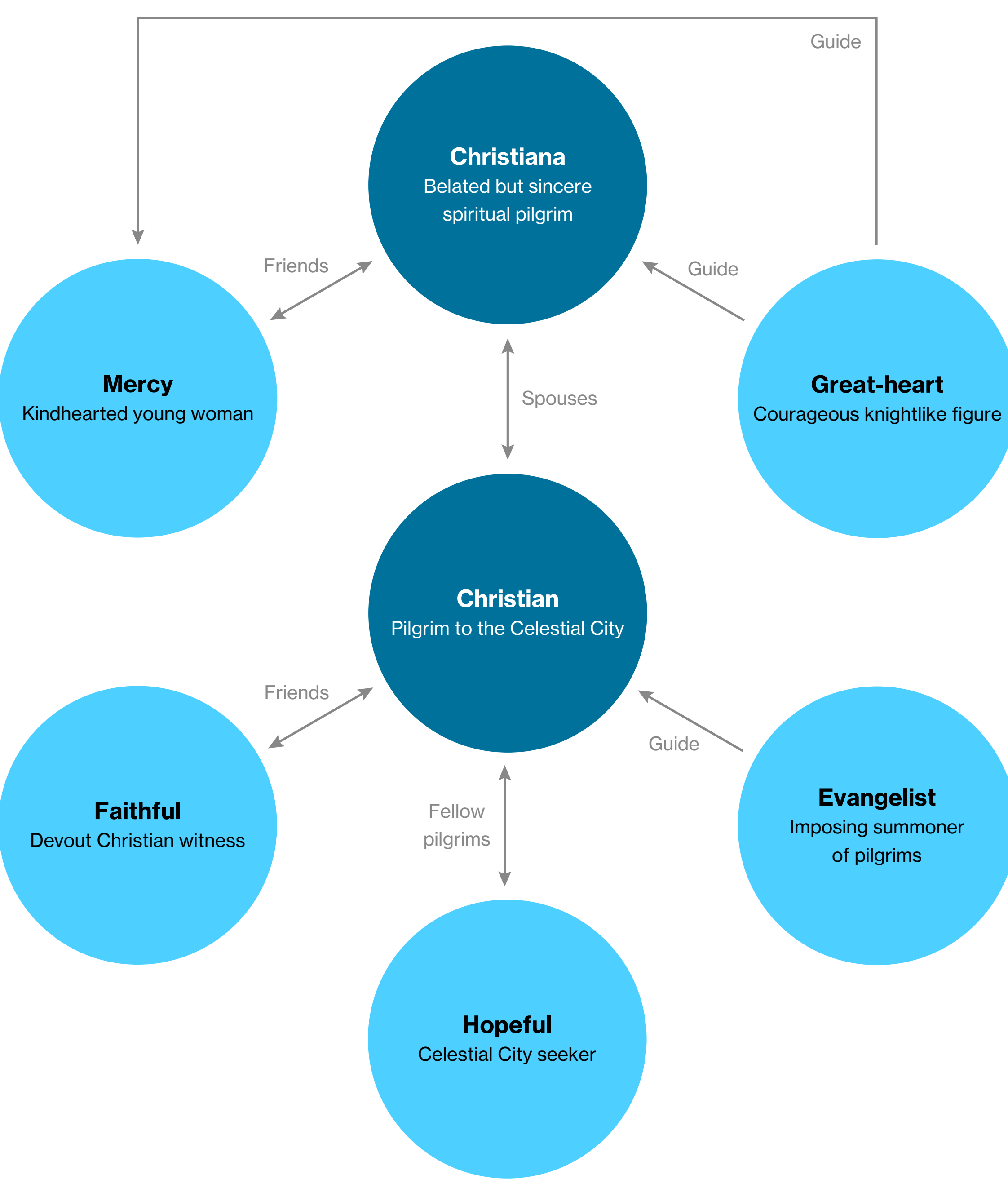
Character Map



- Main Character
- Other Major Character
- Minor Character

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Full Character List

Character	Description
Christian	Christian is the protagonist of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part 1. His journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City allegorically represents the Christian believer's rejection of earthly things in pursuit of heaven.
John Bunyan	John Bunyan (1628–88) is the author and narrator of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He maintains a strong authorial presence throughout the text.
Christiana	Christiana is the wife of Christian and the protagonist of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part 2. Initially unwilling to leave her home in the City of Destruction, she eventually sets out in her husband's footsteps to seek the Celestial City.
Mercy	Mercy is a young neighbor of Christiana who accompanies her and her family on their journey to the Celestial City. She eventually marries Matthew, Christiana's oldest son.
Great-heart	Great-heart is the guide appointed to lead Christiana and Mercy on their pilgrimage. He is brave and chivalrous in a manner reminiscent of a medieval knight.
Faithful	Faithful is Christian's friend and former neighbor who sets forth on his own pilgrimage from the City of Destruction. The two meet up about halfway through the pilgrimage route, but Faithful is killed in the town of Vanity.
Hopeful	Hopeful is Christian's companion for the latter leg of his pilgrimage in Part 1. He joins Christian just after the latter's escape from the town of Vanity.
Adam the First	Adam the First is modeled after the biblical Adam, but he represents his predecessor's worst qualities. He seeks to live—and encourages others—a comfortable life in this world, but there are hints that he enslaves those who come to visit him.
Angels	Angels appear occasionally in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, but they are most prominent at the end of Part 1, where they welcome Christian into the Celestial City.
Apollyon	Apollyon is a demon whom Christian fights in the Valley of Humiliation. After a long and grueling combat, Christian wounds Apollyon and drives him off.
Atheist	Atheist encounters Christian and Hopeful near the end of the pilgrimage. He almost made it to the Celestial City himself but turned back just before the city came into view.
Beelzebub	Beelzebub, one of the many biblical names for the devil, is one of the main adversaries of the king and an enemy of pilgrims. His archers attempt to kill pilgrims on their way to the Wicket-Gate, and his servants also attempt to trap them at Vanity Fair.
Brisk	Brisk is one of the worldly suitors attracted to the young and beautiful Mercy. He breaks off his wooing when he finds that she is devoted to caring for the poor rather than amassing wealth for herself.
Madam Bubble	An old but wealthy woman, Madam Bubble represents the pleasures and allurements of this world. She attempts to distract Standfast from his pilgrimage as he crosses the Enchanted Ground.
By-ends	By-ends is an example of a fair-weather Christian: one who is religious only when it is not inconvenient.

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Charity	Charity is one of the four maidens who live in Palace Beautiful and entertain pilgrims there. She asks Christian questions about the family he left behind.
Chorus of Saints	A chorus of saints sings the hymn of praise from the book of Revelation in Part 1, Chapter 10.
Civility	Civility, son of Legality, lives in the village of Morality and assists his father in helping pilgrims get rid of their burdens. He is mentioned but never met in the course of Bunyan's dream narrative.
Demas	Demas runs a silver mine on the aptly named Hill Lucre. He lures pilgrims to abandon their quest and turn to the dangerous pursuit of wealth.
Despair	Despair, also called Giant Despair, appears in both Parts 1 and 2, capturing pilgrims who venture too close to his castle. Christian escapes him in Part 1, and Great-heart slays him in Part 2.
Despondency	Mr. Despondency (whose name literally means "hopelessness") is one of the captives of Giant Despair. He is liberated by Great-heart and joins the pilgrims late in Part 2.
Diffidence	Diffidence is the wife of Giant Despair and an enemy of the pilgrims. She urges her husband to abuse the pilgrims until they give up the will to live.
Discontent	Discontent tries to convince Faithful to leave the Valley of Humiliation because humility is "altogether without honor."
Discretion	Discretion is one of the four maidens who live in Palace Beautiful and welcome pilgrims there.
Doomed miners	The doomed miners appear in Part 1, Chapter 8. They do not make it to the Celestial City.

Envy	Envy is one of the Vanity Fair townsfolk called to testify against Christian and Faithful. He accuses the two pilgrims of scorning the customs and laws of Vanity Fair.
Ethiopian	The Ethiopian appears in a scene in the Delectable Mountains (Part 2) as part of an allegorical lesson on reputation and appearances. To Englishmen of Bunyan's time, Ethiopians were proverbially dark-skinned.
Evangelist	Evangelist, whose name is also the title of the Gospel writers, is the man who visits Christian to persuade him to leave the City of Destruction and go on a pilgrimage. He is a stern but caring guide throughout Christian's journey. Evangelist appears at the beginning of Part 1 to warn Christian of the doom that will shortly befall the City of Destruction. He reappears at intervals to guide, encourage, and admonish Christian and his companions. Like the writers of the Gospels, who are also known as evangelists, he serves as a messenger who reveals the workings of God's will.
Mr. Fearing	Mr. Fearing is a pilgrim who is mentioned rather than seen by the other characters. He makes it to the Celestial City despite being hindered by constant and unnecessary fears about his salvation.
Feeble-mind	Feeble-mind is a pilgrim who follows the Way as best he can despite his frailty of both mind and body. Bunyan includes him to indicate that being a true Christian does not require any special physical or mental gifts.
Flatterer	Flatterer manages to catch Christian and Hopeful in a net, thereby delaying—but not preventing—their journey to the Celestial City.
Fool	Fool, whom the pilgrims see in the Delectable Mountains, is busy trying to whiten the skin of an Ethiopian. His actions, Bunyan says, are as futile as trying to whiten the reputation of someone "darkened" by sin.

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Formalist	Formalist is one of two men who attempt to climb over the wall rather than go through the Wicket-Gate. He argues that *how* one gets to the Celestial City is unimportant, as long as one gets there.
Gaius	Gaius is an innkeeper who looks after the pilgrims when they grow tired and faint. He is the father of Phebe and thus the eventual father-in-law of Christiana's son James.
Gatekeeper	The gatekeeper lets Christiana, her sons, and Mercy through the Wicket-Gate.
Godly-man	In Part 2 Godly-man appears in a symbolic scene on Mount Innocence, one of the Delectable Mountains. There, two men (Prejudice and Ill-will) throw dirt at him, but his garments remain clean.
Good-will	Good-will is the keeper of the Wicket-Gate, through which pilgrims must pass on their way to the Celestial City.
Grace	Grace is the obedient daughter of Mnason and lives with him in the town of Vanity. She marries Christiana's son Samuel before the pilgrims resume their journey.
Great-Grace	Described as "the King's champion," Great-Grace comes to the rescue of Little-Faith. He fights against the various thieves who attempt to prey on pilgrims.
Grim	Also known as Bloody-man, Grim is a giant who accosts the pilgrims on their way to Palace Beautiful. He is killed by Great-heart after a brief sword fight.
Hate-good	Lord Hate-good is the presiding judge in the town of Vanity. He hears the testimony against Faithful and Christian and quickly condemns the two to death, ordering the former to be executed immediately.
Help	Help makes an extremely brief appearance early in Part 1, where he helps Christian extricate himself from the Slough of Despond.
Honest	Honest is a plainspoken and somewhat cantankerous pilgrim whom Christiana and company meet late in their journey.
Mr. Hold-the-world	Mr. Hold-the-world is a friend of Mr. By-ends. Worldly and cunning, he tries to accommodate his religion to his desire for earthly goods and pleasure.
Hypocrisy	Hypocrisy, together with Formalist, climbs over the wall to get to the Celestial City because it is more convenient than going through the Wicket-Gate.
Ignorance	Ignorance comes to the Celestial City via a "crooked" way rather than going through the Wicket-Gate. He is rejected by the king when he attempts to enter the City and is subsequently cast into hell.
Ill-will	Ill-will is one of the two men who attempt, unsuccessfully, to sully the garments of Godly-man with dirt.
Inconsiderate	Inconsiderate is one of the three thieves who assault Valiant-for-truth before running off as the other pilgrims approach.
Interpreter	The Interpreter keeps a museum-like house just inside the Wicket-Gate. He appears in both parts of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, showing and explaining his house's symbolic contents to the pilgrims.
James	James is the youngest of Christiana's four sons. Late in Part 2 he marries Gaius's daughter Phebe.

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Jesus	Although he is mentioned many times in the text, Jesus is spoken of as a character only in two places. In Part 1, Chapter 6 Jesus is said to have once passed through the town of Vanity, and in Part 2, Chapter 5 he is said to have had a country house in the Valley of Humiliation during his earthly life.
Joseph	Joseph is the second-youngest of Christiana's sons. Late in Part 2 he marries Martha, daughter of Mnason.
King	The king repeatedly mentioned in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is God, who rules over the Celestial City (i.e., heaven).
Legality	Legality is a leading resident of the town of Morality and an alleged specialist in helping pilgrims get rid of their burdens. Christian attempts to visit him in Part 1 but never makes it to Morality.
Little-Faith	Little-Faith is a pilgrim who is robbed of everything but the jewels he needs to enter the Celestial City. He makes his pilgrimage in poverty but arrives safely at his destination.
Man of this world	The man of this world is busily raking straw and dust in Part 2, Chapter 2.
Martha	Martha is one of Mnason's daughters. She is mentioned only briefly in connection with her marriage to Joseph, Christiana's son.
Matthew	Matthew is the eldest of Christiana's sons and the eventual husband of Mercy.
Maul	Maul is a giant who uses sophistry (deceptive, faulty reasoning) to dissuade pilgrims from their faith. Great-heart slays him in Part 2.
Mistrust	Mistrust is, with Timorous, one of the two men who are frightened away from Palace Beautiful because of the lions there. He tries to persuade Christian to run away too and is later severely punished for his bad advice.
Mnason	Mnason is the leader of a small group of pious people who live in the town of Vanity. He welcomes Christiana and her group as they pass through.
Moses	Moses, here caricatured as a violent and unforgiving man, attacks Faithful as punishment for his failure to adhere to God's laws.
Much-Afraid	Much-Afraid is the daughter of Despondency and a captive of Giant Despair. She is freed by the pilgrims and joins them on their trek to the Celestial City.
Obstinate	Christian meets Obstinate just after setting out on his pilgrimage toward the Celestial City. He refuses to believe Christian's tale of the coming wrath and returns to the doomed City of Destruction.
Pagan	Pagan is a giant who once lived in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Bunyan mentions that Pagan has long since died but terrorized many pilgrims in his time.
Passion	Passion is a child found in an allegorical scene in the Interpreter's house. He is impatient and squanders the good things that are given to him.
Patience	The child Patience appears in the same scene as Passion at the Interpreter's house. He is willing to wait for his reward, though it takes a long time to arrive.
Phebe	Phebe is the daughter of Gaius, the host of an inn for pilgrims. She marries James late in Part 2.
Pickthank	Pickthank (whose name is an early modern word meaning "yes-man") testifies against Christian and Faithful at Vanity Fair. He accuses the pilgrims of slandering the chief citizens of Vanity.

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Piety	Piety is one of the damsels who live at Palace Beautiful. She welcomes Christian in Part 1 and Christiana in Part 2.
Pliable	Pliable appears, along with Obstinate, near the beginning of Part 1, just after Christian has left home. He accompanies Christian on his pilgrimage for a short time but turns around at the first sign of difficulty.
Pope	Pope is a decrepit giant who lives in a cave in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. He symbolizes the Catholic Church, which Bunyan views as an evil force working for the ruin of souls.
Pragmatic	Pragmatic is one of the three thieves who cross swords with Valiant-for-truth. Like the others, he runs off when a large group of pilgrims approaches.
Prejudice	Prejudice, along with Ill-will, tries to stain the garments of Godly-man by throwing dirt at him. His effort invariably fails.
Presumption	Presumption is one of three men seen sleeping on the roadside in Part 1. He is later hanged as a criminal, a fact reported in Part 2.
Pride	Faithful meets Pride in the Valley of Humiliation.
Prudence	Prudence is one of the maidens who live in Palace Beautiful; unlike her sisters, she has a substantial speaking role in both Part 1 and Part 2. In the latter she catechizes Christiana's sons (instructs them in religion via a series of questions and answers).
Ready-to-halt	Ready-to-halt walks with the aid of crutches, but beneath his physical infirmity is a devout soul. He joins the Part 2 pilgrims just as they leave Gaius's inn.
Reliever	The Reliever drives off the two men who attack Christiana and Mercy in Part 2, Chapter 2.

Sagacity	Mr. Sagacity is the character within the dream world from whom Bunyan ostensibly learns the details of Christiana's pilgrimage. He is quietly dropped from the story as the main narrative of Part 2 gets underway.
Samuel	Samuel is the second oldest of Christiana's sons. Late in Part 2 he marries Mnason's daughter Grace.
Secret	Secret is the Celestial City messenger who visits Christiana at the beginning of Part 1. He brings her a letter from the city's king inviting her to make her pilgrimage there.
Self-will	Self-will is a stubborn and impulsive pilgrim whose story is reported by Honest in Part 2, Chapter 6. His refusal to listen to others prevents him from mending his ways.
Shame	Shame tries to persuade Faithful to give up his pilgrimage because religion is a "low" and "unmanly" thing. He fails to convince him despite a lengthy argument.
Shepherd boy	The unnamed shepherd boy appears in the Valley of Humiliation in Part 2. He sings a song to express his contentment with his modest lifestyle.
Shepherds	A group of shepherds tend their flocks on the Delectable Mountains. Though they are given names—Knowledge, Experience, Sincere, and Watchful—they effectively serve as a chorus, describing and explaining the local sights.
Shining Ones	At several points in *The Pilgrim's Progress* Bunyan mentions "shining ones," who may be saints or angels. They appear at key moments in the text as messengers from God.
Simple	Simple (in the sense of "foolish") is one of a trio of men whom Christian attempts to wake from their sleep. In Part 2 Christiana learns that he has been hanged for trying to dissuade pilgrims.

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Skill	Mr. Skill is a physician who lives near Palace Beautiful. He prescribes Matthew medicine to cure him of indigestion brought on by eating forbidden fruit.
Slay-good	Slay-good is a giant who terrorizes the countryside near Gaius's inn. Great-heart kills him and rescues Feeble-mind in the process.
Sloth	Sloth is one of three men whom Christian spies sleeping early in Part 1. When Christiana comes to the same point in her pilgrimage, she learns that Sloth has been hanged as a criminal.
Spies	Two unnamed men, sometimes referred to as spies in visual depictions of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, meet Christian as he is about to enter the Valley of the Shadow of Death. They are fleeing the horrors of the valley and urge him to do the same.
Standfast	One of the last characters to appear in Part 2, Standfast is first seen giving a prayer of thanks on the Enchanted Ground. He takes his name from his ability to "stand fast" (i.e., persevere) in the face of extreme temptation.
Superstition	Superstition is one of the three witnesses for the prosecution in the trial at Vanity Fair. He accuses Christian and Faithful of disgracing the religion of the town of Vanity.
Take heed	Take heed, the counterpart of Heedless, escapes the Valley of the Shadow of death where his companion fails to do so.
Talkative	Talkative is a false Christian who would rather discuss faith than practice it. He is shown up as a phony by Christian and Faithful, who avoid his company thereafter.
Tell-true	Tell-true is an evangelist-like figure who brings the news of the Celestial City to Dark-land. There, it reaches Valiant-for-truth and inspires him to go on pilgrimage.
Temporary	Temporary is named by Christian as an example of a pilgrim who made a promising start but then backslid into his old ways.
Timorous	Timorous is one of a pair of characters who attempts to warn Christian away from Palace Beautiful because its gate is guarded by lions. He is later burned through the tongue with a hot iron as punishment for trying to interfere in Christian's journey.
Mrs. Timorous	Mrs. Timorous is a resident of the City of Destruction and a neighbor of Christiana and Mercy. Early in Part 2, she briefly attempts to dissuade these two women from making a pilgrimage to the Celestial City.
Too-bold	Near the end of Part 2, a man named Too-bold is found sleeping on the Enchanted Ground. He is a former pilgrim who was caught off-guard by the allurements of the Ground and never completed his journey.
Two ugly men	The two ugly ("ill-favored") men attempt to attack Christiana and Mercy in Part 2, Chapter 2.
Unidentified voice	An unidentified voice quotes Psalm 23 in Part 1, Chapter 4.
Unnamed monster	The unnamed monster, who terrorizes pilgrims near Vanity, is killed in Part 2, Chapter 6.
Unnamed saint	The unnamed saint or angel rescues Christian and Hopeful from Flatterer's net in Part 1, Chapter 9.
Vain-Confidence	Vain-Confidence is convinced that the "by-path" (side route) he chooses will lead to the Celestial City. He fails to watch where he is going and falls to his death in a deep pit.
Vain-Hope	Vain-Hope is the ferryman whom Ignorance hires to get him across the River of Life.

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Valiant-for-truth	Often known just as "Valiant," this is a knight whom the pilgrims meet late in Part 2. He is first seen defending himself against a group of thieves representing various vices.
Want-wit	The Want-wit is one of the two men seen attempting to whiten the skin of the Ethiopian in the Delectable Mountains (Part 2). His futile effort represents the attempt to clean up the reputation of a person whose name is "darkened" by sin.
Madam Wanton	Madam Wanton, whose name implies indulgence in various bodily pleasures, is a resident of the City of Destruction. She is a friend of Christiana's neighbors, who are committed to enjoying this life rather than seeking another.
Watchful	Watchful is the name of the porter (the doorkeeper) at Palace Beautiful.
Wild-head	Wild-head is one of the three thieves who assault Valiant-for-truth and are then chased off.
Worldly Wiseman	Worldly Wiseman hails from a town near the City of Destruction and offers dubious advice to Christian. He tells Christian of a shortcut to get rid of his burden without any further suffering, but the shortcut ends in a deadly trap.

Plot Summary

Part 1

Christian, a resident of the City of Destruction, learns that his city is soon to be destroyed by fire. He is dismayed by this news until he learns from a messenger named Evangelist that safety can be found in the Celestial City. Over the objections of his wife, Christiana, and their children, Christian decides to make a pilgrimage to the Celestial City, which means he must first pass through the Wicket-Gate—he proverbial "narrow gate" of salvation mentioned in the Bible. On his way there, Christian briefly becomes stuck in the Slough of Despond, a boggy area representing feelings of regret and hopelessness. He next meets Mr. Worldly Wiseman, who convinces him to take a detour and abandon his difficult trek to the Celestial City. The detour proves dangerous and futile, and a chastened Christian finally makes his way through the Wicket-Gate.

Inside the gate, Christian is guided to the house of the Interpreter, who shows him a series of allegorical scenes and artworks depicting principles of Christian living. He next arrives at the foot of a cross, where the burden he has been carrying (and unable to remove) suddenly falls off and rolls away. Clothed in new garments by a group of "Shining Ones" (saints or angels), Christian continues on his journey up a hill toward the Palace Beautiful. He is initially frightened off by a pair of lions there, but after learning they are chained, he enters the palace without harm. There, he is entertained by a group of virtuous maidens and shown about the palace grounds. Just before he leaves, he is equipped with armor, which comes in handy when he reaches the Valley of Humiliation. There, he fights with the fiend Apollyon, whom he drives off with a stroke of his sword. He next proceeds through the Valley of the Shadow of Death—a place every bit as forbidding as it sounds, filled with monsters, pitfalls, and dark, gloomy fog.

After reaching the end of the valley, Christian encounters his friend and fellow townsman Faithful. The two walk together awhile, comparing notes about their respective pilgrimages and are joined for a time by the aptly named Talkative. They part ways with him when they discover he is interested in talking about faith but not living it. Soon afterward, Evangelist reappears to warn Christian and Faithful about the dangers they will face in the next town, called Vanity. Arriving there, they find that Vanity is home to the vast year-round Vanity Fair, which is devoted to the pleasures of this life. As obvious misfits in this worldly setting, they are ridiculed, locked up, and eventually put on trial. Faithful is sentenced to death and executed; Christian escapes and proceeds on his way.

Having lost one companion, Christian gains another, named Hopeful. The two travel past a perilous but alluring silver mine, called Hill Lucre, and then wander into a pleasant meadow that leads them out of the path they are supposed to be traveling. They are captured by Giant Despair and brought to his home, Doubting Castle. Again they escape and make their way to the Delectable Mountains, a pleasant country from which they can just barely see the Celestial City. After the mountains, the next major stop is the Enchanted Ground, where pilgrims are lulled to sleep by earthly comforts even as they near their celestial

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goal. Struggling over this dangerous terrain, the two travelers arrive in the holy Land of Beulah. They cannot remain here, however, but must cross over the River of Life. With this final feat accomplished, Christian and Hopeful arrive in the Celestial City, where they are welcomed by the king himself.

Part 2

The pilgrimage of Christiana, Christian's wife, runs parallel to that of her husband, with many of the same stops along the road. She and her sons start on their journey after learning of Christian's happiness in the Celestial City. They are mocked by their neighbors, but Christiana's young friend Mercy decides to go along with them. When they reach the Wicket-Gate, they are appointed a protector and guide called Great-heart, who defends them from assault numerous times during their journey. They visit the Interpreter's House, the Hill of Difficulty, and the Palace Beautiful just as Christian did, in each case receiving a warm welcome because of their ties to the now-famous earlier pilgrim. They stay longer than Christian did in Palace Beautiful, conversing with the maidens who live there. Mercy is ineffectually wooed by a worldly man called Brisk and afterward marries Christiana's oldest son, Matthew.

When they leave Palace Beautiful, Christiana and company find the Valley of Humiliation much easier to traverse than Christian did. They also fare better in the Valley of the Shadow of Death because, unlike Christian, they have the good fortune to travel through it by daylight. Great-heart fights and beheads a giant named Maul, then places his head on a pillar as a warning to passersby. Outside the valley, the group meets up with the crotchety but good-hearted Honest, who joins their company. As they travel, Great-heart tells them all about the many other pilgrims, both wise and foolish, whom he has guided over the years.

In Vanity, where Christian met with such trouble, Christiana and her group likewise have an easier time. They are welcomed by a small contingent of pious people who live in the town without succumbing to the worldly excesses of Vanity Fair. When they reach Doubting Castle, the men in the pilgrim party slay Giant Despair and demolish his home. From here the pilgrims travel over the Delectable Mountains—where they are welcomed by the same shepherds who greeted Christian—to the Enchanted Ground, where they meet a new friend named Standfast. Together, the group arrive in the Land of Beulah, after which several of them are summoned to cross the River of Life. Crossing, they arrive at their permanent home in the Celestial City.

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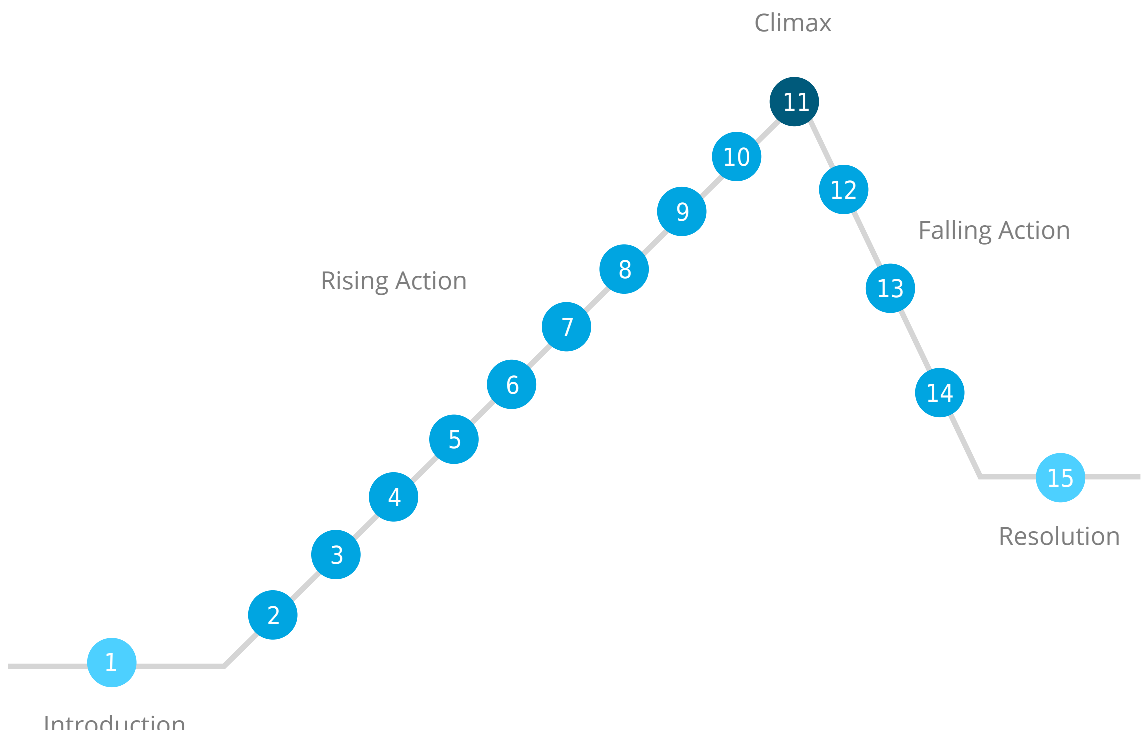
Plot Diagram



Introduction

1. Warned by Evangelist, Christian flees City of Destruction.

Rising Action

2. Christian gets stuck in the Slough of Despond.

3. Christian passes through the Wicket-Gate.

4. At the Interpreter's house, Christian is shown wonders.

5. Christian sojourns at Palace Beautiful.

6. Christian endures the Valley of Humiliation.

7. Christian survives the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

8. An old friend, Faithful, joins Christian on his journey.

9. In Vanity Fair, Christian is jailed, and Faithful is killed.

10. Christian and Hopeful are captured by Giant Despair.

Climax

11. The two pilgrims reach the Delectable Mountains.

Falling Action

12. Christian and Hopeful arrive in the Land of Beulah.

13. At their final trial, the pilgrims cross the River of Life.

14. The pilgrims are welcomed into the Celestial City.

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Resolution

15. Ignorance is rejected from the City and cast into hell.

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Timeline of Events

Suddenly one day

Christian flees City of Destruction.

Soon after

Christian gets stuck in the Slough of Despond.

After further detours

Christian passes through the Wicket-Gate.

As night falls

Christian reaches Palace Beautiful.

In the coming days

Christian passes through two fearsome valleys.

Short while later

In Vanity Fair, Christian is imprisoned, and Faithful is killed.

In a few days

Christian and Hopeful reach the Delectable Mountains.

After a lengthy hike

Christian and Hopeful arrive in the Land of Beulah.

Not long after

The pilgrims cross the River of Life and enter the Celestial City.

Some time later

Christiana is summoned to the Celestial City.

Within days

Christiana and her party reach the Wicket-Gate.

Evening of the next day

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The pilgrims follow Christian's path to Palace Beautiful.

About a month later

Christiana and family traverse the two valleys.

Over the coming weeks

Gaius and Mnason host the pilgrims.

A little while later

Great-heart and the other men slay Giant Despair.

After a night's rest

The pilgrims pass safely through the Enchanted Ground.

At the "time appointed"

Christiana crosses the River of Life to reach the Celestial City.

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Chapter Summaries

The Author's Apology for His Book

Summary

The Pilgrim's Progress begins with a rhyming poem in which John Bunyan explains and defends his decision to publish the book. He tells how he "fell suddenly" into an allegorical style of writing while trying to complete a more conventional book on religious themes. Ultimately, the allegorical ideas began to "multiply" until Bunyan decided to put them in a freestanding book.

The author explains to the reader that when *The Pilgrim's Progress* was drafted, he was unsure whether, as some of his friends urged him to do so, while others did not. Ultimately, he decided to publish the book and let the world decide its merits. He defends this decision by saying that unusual methods sometimes yield good results. He states that fishermen, for instance, use different techniques to catch different kinds of fish, and fowlers (bird hunters) know to vary their tactics depending on the type of bird they are hunting.

Bunyan also defends his use of metaphors and symbols by pointing out that the Bible uses these same devices. He further observes that philosophers "write / Dialogue-wise," as he will do throughout *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Since he is following the example of Holy Writ on one hand and learned authors on the other, Bunyan is confident that the methods he has chosen are sound ones. The poem closes with a few lines advertising the book's contents and recommending them to readers who want to be entertained in a "profitable" way.

Analysis

In 17th-century English the word *apology* meant "an explanation and defense" rather than "an expression of regret." Thus, Bunyan is not "apologizing" for his work in the modern sense of the word. Instead, he is addressing and answering possible objections that his readers might have. He is keen to show that *The Pilgrim's Progress*, despite its unusual style, is not a mere entertainment but a work of serious religious literature intended to guide the reader's own investigation into spiritual matters. The back-and-forth nature of discussion is evident here. Bunyan engages a logical appeal to the reader by presenting both sides of an argument and the logic supporting each side even though they are in opposition ("Yes, you should publish the book" and "No, you should not"). This spirit of respectful debate is characteristic of the critical thinking and analysis each individual must engage in order to mature into a genuine (as opposed to superficial) Christian morality based not only on words but also upon actions.

A major concern in the apology is the "dark" nature of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Here, too, Bunyan uses an important word in a sense different from the modern one. His book is "dark" because it is obscure, not because it is morbid or bleak. It uses metaphorical characters and settings to discuss religious concepts, rather than speaking of them in a dryly direct way. Bunyan spends many lines in the apology defending this practice, which he likens to the parables of Jesus and the complicated figurative language used in the Hebrew Bible. In doing so, he calls to mind other senses of "dark" that are more familiar today. The "dark" (obscure) language of the Bible, he says, "turn[s] our darkest nights" (i.e., of gloom or hopelessness) to days of sunlight.

The contrast between light and dark throughout *The Pilgrim's Progress* closely follows both biblical connotations and prebiblical emotional expressions. While darkness is emotionally associated with fear of unseen enemies or hazards that could beset someone traveling at night, misunderstanding and lack of knowledge is associated with the darkness of ignorance of mind and soul in the Bible; it is sometimes symbolically presented as "blindness." Light makes it possible to perceive otherwise hidden enemies or dangers, and in many biblical passages it is associated with clarity of purpose, divine guidance, and understanding leading to wisdom. Being "in the light" is synonymous with being in God's grace, while "being in the dark" indicates separation from God.

Bunyan is certainly not the first to make this kind of comparison, as indicated in biblical text. Several scholars have paired *The Pilgrim's Progress* with the well-known epic poem *Paradise Lost* (originally published in 1667) by Bunyan's contemporary Englishman, John Milton (1608–74). Milton not only included vivid descriptions of the battle between the rebel angels led by Lucifer (meaning "light") and those angels

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defending Heaven from the rebellion, but also Lucifer's fall into darkness, or the non-illuminated cavern (severance from God) of hell. Italian poet Dante Alighieri's (1265–1321) *Inferno* (the first book of *The Divine Comedy*, c. 1308–21), a religious work preceding Bunyan's by 500 years, describes a blind and mute Satan as frozen in ice at the very bottom of the darkest hell (Canto 34).

Allegorical literature was hardly new or unusual in Bunyan's time; in fact, allegories were a familiar part of early modern English literature and were used for a variety of purposes. English poet Edmund Spenser's (c. 1552–99) long poem *The Faerie Queene* (1590), for example, was one long allegory that sought, among many other things, to glorify the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603) by likening her to figures from mythology and legend. Two centuries earlier, English poet William Langland's (c. 1330–c. 1400) late medieval poem *Piers Plowman* (c. 1380) mingled social satire with a religious journey similar to that undertaken in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405) by the French/Italian writer Christine de Pizan (1364–1430) presents the author as both narrator and participant in the construction of the City of Ladies as guided in her dream vision by the Ladies Reason, Rectitude, and Justice. Although initially written in French, this highly influential and popular book was translated into English in 1521. These earlier works show both the value and the versatility of writing in an allegorical style of which Bunyan took ample advantage in his own writing.

Bunyan's concern in the apology is not simply to establish allegory as a legitimate literary technique, which would have been old news to late 17th-century readers. Instead, he is defending allegory as an appropriate means for discussing weighty religious ideas in a time of great sectarian strife. Langland, in his own religious allegory, had had the luxury of working in a time when the English overwhelmingly embraced a single variety of Christianity, namely Catholicism. Bunyan, a Separatist writing in a country once more hostile to religious nonconformists, had to make sure that his ideas would not be taken as heresy—and that his methods would not be seen as blasphemous.

Part 1, Chapter 1

Summary

John Bunyan as the author and narrator of the story tells it as a dream he once had while wandering through "the wilderness of this world." In the dream he sees a man named Christian who is greatly troubled at learning that his city will soon be destroyed by fire. Christian tries to convince his family to escape with him, but they refuse to listen and suspect him of being mentally unsound. The despondent Christian is greeted by a man named Evangelist, who tells him to leave the city and seek out the "Wicket-Gate"—a narrow gate. Christian, who carries a large burden on his back, listens to Evangelist's instructions and resolves to follow them.

Leaving his family behind, Christian heads for the Wicket-Gate, but his neighbors Obstinate and Pliable catch up with him. He explains his plan to escape the city and convinces Pliable, but not Obstinate, to join him. The two hurry onward but soon fall into a bog called the Slough of Despond. Pliable thrashes about briefly and then turns back toward the city. Christian struggles his way out of the bog with the assistance of a man called Help, who explains that the Slough is created by the filth of sin, and that the servants of the king (God) are constantly trying to turn it into solid ground.

Walking along further, Christian encounters Mr. Worldly Wiseman, who promises him an easier way out of his burdens. He tells Christian of a nearby town called Morality where a father-and-son team, called Legality and Civility, live. These gentlemen, Worldly Wiseman says, can help Christian remove the burden on his back without all the trouble of going through the Wicket-Gate and beyond. Christian is fooled into taking Worldly Wiseman's advice, but he encounters a hazardous-looking mountain on the way to Morality. Evangelist catches up with him and warns him that Civility and Legality are frauds. The only way to salvation, he reiterates, is through the narrow gate.

Analysis

The first words of the narrator in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, "As I walked through the wilderness of this world," are remarkably similar to the opening lines spoken by the pilgrim and narrator in Dante's description of the pilgrim/narrator in *The Inferno*. This reads, "In the middle of the journey of our life, I came to myself in a dark wood, for the straight way was lost." The

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similarities between these lines might lead to speculation that Bunyan had been inspired by this epic poem, but there is no evidence that Bunyan could read Italian, and *The Divine Comedy* was first translated into English a good 500 years after Bunyan's lifetime. There is some possibility that Bunyan might have heard someone conversant in Italian, which was not unusual among the English aristocracy, read cantos from *The Divine Comedy* aloud, verbally translating or perhaps paraphrasing passages of it to English listeners. It must be noted, however, that although Dante was pointedly critical of members of the papacy he placed in various parts of hell, an Italian Catholic writer in direct reference to religious practice would have been viewed by English Separatists—the group to which Bunyan belonged—as heretical, especially since it contains references to Pagan mythology, and the pilgrim's guide in it is the Pagan Roman poet Virgil (70–19 BCE). It is not beyond the realm of possibility that Dante's story might have been told to listeners as a secular rather than a religious story, perhaps along the lines of the English author Geoffrey Chaucer's (1342/43–1400) *The Canterbury Tales* in which a group of pilgrims journey to various holy shrines in England together.

The Evangelist who first gives Christian good advice on what to do reappears later to redirect the pilgrim when the way is lost. It is speculated that the person behind this character is Bunyan's mentor, Gifford, who not only experienced some of the same youthful vices in military service as did Bunyan, but repented his sins and turned to a religious life as the pastor of a Separatist (Calvinistic) Baptist congregation in Bedford. This pattern of youthful excess followed by stark conversion echoes the autobiographical *Confessions* (c. 400) of St. Augustine, who "helped lay the foundation for ... modern Christian thought." The idea here is that a person can't know what is right without first experiencing wrong firsthand, and it is explored by many spiritual writers, including Dante, who, as the pilgrim in *The Divine Comedy*, must first pass through the subterranean depths of Inferno before being ready to ascend to Purgatory and Paradise.

The Wicket-Gate is an important symbol in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. As a narrow passageway and the only opening that will lead to the Celestial City, the Gate implicates the rite of baptism, or a spiritual rebirth. The American writer Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–64) sheds some light into what must have been a long-standing spiritual meaning of a wicket gate by stating in his book, *Mosses From an Old Manse and Other Stories* (1846), that pilgrims to cathedrals were admitted inside through this smaller gate that, "by its inconvenient narrowness, was a great obstruction to the traveler of liberal mind."

It may seem odd that a book about religion sets such little store by morality, per se. Bunyan goes to the trouble of inventing a town named Morality, then locates it at the end of a dangerous detour, not along the way to salvation. It may seem that morality, in Bunyan's estimation, is to be avoided. But to understand the point Bunyan is making about morality here, it helps to look at who lives in the town: Legality and Civility. The people who take refuge in morality, without seeking for anything greater, are for Bunyan mere followers of the law (Legality) or custom (Civility). They are not foolish or dangerous *because* they are moral; rather, as Bunyan sees it, they are fools because they believe that living a moral life (by their own definition) is sufficient, and they are dangerous because they attempt, with some success, to convince other people of this viewpoint. Bunyan argues instead that it is only by passing through the Wicket-Gate, which represents a scripturally informed faith and deliberate acceptance of God's grace, that one can be saved. It's inadequate to be merely a moral person, a follower of the law, or a courteous neighbor. A good Christian, in Bunyan's view, need not be an especially nice person. In fact, some of the holy pilgrims in Part 2 are downright cantankerous.

The broader theme here, which is that there are no shortcuts or detours to salvation, will be reprised in subsequent chapters as a whole cast of characters try to get to the Celestial City without going through the Wicket-Gate or without bravely facing the various obstacles in the road beyond the gate. Through their foolishness or frailty, these unsuccessful pilgrims will be duped or cajoled into taking a road that *seems* safer or more convenient but doesn't actually lead to the Celestial City. As in the old proverb, these roads to hell are often paved with good intentions—reaffirming that, for Bunyan, good intentions are not enough.

Part 1, Chapter 2

Summary

Christian hurries on to the Wicket-Gate and, arriving there, knocks repeatedly. He is greeted by Good-will, who opens the gate and quickly pulls Christian in. Beelzebub, he explains, has

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a castle nearby, with archers who try to shoot down pilgrims before they can get through the gate. After asking Christian a little about his journey so far, Good-will describes the next step of the journey: a straight and narrow path from which there is no turning aside. He then sends Christian on toward the house of the Interpreter, who will show Christian "excellent things."

Arriving at the Interpreter's house, Christian finds himself in a kind of museum. The Interpreter first shows Christian a picture of "a very grave person" holding "the best of books" and speaking "the law of truth," with a golden crown hanging over his head. This person, the Interpreter says, is the only one who can guide pilgrims in their greatest difficulties. Next comes a large and spacious room that is first dusted by a man with a broom, an action that kicks up choking clouds. Then a maiden arrives and sprinkles water over the place to make it easier to clean. This, the Interpreter explains, is the soul, swept by the law and sprinkled by the Gospel.

The next room has two children named Patience and Passion. The latter is given a bag of treasure immediately and squanders it all, while the former waits for the "good things" that are coming to him later. Another room holds a burning fire, which is continually doused by the devil but secretly fueled by Christ so that it never stops burning. After this, Christian beholds a stately palace, at whose gate a man sits taking down the names of those who enter. A bold man enters the palace and, after having his name set down, rushes through the gate, breaking through ranks of armed guards to enter. Another room, dark and somber, holds a man in an iron cage, which represents the despair of those who have abandoned their faith. In a final scene, a man rises from his bed, troubled by dreams of the Last Judgment. Having seen all these things, Christian thanks the Interpreter and takes his leave.

Analysis

The scenes and characters in the House of the Interpreter are mostly self-explanatory—or rather, the Interpreter spells out their meaning in detail, ostensibly sparing Bunyan the trouble of doing so. The convention of "stations" (here represented as rooms in a house) in which living tableaux represent biblical episodes dates from the earliest Christian times. Even today, a tableaux (a staged scene without movement or speech with live actors or statues, first recorded as a feature of ancient Roman theatrical presentations) depicting the Nativity of Christ during the Christmas holidays is not uncommon. The intent of such presentations is to bring the viewers closer to the actual presence of a spiritual concept. The rendering of an abstract concept, such as salvation, into a concrete representation has the effect of bringing it into an immediate reality of being.

Passion and Patience are like the 17th-century versions of American comic strip characters Goofus and Gallant. One is foolish and hasty and the other wise and cautious. The two also reflect the way in which the seven deadly sins were, in the popular imagery that had become a convention by the 1600s, matched with a corresponding virtue. Gluttony, for example, would be matched with Abstinence or Arrogance with Humility. Identification of these and their correspondingly corrective virtues in Church doctrine began in the 6th century and developed in the 13th century by St. Thomas Aquinas.

Despair is pictured as an iron cage that confines and constrains a captive, an image with direct connotations to Bunyan's time spent in prison. Heaven is imagined rather splendidly as a palace that must be taken by storm. Here, as elsewhere in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan shows his sense of the hostility that a true Christian believer must expect to face. As a member of a religious minority who was imprisoned multiple times for his beliefs, Bunyan could no doubt relate to—and thus chose to echo—the Bible's many images of spiritual combat.

The scene in the dusty room reinforces a point about the law made in Chapter 1, which is revisited throughout *The Pilgrim's Progress*. By itself, Bunyan argues here, God's law is harsh, stirring up the "dust" of human sinfulness and bringing it into painful awareness. But simply stirring up guilt over one's sinfulness is not enough, just as morality derived from law and civility is not enough. Something more—the saving grace of Jesus—is necessary to truly clean the "house" of the soul instead of just kicking up clouds of guilt. The point is a distinctly Protestant perspective critical of the Catholic practice of pardon granted through confession of sin, whereby the sinner is forgiven without having to change his ways.

In Part 1, Chapter 5 Bunyan will return to this line of thinking, offering a personification of the law in the form of a caricatured Moses. Almost cartoonishly violent, this version of Moses "spareth none, neither knoweth ... how to show mercy to those that transgress the law." Jesus, in contrast, is for Bunyan a consummately merciful figure. Some critics, though certainly not all, have seen an element of anti-Semitism in Bunyan's juxtaposition of letter-of-the-law Israelites with Christians who

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live out the law's spirit.

More than three centuries later, there is today no universal consensus as to who is depicted in the Interpreter's painting. Several editions describe the figure as Evangelist, which is plausible given the major role he plays in both inspiring and encouraging Christian's pilgrimage. The "best of books" would, for Bunyan, be the Bible, and in particular the Gospels, which were written by the original four Evangelists. The "law of truth" would then be the doctrines of Christianity as expounded in the Gospels and interpreted by Bunyan and his fellow Separatists. If, indeed, it was Bunyan's intention to depict Evangelist in this portrait, he shows the character in a softer light than elsewhere: stern and forbidding, Evangelist typically appears in order to warn or chastise the pilgrims.

Part 1, Chapter 3

Summary

Continuing along the highway, Christian encounters a cross. As he beholds it, his burden falls from his back and rolls into a tomb at the foot of the hill. Three "shining ones" appear and give Christian new clothing along with a sealed "roll" (scroll) to serve as a kind of passport at the Celestial Gate. He sings a song of rejoicing and resumes his journey, encountering three sleeping men "a little out of the way," with their feet bound in irons. He calls to the men—whose names are Simple, Sloth, and Presumption—but they fail to recognize that they are in any danger and lie back down to sleep.

Next, Christian encounters Formalist and Hypocrisy, two men who snuck over the wall rather than going through the Wicket-Gate. Christian accuses them of trespassing, but they assure him that their way of reaching the highway is as legitimate as his. When the three encounter a hill called Difficulty, Christian begins to climb over it, while the other two attempt to go around and are never heard from again. Partway up the hill, when Christian pauses for a nap, the "roll" slips out of his pocket and is lost. He proceeds up to the hilltop unaware and meets Mistrust and Timorous, who are fleeing from a pair of lions. Realizing he has misplaced his roll, Christian goes back down the hill and searches for it. By the time he finds it, night is coming on, and he fears he will be eaten by wild beasts.

Fortunately, however, Christian happens upon a palace called Beautiful. He attempts to enter and seek a place to sleep but is deterred when he sees two lions near the entryway. The gatekeeper chides Christian for his cowardice and tells him the lions are chained. Christian takes Watchful at his word and enters the palace, where he meets four damsels named Discretion, Prudence, Piety, and Charity. They offer him food and lodging and converse with him about his travels. In the morning Christian's hostesses show him the "rarities" of the house, including the library, the armory, and a collection of biblical artifacts. The next day they point out to him in the distance the Delectable Mountains, a "most pleasant mountainous country" that lies between the palace and the Celestial City. By the time he reaches these mountains, they say, he will be able to see the city for himself.

Analysis

The scene with the cross and the burden may require a little unpacking. The burden Christian has been carrying because he can't get rid of it by himself is sin, which metaphorically weighs a person down. Christian cannot remove this burden without help, or even with merely human help because only God's grace is capable of freeing humankind from the ill effects of sin. This is why Christian's detour to the village of Morality is not only pointless but also dangerous: Legality and Civility, the supposed specialists in burden removal, cannot truly "unburden" a person from sin. They can, however, delude a person into postponing the effort and cultivating the humility required to reach and pass through the Wicket-Gate—a narrow opening in a larger barrier that will admit only one person at a time so that a group of pilgrims entering a cathedral through its wicket gate must be patient and generous to one another. Concentrating on merely being a good person is, for Bunyan, a kind of spiritual procrastination.

Given the role of the cross in Christian theology, it is not all that surprising that Bunyan chooses this moment to free Christian from his burden. In so doing, Bunyan follows an almost universally accepted tenet of Christian thought, which is that Jesus's sacrifice on the cross redeemed humanity from its fallen state. The traditional explanation, still current across many modern Christian denominations, is that humanity had, through sin, fallen short of the demands of God's law. Part 1, Chapter 2 includes the lesson from Interpreter's house that this law is, by itself, strict rather than lenient. No burnt offering, act of atonement, or other sacrifice would be sufficient for humans to redeem themselves; the debt, to use a common

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analogy, was too great to be repaid.

But God did not simply pardon the sin or forgive the debt. The usual reasoning here is that to do so would be merciful but not just, and God in the Christian tradition is both infinitely just and infinitely merciful. To reconcile the demands of divine justice with those of divine mercy, God took human form (the Incarnation) and atoned for humanity's sins himself by accepting death on the cross. Because of the blamelessness of the victim—after all, how could God offend against himself?—this was a perfect sacrifice, capable of redeeming humanity's sins. Christian, at the mere sight of the cross, is reminded of this sacrifice, and the burden falls off seemingly of its own accord.

The "three shining ones" who give Christian new clothes and a roll as a certification or "passport" invoke the gift of new clothes to converts who have just been baptized to symbolize the new life into which they have been reborn. Travelers in Bunyan's time who went from one town to the next as itinerant professionals, such as both Bunyan and his father, as metalworkers, were required to carry a roll with an official seal to be presented to the town magistrate. This would verify that the stranger is on an errand of legitimate business rather than for criminal purposes. Only thieves and other miscreants would, like Formalist and Hypocrisy, try to avoid detection by climbing over the wall instead of knocking, presenting a roll to be examined, and then going one by one through the narrow wicket gate. This requirement of being vouched for to enter a city is all the more important to understand why the loss of his "roll" is as much a trouble to Christian as if he'd lost a key.

Part 1, Chapter 4

Summary

Before leaving the Palace Beautiful, Christian returns to the armory, where he is given a full suit of armor to defend himself against unspecified "assaults." He hears that his neighbor Faithful has been spotted along the highway and wishes to catch up with him. First, however, Christian must navigate the Valley of Humiliation, where he meets a fiend named Apollyon. The demon first tries to get Christian to forsake God and return to the City of Destruction, but, failing to persuade him, he attacks him instead. After a frightful struggle, Christian wounds Apollyon and forces him to retreat.

After the Valley of Humiliation comes the Valley of the Shadow of Death, where Christian encounters a pair of spies who warn him of the many monsters lurking therein. They flee, presumably back through the Valley of Humiliation, but Christian proceeds. The path is narrow, with a steep ditch on one side and a bottomless quagmire on the other. Nonetheless, Christian makes it through, relying on continual prayer to pluck up his courage, even when he hears voices whispering "grievous blasphemies" all around him.

The sun rises, and Christian reaches the end of the valley, alongside which he sees a cave. This, John Bunyan explains, is the home of two giants, Pope and Pagan, who were once quite terrifying and killed many men. Pagan, however, is now dead, and Pope has grown decrepit with age. Thus, Christian emerges unharmed from the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Analysis

Christian is armored like a knight, which invokes references to stories of Christian knights who rode into battle with the Saracens (identified as the Muslims who held the Holy Land of Jesus's time) during the Crusades (late 11th century), and King Arthur's knights of the Round Table, who were set on heroic deeds, one of which was to find the Holy Grail, or the cup from which Christ drank at the Last Supper. Whether or not Bunyan read these stories for himself or was told them by oral tradition, he certainly realized their dramatic and thrilling potential to attract young men and draw them into a spiritual battle for themselves. Bunyan himself contemplated writing a version of King Arthur and the knights. In any case, his allegory *The Holy War* (1682) includes this imagery. Even today, evangelistic rhetoric exhorting Baptist youth to go forward as warriors of Christ into missionary work invokes the glamor of knightly battle righteously won against the ignorance of nonbelievers. *The Pilgrim's Progress* represents this as both an internal and external battle. The two valleys through which Christian must pass are inhabited by monsters, the first of which in the Valley of Humiliation is Apollyon. The name *Apollyon* (the Hebrew word *Abbadon* as translated from the Greek) appears in biblical text in Revelations 9:11 and refers to a place of destruction later personified as "the angel of the bottomless pit."

The Valley of the Shadow of Death is a phrase from the

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Twenty-Third Psalm, one of the most well-known of the Bible and particularly associated with final Christian funeral rites. The contrast between the fear of this valley and the image of Christ as a Good Shepherd who guides his flock to safety is drawn upon throughout Bunyan's story.

The two giants at the valley's end are a great help in understanding the religious and political context in which Bunyan wrote. "Pope" and "Pagan" symbolize the threats of the ancient and recent past, but, tellingly, there is no third giant to represent the threats of the present.

An anti-Catholic streak is evident in *The Pilgrim's Progress* at various times, but nowhere more than here, where Bunyan gives the name Pope to a senile yet terrible monster. Catholicism was officially repressed in England throughout much of the early modern period, but this repression was relaxed somewhat under Charles II (1630–85), the first monarch of the English Restoration era, likely due to the fact that his queen was Catholic. Hence Bunyan's portrayal of the pope (the supreme leader of the Catholic Church) as a former threat who has lost much of his power to threaten pilgrims but who is not quite dead.

The figure of Pagan, who appears to represent non Judeo-Christian religions as a group, shows that the focus of Bunyan's religious writing is close to home. England in Bunyan's time had extremely few residents who did not at least outwardly profess some variety of Christianity. Of those few, most were Jewish. Worldwide, however, Christianity did not enjoy the dominant position that it had acquired in late 17th-century English society. The idea of "pagan" traditions as a largely defunct opponent to Christianity was accurate only from a European perspective.

In England the main political antagonist of Bunyan's Separatist beliefs was thus not the still-suppressed Catholic Church nor the ancient "pagan" customs of the British Isles. Instead, the force most responsible for marginalizing Separatism and repressing its leaders was the established Church of England, which had resumed its prestigious place in English society when the monarchy was restored. Prior to the Restoration, Separatists had briefly ruled the country, so the official backlash was in a sense predictable. Living through this backlash as a member of a minority religion, Bunyan—ordinarily no stranger to controversy—is shrewd enough not to include a third evil giant called Anglican.

Part 1, Chapter 5

Summary

Pausing to take in a scenic view, Christian spots his friend Faithful up ahead and rushes to catch up with him. Faithful, who is glad to have company on his pilgrimage, fills Christian in on the happenings back in their hometown of Destruction. He then tells of the dangers of his own journey, which was nearly turned aside at the foot of Hill Difficulty. There, Faithful met an ancient man—Adam the First—who tried to lure Faithful into becoming his servant. Rejecting Adam's offer, he proceeded to climb the hill but was chased, knocked down, and beaten by Moses, who "[knew] not how to show mercy." In the Valley of Humiliation he met with many who attempted to halt his journey, including Discontent, Pride, and Shame, but he shook them off and continued through the two valleys to where he stands now.

As the two friends continue, they are joined by Talkative, who quickly proves himself worthy of his name. Faithful admires Talkative because he speaks a great deal about religious matters, but Christian warns him to beware. Together, the two bait Talkative into admitting that he may know and say a great deal about religion without actually being a good Christian. Irritated by their behavior, Talkative parts ways with them just as they come to a wilderness.

Analysis

Bunyan continues to stress the distinction between faith and works and to insist on the value of both in Christian life; that is, faith instigates and guides the execution of good works something on the order in which a horse —in action—is directed by its rider—in intent. In the first half of this chapter Faithful recalls his encounters with a cast of characters who showcase the need for faith. Moses, who assaults Faithful as he is already climbing up Hill Difficulty, is for Christians the archetypal lawgiver of the Hebrew Bible. In making Moses such a violent figure here, Bunyan underscores the emptiness of merely following the law without a saving faith in Jesus. This is one of a few points in *The Pilgrim's Progress* at which Bunyan contrasts obedience to God's law in the Hebrew Bible with the fulfillment of God's law through Christ in the Gospels. In this, he puts the New Testament firmly as a refinement to the Old.

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The group of malcontents in the Valley of Humiliation further showcases the need for faith. If Faithful were not so faithful, he might easily be convinced by their arguments, which are grounded in this world. Discontent, Pride, and Shame all seek to appeal to Faithful's vanity—a recurring point of attack for Bunyan's "bad guy" characters. Faithful, however, has his eyes on a bigger prize, and his belief in the Celestial City and its king draws him onward.

In the second half of the chapter, Bunyan introduces a new character who shows the folly of faith without works—or, more accurately, who shows that a true faith is an active faith. For Bunyan faith is more than mere belief in the fact of Jesus's resurrection: it is an inward change that inspires virtuous living. This view draws support from the New Testament letters of Paul and other early Christian leaders, but there is a certain "chicken-or-egg" quality to the way Bunyan presents it in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Talkative may have faith in some sense, as he professes to, but if he *really* had faith, he would practice what he preaches. Thus, it isn't the case that good works are necessary, per se; rather, they serve as a sign that one's faith is resilient and mature.

Part 1, Chapter 6

Summary

As they make their way out of the wilderness, Christian and Faithful are approached by Evangelist, who set Christian on his pilgrimage several chapters ago. He now warns them to be steadfast in their faith, even to the point of death. Courage will be necessary, he says, in the town they are coming to, where one or both men will likely be killed. Soon enough, the two pilgrims arrive in the town of Vanity, where the famous Vanity Fair is held year-round. There, all kinds of vain worldly goods are sold, and all sorts of crimes and subterfuges are committed. Presiding over Vanity Fair is Beelzebub, who in fact founded the fair for the express purpose of ensnaring and distracting pilgrims. Jesus (referred to here by the title Prince of Princes) was, Bunyan reveals, once tempted by the fair's finest merchandise, but he resisted.

Christian and Faithful pass through the fair, drawing attention on account of their strange clothes and their distaste for the fair's goods. The crowd begins to mock them and eventually throws them into a cage as if they were madmen. The pilgrims remain calm, but their refusal to retaliate or lash out only aggravates the townspeople. Christian and Faithful are brought to trial before a judge named Lord Hate-good, where they stand accused of creating a public disturbance and speaking seditiously against Beelzebub. Three witnesses—Envy, Superstition, and Pickthank—are called, all of whom speak out at length against the two pilgrims and their vanity-hating ways. Hearing their testimony, Lord Hate-good calls for Faithful's execution, which is carried out immediately via a series of painful tortures. Christian, who is granted a brief respite, escapes from Vanity and resumes his pilgrimage.

Analysis

The way in which the town of Vanity and its year-round fair is described in careful detail is likely due to several points Bunyan wished to put to the reader. Since he had first followed his father's profession as a metalworker and was later stationed in the military, Bunyan was, in his early life, likely in the company of every unsavory character who preyed on unsuspecting victims amid the many lighthearted distractions of an urban street fair. He probably was himself a victim of fraud, theft, and con games popular in the day, and he may have learned some of the tricks to pull on others. In any case, placing the town of Vanity near the Celestial City reminds the reader that the closer the pilgrim comes to the goal, the stronger are the efforts of evil to dissuade his purpose. This is also the case with the wicket gate by which pilgrims traditionally entered a cathedral, in that not only did they have to enter one at a time but they were also at risk of being shot with arrows by Beelzebub, a sort of lieutenant to Satan. Once they had crossed the threshold between the secular world of vanities into the sacred space of worship, evil could not touch them. Bunyan refers to this danger when in the first chapter Christian has reached the Wicket-Gate and knocked until Good-will answers and lets him in. Good-will assures him he is now safe from the arrows that Beelzebub and his evil followers shoot at travelers approaching the gate.

The special bitterness with which Bunyan depicts Vanity and its court system may reflect his own longtime status as a prisoner of conscience. The first installment of *The Pilgrim's Progress* was written while Bunyan was in jail for refusing to give up preaching, a casualty of the changes in religious climate brought by the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. In 1661 Bunyan was rounded up as part of a larger effort to

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repress Separatist preachers. He remained imprisoned for over a decade because he would not take a vow to stop preaching should he be released.

Bunyan left prison in 1672, not because he renounced his principles, but because King Charles II had temporarily backed down from his persecutory campaign. The Declaration of Indulgence, the king's official proclamation of this policy change, effectively suspended the harsh penal laws enacted during the early 1660s. Now licensed to preach, Bunyan was freed just long enough to establish himself at a congregation in Bedford before the pendulum swung back toward intolerance. He spent a further six months in prison, again on charges related to his religious nonconformism, and he published *The Pilgrim's Progress* not long after his release.

To be clear, Bunyan was not persecuted as harshly as Christian and the hapless Faithful in this chapter. Prison in early modern England was a pay-as-you-go, or more accurately, a bribe-as-you-go system. Both of Bunyan's jail sentences were served close to his family and congregation in Bedford, and he was occasionally permitted visits by family and other supporters. Moreover, though Bunyan himself was by no means affluent, he had enough friends in his dissident congregation that he could bribe the guards for various comforts and necessities. Still, Bunyan's imprisonment severely limited his ability to earn money to support his family. The work available to inmates was repetitious and poorly paid, consisting mostly of small manufacturing trades such as lace making. Bunyan himself spent a lot of time making shoelaces for little pay.

Part 1, Chapter 7

Summary

Though bereft of his friend Faithful, Christian is now joined by Hopeful, a former resident of Vanity who was inspired by Faithful's pious example. The two of them are joined briefly by Mr. By-ends, who represents the idea of being religious only when it is convenient. Christian sharply criticizes him for his attempts to treat religion as a tool for worldly profit or career advancement. They next visit Hill Lucre, where a man named Demas has set up a silver mine. The mine is dangerous, yet many adventurers are lured to it and end up losing their lives. A pillar with the inscription "remember Lot's wife" reminds the pilgrims not to "look back" to worldly things as they are fleeing to the safety of heaven.

The path to the Celestial City now runs parallel to a river for a while. The scenery is so pleasant and the going so easy that Christian and Hopeful are tempted to follow a side trail, not noticing that it curves away from the true way. The trail leads them to the domain of Giant Despair, who, with his wife, Diffidence, keeps the pilgrims prisoner in Doubting Castle. He seeks to convince them, through starvation and beatings, to give up on life and commit suicide. They escape, however, when Christian recalls that he has had a key, called Promise, to get out of the dungeon all along. Returning to the main road, the two pilgrims post a sign to warn others of the dangers of Doubting Castle.

Analysis

Here, as elsewhere, Bunyan juxtaposes two dangers to Christian life: one blatant and one insidious. The pilgrims have little trouble avoiding the deadly silver mine because they have been warned repeatedly and in many ways to avoid it. The inscription on the pillar in particular ("remember Lot's wife") is *The Pilgrim's Progress* equivalent of a "Danger!" sign. It hearkens back to Genesis 19, in which the wife of the biblical patriarch Lot is transformed into a pillar of salt. She met this fate as punishment for looking back at her hometown of Sodom as it was being destroyed by fire. As Christian and Hopeful muse, this act of disobedience seems a small offense given the magnitude of the punishment. The traditional explanation is a symbolic one: Lot's wife is an archetype of those who "look back" at the vanishing things of this world when their eyes should be on heaven. The juxtaposition here of salt and silver is interesting because both are types of lucre, or monetary gain. The silver mine is in Lucre Hill (related to the word *lucrative*), and as a precious metal silver has long been used as money. But here Bunyan has tied in a biblical reference to an older type of renumeration that was probably still in use among the poor of his time: salt. For example, soldiers of the Roman Empire were sometimes paid in salt, and it is from this practice that the word *salary* is derived.

Even without the pillar, though, Christian and Hopeful should be well versed in the dangers of greed. They have only recently come from Vanity Fair, a massive, town-sized festival of buying and selling. The denizens of that city were not just materialistic

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but also warped by materialism to a shocking extent, as can be seen when their way of life is challenged and they clamor to execute the offending party. Having witnessed the evil that comes of a preoccupation with such "vanities," these two pilgrims are better able to resist the temptation posed by the silver.

When it comes to By-path Meadow and Doubting Castle, however, the pilgrims let down their guard—and pay dearly for it. The idea here is that greed, like most of the deadly sins, is a powerful but fairly obvious source of temptation. The seven deadly sins including greed (or selfishness) were sloth, vanity, pride, avarice, lust, and wrath. But each of these sins is matched with a counteracting virtue, which, if a person applies it, grants the ability to overcome the vice. It is by application of the virtue of humility, for example, that the sin of pride can be overcome.

There are numerous stories in the Hebrew Bible about the dangers of an attachment to material things, the tale of Lot's wife being just one example. There are multiple biblical proverbs on the theme of greed and its perils, and several letters and parables in the New Testament sound the same theme. But the danger of the by-path is a more abstract one, not to be found among the seven capital sins. The pilgrims do not even realize they are going astray, as they certainly would if they took a sharp detour to visit the mines. The religious doubts represented by the meadow and the castle sneak up on them. Bunyan here efficiently offsets the perils of doubt—in the form of a confining castle—and despair—a giant—that might lead the pilgrim to take his own life (one of the most grievous sins a person can commit against the life God has gifted is "self-murder") by providing a key. If only the pilgrim will recall that the key, or the promise of redemption from sin, is already in his possession, then there is nothing in doubt or despair that can reach the soul. The pilgrim can, with this key, release himself from it.

Thus, in a short space Bunyan sketches the outlines of a story he cannot tell in complete detail, challenging the notion that the road to hell is necessarily paved with good intentions. Here, as throughout *The Pilgrim's Progress*, he shows instead that there are *many* roads to hell, the paving materials of which vary as much as silver does from soil.

Part 1, Chapter 8

Summary

Soon, Christian and Hopeful reach the Delectable Mountains, where they are greeted by a group of shepherds. These shepherds are individually named, but they act in unison, like a type of chorus. The shepherds show the two pilgrims the suitably allegorical "wonders" of the area, including a dangerously steep hill called Error and a smoky passageway they describe as the "by-way to hell." For a final wonder, the shepherds bring them to the end of the mountain range and offer them a "Perspective-Glass" (spyglass or telescope) through which they can just barely glimpse the gates of the Celestial City. After some parting words of wisdom from the shepherds, Christian and Hopeful begin the last leg of their pilgrimage.

Analysis

Shepherds and shepherd imagery have a special place in the New Testament, which Bunyan was surely aware. Shepherds are proverbially vigilant, protecting their flocks from predators and other dangers. Early Church iconography prior to the Crusades (an ongoing conflict between Christians and Muslims over territories held holy by both religions) depicted Jesus as a gentle, loving, and youthful shepherd to his flock of faithful devotees. The Twenty-Third Psalm of the Bible, which is perhaps the most well known, uses the rich imagery of safety, refuge, and comfort. Another biblical example of the humility and diligence of a shepherd is that the job of guarding the father's flock of sheep was given to the youngest son, as was the case in the Old Testament, or Book of Genesis, with Jacob, the youngest son of Isaac. It is further recorded in the New Testament that watchful shepherds were among the first summoned to the Nativity of Christ. Given this longstanding association, it's not all that surprising that one of the shepherds' names is Watchful in Bunyan's allegory. Likewise, shepherds and other rustic figures are often perceived as honest, humble, and lacking in guile, qualities summed up by the inclusion of Sincere. Knowledge and Experience can be explained, somewhat more loosely, as emblematic of the qualities that exert a shepherd-like influence on the soul, guiding it away from harm.

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Among the specifically biblical reasons for including shepherds in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, perhaps the most important is their role in the Gospel of Luke. There, a group of shepherds tending their flocks near Bethlehem is described as the first to hear the angels' proclamation of Jesus's birth (Luke 2:8–20). The shepherds depicted in *The Pilgrim's Progress* recall this important scene in that they are positioned just within sight of the Celestial City. Just as the Gospel shepherds were forerunners of the many Christians who would hear the good news of the Incarnation, the shepherds of Part 1, Chapter 8 are the harbingers of the pilgrims' arrival in heaven.

The spyglass or telescope is a further image of watchfulness, or of being able to see what is approaching from a great distance away. The use of lenses in this way was still something of a novelty in Bunyan's time, as a telescope was used for astronomy as early as 1609.

Part 1, Chapter 9

Summary

Now in the home stretch of their journey, Christian and Hopeful meet with a "brisk" young man named Ignorance, who comes from a place called Conceit. He has come into their path via "a little crooked lane," but he protests that he will be welcomed in the Celestial City because he has led a good life overall. The two attempt to argue with Ignorance, but finding him unwilling to hear what they have to say, they leave him to follow behind. Christian tells Hopeful the story of Little-Faith, who was robbed by a group of thieves but managed to keep the "jewels" of his faith, though reduced to poverty otherwise. The thieves, Christian explains, might have done far worse to Little-Faith had they not fled for fear of Great-Grace, the king's champion.

As they walk, still followed by Ignorance, Christian and Hopeful are accosted by two more tempters. First is the "false apostle" Flatterer, who traps them in a net before they are set free by an unnamed saint or angel. Next is Atheist, who has made it *almost* all the way to the Celestial City before concluding that no such city exists. Finally, the two pilgrims reach the Enchanted Ground, where they struggle to stay awake. To keep from falling asleep and possibly never getting back up, they speak with each other about the circumstances that first led them to become pilgrims. Waiting for Ignorance to catch up, they quiz him about the nature of his faith and find it defective on several points.

Analysis

The fate of Ignorance at the end of Part 1 is a particularly hard pill to swallow compared to the deaths of other minor characters. Like many, though certainly not all, of the other "also-rans" on the pilgrims' road, Ignorance seems truly convinced that he is in the right. Formalist and Hypocrisy in Part 1, Chapter 3 and the doomed miners in Part 1, Chapter 8, never get very far, but Ignorance will make it all the way to the Celestial City only to be rejected. Bunyan does not even make Ignorance a particularly annoying or unpleasant character; in any case, he is not in the same league as the grating Talkative from Part 1, Chapter 5. By having this hapless character join the pilgrims near the end only to fail, Bunyan is setting up his readers for what he sees as a harsh reality, which is that not everyone who considers himself a Christian will be saved. A person can persist in following Christianity to the best of their knowledge and ability and still be denied salvation because they willfully cling to their ignorance that they are not following the true Christian path.

The question of whether or not the ignorant (in this theological sense) will be saved is one that has interested Christian theologians of all eras. Catholic ethics, for instance, make a distinction between *invincible* and *vincible* ignorance: the former is ignorance so profound and irremovable that it prevents a person from being truly guilty for their sins. The archetypical case would be someone who has never even heard of Christianity or of what it teaches. For Bunyan, however, calculations of distinctions of ignorance do not matter much: he confidently declares in Part 1, Chapter 10 that God will not save the ignorant, citing Scripture to defend his position. This unsettling conclusion—that an honest mistake might doom a person to hell—doubtless lent as much fire and urgency to Bunyan's preaching as it did to his writing.

Part 1, Chapter 10

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Summary

Closer than ever to the Celestial City, Christian and Hopeful discuss various theological topics, including the fear of God and the danger of backsliding in one's faith. Christian illustrates the latter with the cautionary tale of a would-be pilgrim named Temporary. At last the two arrive in the beautiful Land of Beulah, their last stopping point before the city. They rest here for a time but then grow eager to resume their journey. Their last and greatest obstacle is the deep, broad River of Life, which surrounds the city on all sides and over which there is no bridge. Wading in, Christian falters and seems nearly to drown, but Hopeful rescues and encourages him multiple times.

When the pilgrims finally make it ashore, they are immediately welcomed into the Celestial City. There, they are adorned with robes and crowns and are given harps to play in praise of the king. They greet, and are greeted by, their fellow citizens: the saints and martyrs who have loved God throughout the ages. Ignorance, meanwhile, is ferried over the river but is rejected by the king because he does not have a certificate proving his right to enter. He is therefore bound hand and foot before being thrown into hell. After this frightening epilogue, Bunyan offers some reflections in rhyme, asking the reader to seek out the "substance" beneath the allegorical exterior of his work.

Analysis

The River of Life is likely in reference to the symbolic drowning of baptism, a submersion often conducted in a river to echo the baptism of Jesus in the Bible as conducted by his cousin, St. John the Baptist, in the Gospels. Different Christian denominations have argued for either infant baptism or adult baptism, but the idea is the same. A person is first born into the world and then is "reborn" as a member of the Christian faith. A complete submersion of the body into the waters of a river can be terrifying, especially if the person doesn't know how to swim. Hopeful, then, is a trustworthy aide to Christian in his effort to reach the Celestial City.

The details of this final chapter are taken wholesale from the Book of Revelation, where the second coming of Christ in glory is prophetically described. The closest and most important parallels come in Revelation 7:10, which describes a great, white-robed multitude assembled before God and praising him in "a loud voice." When John, the prophet witnessing this vision, asks who the multitude are, he learns they are the souls who survived the final trial and have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:14). In other words, these are the elect, the saints and martyrs who have suffered for their faith and have been purified by Jesus's sacrifice—"the blood of the Lamb." Bunyan updates the imagery somewhat by comparing the Celestial City to the court of an early modern European monarch, but the underlying idea of this final chapter is solidly biblical.

Other details, such as the binding and casting away of Ignorance, recall Jesus's teachings about hell and judgment. Perhaps the closest analogy to Ignorance's situation comes in the Gospel of Matthew, where Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven to a royal wedding banquet. In the first part of this parable (Matt 22:1–10), Jesus describes the king's search for guests to come and partake of the feast. When those invited reject his invitation and mistreat his servants, the king punishes them and then summons everyone, "both bad and good," to the feast. At the banquet, however, the king sees a man who is not wearing "a wedding garment" (Matt 22:11)—that is, who is not appropriately dressed for such a celebration. This man, like Ignorance, is seized by the king's servants, bound hand and foot, and "cast ... into outer darkness," where "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt 22:13).

This punishment may seem shockingly severe, given that the crime is essentially a dress code violation. The guest's fate, however, anticipates and underscores Bunyan's point about the necessity of responding to God's call and of preparing oneself. Ignorance's lack of a "certificate" he can show at the gate, like the guest's lack of a "wedding garment," shows a failure to prepare properly. For Bunyan, merely being invited—or even accepting the invitation—is not enough. One must respond to God's call in the proper time and manner, and even seemingly minor failures are enough to jeopardize one's soul.

Part 2, Author's Way of Sending Forth His Second Part of the Pilgrim

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Summary

As with Part 1, John Bunyan begins the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* with a poem, in which he anticipates and answers some possible criticisms. This time, the imagined critics are those who did not like Part 1 or who do not see the need for a Part 2. Bunyan structures most of the poem as a series of "objects" (i.e., objections) and "answers."

The first objection is: How will people know this is an authentic sequel, since so many counterfeited books get published? Bunyan's answer is that he will testify on the book's behalf if people doubt its authenticity. Objection number two is: What about all the people who hated Part 1? Here, Bunyan engages in a bit of self-promotion by answering that his first book has been extremely well received among men, women, and children, both in Europe and in America. Thus, those with a bad opinion of Part 1 are a small minority.

A third objection is related to the second: some people say Bunyan's method of storytelling is too "dark" (i.e., obscure). Bunyan defends his use of allegory the same way he did at the beginning of Part 1. "Similes" and "similitudes," he argues, are an appropriate tools for religious literature because they capture people's attention and imaginations in a way that dry, nonfiction prose cannot. The final objection—that *The Pilgrim's Progress* is unserious "romance" literature—is answered with the written equivalent of a shrug: there's no accounting for taste, Bunyan admits. The poem closes with a short overview of the plot and characters of Part 2, which concerns the pilgrimage of Christian's wife, Christiana, and their children.

Analysis

Bunyan's apparent paranoia about counterfeit *Pilgrims* is, historically speaking, quite understandable. There were not any legal safeguards against copyright infractions in England until 1844, although the United States had enacted legislation in 1790. *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part 1 was a tremendous success, running to eight editions during its first four years in print (1678–82). No wonder, then, that some enterprising but unscrupulous writers set about writing their own unofficial sequels that were fraudulently marketed under Bunyan's name. The most important of these spurious works—the 1682 *Second Part*—was, however, never explicitly described as Bunyan's: it is left to a careful reader to deduce that Bunyan's work has been continued by another. The author of this *Second Part*, thought to be the Baptist Thomas Sheridan, appreciated the popular appeal of Bunyan's allegory but evidently disagreed with him on some theological points, which he therefore attempted to correct in a "Supplyment" or sequel. Many other Christian writers through the ages have taken a similar tack, preserving the general outline of *The Pilgrim's Progress* while conforming its contents to their specific beliefs.

Despite Bunyan's protestations, the parade of false sequels did not stop when the authentic Part 2 was published in 1684. An anonymous *Third Part* appeared in 1693, five years after Bunyan's death, with a new protagonist named Tender-Conscience tracing a similar route to that taken by Christian and Christiana. The authenticity of this work was questioned as early as 1708, and a 21st-century reader will quickly find that the style differs noticeably from Bunyan's. If early modern readers shared these doubts, however, they were evidently either ignored or suppressed: the *Third Part* continued to be printed alongside the authentic Parts 1 and 2 until 1852.

Part 2, Pilgrimage of Christiana and Her Children

Summary

John Bunyan frames Part 2 as a second dream vision, experienced under similar circumstances to Part 1, but years later. Awaking in the dream world, Bunyan meets Mr. Sagacity, who tells him that Christian is now highly thought of in the City of Destruction, though few wish to follow his example. Sagacity also reports that Christiana, Christian's wife, left on a pilgrimage of her own with her four sons. At this point Sagacity essentially drops out of the story, leaving Bunyan to narrate the remainder of the dream.

Christiana's pilgrimage begins much like her husband's, with a conviction that she is living a sinful life and a desire to change. She is greeted one day by a man named Secret, who bears a summons from the king of the Celestial City. Once she explains this to her sons, they are eager to go along, but the family is interrupted by a visit from neighbors Mrs. Timorous and Mercy. Mrs. Timorous tries to get Christiana to give up her travel plans, but Mercy, a compassionate young woman, insists

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on going with Christiana at least part of the way. As the pilgrims, now six in number, set out, Mrs. Timorous goes home to gossip about them with her worldly friends.

Analysis

Bunyan's allusion to two different "dream" episodes may reflect the two different periods of imprisonment he suffered, one long (1661–72) and the other relatively short (1676–77). In Part 1, Bunyan made the connection explicit via a marginal note, describing the "den" in which he lay down to sleep as a jail. No such direct comparison is made in Part 2. Instead, Bunyan elliptically says that he has "had some concerns" (i.e., business to tend to) in the place he visited in Part 1. In any case it is true that neither part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* was published until after Bunyan's second and final release from prison.

Mr. Sagacity, who initially seems like an important figure, is really just a framing device who will be quickly and quietly abandoned. He serves both to introduce Part 2 and to give Bunyan an excuse to recap the events of Part 1, under the guise of asking what happened to Christian. The real one to watch here—the protagonist of Part 2—is Christiana, whose remorse over failing to follow her husband is cured when she begins her own belated pilgrimage. The role of the wife and mother in the early 17th-century England and the Americas among European immigrants was strictly maintained as subordinate to her husband, whose "patriarchal role as governor ... was ... instituted by God and nature." Faced with the example of her husband having achieved entry into the Celestial City, Christiana, as a good wife, saw her failure to accompany him as a grave error and sought to rectify it by following him. Mercy, who is introduced as if she were a minor character, will become, in effect, Christiana's sidekick and play a major role in the remaining chapters. Since such feminine qualities as mercy, compassion, and modesty were considered appropriate to women, it is appropriate that mercy should appear as a woman. Congregations of Protestants made distinct separations of gender in all facets of life. The small group of Shakers, also called the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing founded in England in 1747, for example, entirely separates men and women from any and all contact with one another, and membership in the Church is achieved by conversion only.

Part 2, Chapter 1

Summary

Christiana, her sons, and Mercy set out from the City of Destruction. Mercy says she would gladly go along for the entire trip if she thought she would be admitted at the Celestial City, and Christiana encourages her to trust in the merciful nature of the city's king. Mercy remains doubtful but agrees to go as far as the Wicket-Gate, where Christiana will speak to the gatekeeper on Mercy's behalf.

The pilgrims arrive at the Slough of Despond and find it even worse than when Christian passed through, but they step carefully and manage to get over without falling in. They make their way to the Wicket-Gate, and Christiana knocks for admittance. Hearing the menacing bark of a dog, they are briefly paralyzed with fear, but they knock even more energetically in the hope of escaping through the gate.

The gatekeeper admits Christiana and her children, though Mercy lingers outside, fearful of being rejected. Eventually, Mercy works up the courage to knock, but by the time the gate is opened again she has fainted. Reviving, she is overjoyed and relieved to be brought safely inside. The gatekeeper explains that the dog they heard is kept by the devil for the purpose of scaring off pilgrims.

Analysis

Mercy's doubts about her salvation form part of an important recurring theme in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. For Bunyan, those who are most anxious about the state of their souls are, in fact, the most likely to be saved. This idea is voiced in Part 1, Chapter 10, where Hopeful reassures Christian that his fears at the point of death are actually a *good* sign: only the foolish and the damned, he suggests, can go to their deaths easily.

Part 2 makes a similar point regarding Mercy's anxiety about whether she will be saved. Her soul would be in more danger, Bunyan implies, if she were *not* continually asking this question. Christiana's son James will put it concisely in Part 2, Chapter 6: "No fears, no grace," though he proceeds to explain that fear itself does not necessarily indicate divine favor.

Moreover, Bunyan draws a line between a healthy, pious fear

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and a morbid, paralyzing dread, though he makes it clear that the latter is still preferable to foolish overconfidence. James's remark follows the account of Mr. Fearing, whose entire pilgrimage is made unnecessarily difficult by his inability to trust in God's loving kindness. Mercy will, understandably, recognize something of herself in this character, who serves almost as a parody of her own timidity. Mercy might also be inclined to be especially fearful of attack by a dog, which shows no mercy to any stranger as the traditional guardian of property. This might be all the more true in Bunyan's time, since the risk of rabies as a result of being bitten by an infected dog was an additional threat.

Part 2, Chapter 2

Summary

The pilgrims now continue beyond the Wicket-Gate. Christiana's sons pluck fruit from a tree whose branches overhang the wall, unaware that the tree is planted in the garden of "the enemy" (the devil). Two ugly ("ill-favored") men come down the road and attempt to assault Christiana and Mercy, but the women's shouts attract a Reliever, who drives the men off. This man asks why the women did not ask the gatekeeper for a guide to protect them. Christiana explains that they were so happy with the "blessing" of being let in the gate that they forgot about the "dangers" that might await them inside. Christiana tells of having dreamed of the ill-favored ones' assault and chides herself for failing to prevent it.

Soon, the group reaches the Interpreter's house, where all are overjoyed that Christiana has "turned Pilgrim." The Interpreter shows Christiana and company the various allegorical scenes he showed to Christian in Part 1. He then takes them into a room with a man who, busily raking straw and dust, cannot see the crown that dangles above his head. This, Christiana surmises, is a "man of the world," too bent on earthly things to contemplate heavenly ones. The next room is empty except for a spider clinging to the wall, emblematic of the way in which sinners must "take hold" of faith. Out in the yard various plant and animal images are presented: a hen's different calls, for instance, represent the different ways in which God calls his people.

At supper the pilgrims are entertained with music, and the Interpreter asks Christiana about her travels so far. Mercy tells of her last-minute invitation to join Christiana, and the Interpreter commends her courage. In the morning the pilgrims bathe and are given new white garments, and a seal is placed on their foreheads as a final adornment.

Analysis

"Ask and you shall receive," Jesus famously declares in the Gospel of Matthew 7:7. Here, and throughout the remainder of Part 2, Bunyan sets out to explain the necessity and benefit of asking for God's help. When the Reliever comes to the pilgrims' rescue, he explains that they might have had a protector from the get-go if they had thought to ask for one. They respond, naturally enough, by asking why God did not provide a protector in advance if he knew that there would be trouble—and if he knew they would forget to ask.

The chicken reference is interesting in that one of the symbols of a call to the spiritual life in the Bible is the crowing of a rooster first thing in the morning well before the sun rises. However, since Christiana is a woman, it may have been inappropriate to refer to a rooster, so Bunyan brings in a hen instead. As is observed by anyone who has kept chickens, it is the rooster who marshals the hens, summons them to eat first thing in the morning, drives them into the roost at night, or leads them to safety when threatened by a predator. Bunyan may have used the hen here by way of illustrating that Christiana's husband has gone before, and is now, like the rooster to his hens, calling her to follow to safety.

Reliever's answer is illuminating: when God bestows favors without asking, those favors are often underrated or taken for granted. That is, God does not have to wait for a person to pray before granting blessings, but there is value for the believer in having to pray before blessings are received. This message will take a while to sink in for Christiana and Mercy, not just because they are forgetful, but because they will be afraid to ask for too much. The second lesson here, one learned in later chapters, is that there is no "too much" where prayer is concerned.

The bath that the pilgrims take before setting out has baptismal connotations, but it should be noted that Separatists, unlike some other English nonconformists, practiced infant baptism. Thus, the symbolism here should not be taken too

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precisely. Instead, the bath can be seen as a more general metaphor for the purification that one must undergo before setting out toward heaven. The seal and white garments the pilgrims then receive are, though described as beautiful, a somewhat ominous touch. The gesture of sealing hearkens back to the Book of Revelation, where God commands his angels to seal the foreheads of the saved before proceeding to bring about the apocalypse (7:2–8). Those sealed are then "clothed with white robes" (7:9) and proceed to take their places before the throne of God as the world is destroyed by fire, flood, and earthquake.

Part 2, Chapter 3

Summary

As the pilgrims prepare to resume their journey, the Interpreter appoints his servant Great-Heart to be their guide to their next waystation, Palace Beautiful. As the group pass by the cross where Christian's burden fell off in Part 1, Great-Heart leads a discussion on the nature of justification and righteousness. Affected by the thought of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, Christiana wishes that her neighbors back in the City of Destruction would undergo their own change of heart.

Continuing down the road, they see three hanged men. These are Simple, Sloth, and Presumption from Part 1, Chapter 3, now duly punished for dissuading pilgrims from their quest. Next comes Hill Difficulty, at the foot of which are the two deadly paths once taken by Formalist and Hypocrisy. After some remarks on the danger of taking "by-ways" to salvation, the group climb the hill, albeit slowly and laboriously. They make a brief stop for rest at the arbor midway up the hill where Christian fell asleep and lost his scroll.

Analysis

Christiana's concern for her neighbors illustrates her kindheartedness, but it also shows a degree of spiritual immaturity. On the one hand it is laudable of her to wish that her worldly neighbors would experience a change of heart and be saved rather than perish in flames with the other denizens of Destruction. On the other hand she is naive in thinking that her neighbors would become devout Christians if only they saw what she has seen. After all, so many other pilgrims have made their way through the gate and past the cross, only to lose sight of their goal and fall prey to greed, carelessness, or some other vice.

In inviting the reader to think about Mrs. Timorous and the rest of Christiana's neighbors back home, Bunyan is revisiting a topic from the end of Part 1: "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt 22:14). Although Bunyan does not here go into the factors that make one person—Christiana—respond to God's call and others—Mrs. Timorous and company—stay behind, the point remains that not everyone will follow the pilgrim's path, even if invited. She does, however, have one clear advantage over her neighbors relative to the hope of success, and that is that her good husband, Christian, has gone before her and provided her and their children with his own example.

Part 2, Chapter 4

Summary

Great-Heart politely urges the pilgrims onward, so they continue uphill toward Palace Beautiful. The two lions from Part 1 are now accompanied by a giant called Grim or Bloody-man. Great-Heart fights and slays Grim, and the pilgrims pass by the two chained lions without further trouble. With night coming on, they reach the palace door, and Great-Heart takes his leave for now. The porter, Watchful, comes out to greet them, as do the damsels who live in the palace.

That night Christiana and Mercy converse about their journey and resolve to stay at Palace Beautiful a while if invited. In the morning Prudence—one of the damsels—catechizes Christiana's four sons; that is, she quizzes them on their religious knowledge. The boys answer questions about God and humankind, sin and redemption, heaven and hell. Days pass, and Mercy is briefly visited by a suitor named Mr. Brisk, who gives up when he learns that she makes handicrafts to help the poor rather than for profit.

Matthew, Christiana's eldest son, now grows sick because of the forbidden fruit he ate just after coming through the Wicket-Gate. The physician Mr. Skill is summoned and gives Matthew a purgative made "*ex carne et sanguine Christi*" (from the flesh and blood of Christ). Taking this medication according to the

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doctor's orders, Matthew soon recovers. The boys question Prudence about the spiritual meaning of various natural phenomena. Christiana, like her husband before her in Part 1, Chapter 3, is shown various biblical wonders, including the apples from the Garden of Eden. Great-Heart arrives, to the surprise of the pilgrims, and announces that he will guide them the rest of the way to the Celestial City.

Analysis

This chapter presents, first and foremost, a continuation of the "ask and receive" idea from Part 2, Chapter 3. Leaving the house of the Interpreter, the pilgrims are so thrilled to have Great-Heart as a protector that they repeat their mistake from the Wicket-Gate: they do not think ahead to the dangers they may face after he is gone. When he leaves them at the Palace Beautiful, they realize their error and ask him to continue further with them. Their request, really a prayer, seems to come too late, as Great-Heart is bound by duty to return to the Interpreter. Yet the fact that their prayer is not answered immediately does not mean that it goes unheard: Great-Heart comes back to lead them when they no longer expect him to.

Mr. Skill's prescription—which, unusually for *The Pilgrim's Progress*, includes a Latin phrase—is a direct reference to the Lord's Supper, at which Jesus instituted the Eucharist. The fact that Christ's body and blood are administered to cure illnesses may seem to suggest that, for Bunyan, the Eucharist had miraculous powers. Here, it has to be kept in mind that *The Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory. Separatists like Bunyan, along with their theological allies the Puritans, did not believe in transubstantiation, as Catholics do, or in the power of the Eucharist to expiate sins. Rather, they viewed the Lord's Supper as essentially a renewal of the participants' bond to Christ and to each other. Participants were spiritually strengthened and nourished, but only if they took part with a pure and carefully examined conscience. Hence, perhaps, Mr. Skill's insistence on taking the medicine exactly as prescribed.

Part 2, Chapter 5

Summary

Amid sunshine and birdsong, the pilgrims set out once more. They carefully make their way down into the Valley of Humiliation, which they find much more pleasant than Christian did. A shepherd boy alongside the path breaks into song, extolling the virtues of the simple life. Great-Heart explains that Jesus was also very fond of the Valley of Humiliation and once kept a "country-house" here. The pilgrims pass by the place where Christian fought with the demon Apollyon and behold the marks left by the battle on the landscape.

Next comes the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Here, earthquakes and strange sounds frighten the travelers, especially James, the youngest. Darkness falls, and the group prays for deliverance. Soon the darkness is lifted, but snares and pits make for rough going right up to the end of the valley. Just as they are about to emerge, they are accosted by a giant named Maul, who calls Great-Heart a kidnapper and challenges him to a fight. The ensuing battle is drawn-out and dramatic, but Great-Heart prevails and beheads the giant. The women and children celebrate as Maul's head is fastened on to a pillar as a warning.

Analysis

The word *humiliation* in modern English has a meaning akin to extreme embarrassment or shame. In Bunyan's time it meant something more like "humility," which is why Great-Heart can speak of so many people living contentedly in the Valley of Humiliation. These people, including the singing shepherd boy, chose the secure blessings of a simple life over the precarious gifts of worldly power and status. Reading "humility" for "humiliation" also helps to explain why Christ would have a "country-house" (but not his main residence) in this valley. The Incarnation—God becoming human—was a profound act of self-humbling; thus, figuratively speaking, Jesus during his time on earth took up residence in the valley.

In the next valley Bunyan introduces a third giant at the cave previously occupied by Pope and Pagan. Maul represents a different, more insidious kind of threat than the doctrines of other religions (Pagan) or of Catholicism (Pope). He is a sophist, using high-sounding philosophical argument to trap pilgrims and dissuade them from their faith. By positioning Maul here, Bunyan suggests that sophistry is a modern

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"successor" to paganism and Catholicism—a new but no less deadly allurement away from the true path.

Part 2, Chapter 6

Summary

Emerging from the Valley of the Shadow of Death, Christiana and company pause to rest. They spy an old pilgrim sleeping under a tree nearby and decide to wake him up. The old man, whose name is Honest, is initially annoyed but soon agrees to join the party, which now resumes its journey. He and Great-Heart talk awhile about other pilgrims they have known, including Mr. Fearing, whose journey was constantly hampered by his doubts about his own salvation. Mercy, Christiana, and the boys are edified to hear of Fearing's safe arrival at the Celestial City in spite of his fears. Another pilgrim, called Self-will, is discussed as a counterpoint to Fearing. Self-will, Great-Heart says, was excessively self-assured and embraced his sins when he should have rejected them.

Christiana, growing tired, wishes for an inn, and Honest directs her to a nearby one. They are greeted heartily by their host, Gaius, who tells them of the noble line of martyrs from whom Christian is descended. Gaius urges Christiana to find wives for her sons to perpetuate that line. In all, the pilgrims spend a month at Gaius's house, during which time Matthew and Mercy are married. During their stay, Great-Heart leads an expedition to kill the giant Slay-good and rescue his prisoner, a pilgrim named Feeble-mind. Because he is weak and sickly, Feeble-mind worries he will be a burden to the pilgrims, but just as they are about to resume their journey, they meet a man named Ready-to-halt, who walks with the aid of crutches. Able to keep pace with each other, these two men become friends.

The next stop is the town of Vanity, where Christian was imprisoned and Faithful was killed in Part 1. Here, the pilgrims stay with Mnason, one of the few truly good people in the otherwise amoral town. Mnason summons several friends to visit the pilgrims, who are given a chance to recount the story thus far. Great-Heart, having gone almost 10 pages without drawing his sword, leads the townsmen on the hunt for a creature that has been capturing local pilgrims. They succeed in wounding and driving off the unnamed monster.

Analysis

The story of Mr. Fearing serves as a natural conclusion to a thematic thread begun much earlier in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. At the beginning of Part 2—and even briefly at the end of Part 1—John Bunyan develops the idea that it is healthy to fear God and, consequently, to fear for the salvation of one's soul. Among the major characters, no one exemplifies this pious fear more than Mercy, who in Part 2, Chapter 1 is afraid even to go on the pilgrimage because she worries she will be rejected. Mercy becomes, among her many other roles, the embodiment of a largely appropriate, in Bunyan's eyes, level of caution and trepidation. At the same time she is also held back by fear from seeing some of the blessings that God would otherwise bestow on her. She nearly fails to knock at the Wicket-Gate, for example, because she is afraid she will not be admitted.

In Fearing, however, Bunyan presents the idea of a holy fear carried to extremes. Fearing responds to every event along the pilgrim's way in terms of how it plays upon his fears—how it either aggravates or assuages them. He gets to the Celestial City at last, but with much more grief and anxiety than are necessary. Moreover, his fears make him a burden to other pilgrims. Compared to Fearing, Mercy seems quite reasonable, a fact she seems to acknowledge as she listens to and comments upon his tale.

The names Gaius and Mnason both come from the New Testament. There, as here, the two men are emblematic of hospitality, in particular, hospitality toward Christians. Gaius is mentioned in the letters of Paul, both 1 Corinthians 1 and Romans 16, as a man who helped to found the Church in Corinth and who hosted Paul when he stayed in that city. His role as innkeeper here is in keeping with his biblical status as a patron or "host" of early Church meetings. The early disciple and Christian convert Mnason appears briefly in the Acts of the Apostles. There, he is described as extending hospitality to Christians traveling to Jerusalem from Caesarea.

Part 2, Chapter 7

Summary

The pilgrims pass through and beyond the town of Vanity, past the silver mine of Demas, and through a green pasture where

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sheep graze. When they reach the By-path Meadow, Great-Heart and Honest, together with Christiana's sons, decide to destroy Doubting Castle and kill its master, Giant Despair. They succeed, freeing the captive pilgrims Despondency and Much-Afraid in the process. These "honest people" thank their liberators and accompany them back to the womenfolk, who have been left in the road. Music and dancing ensue.

The party's next stop is the Delectable Mountains, where they are greeted by the same shepherds who welcomed Christian in Part 1, Chapter 8. After a meal and a rest, the shepherds show the pilgrims some suitably allegorical wonders, including Godly-man, whose clothes remain clean no matter how much dirt is thrown at him by Prejudice and Ill-will. The pilgrims also glimpse the horrifying By-way to Hell, with its smoke and shouts of torment. Mercy is given a magical mirror ("the word of God," Bunyan clarifies in a note) that, held at a particular angle, allows her to see Jesus. The shepherds bestow a further gift of jewelry on the women, and the pilgrims go singing on their way.

Analysis

In light of Bunyan's Puritan sympathies, the celebratory scene after Giant Despair is slain deserves some comment. This is not the first time that music or dancing is seen in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, but it is the most conspicuous. Christiana plays the viol, a kind of precursor to the violin, and Mercy accompanies her on the lute, a plucked-string instrument. More important than the instrumentation here is the fact that Bunyan finds nothing unseemly in singing and playing after liberation from a great evil. Moreover, he sees nothing indecent about near-strangers such as Ready-to-halt and Much-Afraid dancing together.

This is just one way in which *The Pilgrim's Process* complicates the traditional and highly unflattering picture of the Puritans and, by extension, their Separatist brethren. Bunyan, himself, in earlier life shunned such pastimes as dancing, and a few of his pilgrims follow suit. Yet music and dancing, along with feasting and drinking, are not categorically forbidden and are in fact even presented in a positive light, here and elsewhere. To the extent that Bunyan's work can be taken as representative of Puritan attitudes, the prudish "fun police" stereotype doesn't hold much water.

The Delectable Mountains function, as they did in Part 1, as a sign that the narrative is drawing toward its close. The pilgrims have gotten accustomed to the rigors of travel, but they are about to enter the most hazardous part of their journey. Resting and refreshing themselves with the shepherds will allow them to cross the Enchanted Ground without succumbing to weariness.

Part 2, Chapter 8

Summary

Leaving the Delectable Mountains, the pilgrims meet a man with his sword drawn and his face bloodied. This is Valiant-for-truth, who was assaulted by a trio of robbers but managed to hold them off until they were forced to flee. The party tend to Valiant's wounds and invite him to join them. He accepts, and, as they continue walking, he tells them of his upbringing in Dark-land and of his eventual calling to go on pilgrimage. No tale of woe or threat of danger, he says, could dissuade him from setting out for the Celestial City.

Next, the pilgrims reach the Enchanted Ground, "where the air naturally [tends] to make one drowsy." Despite the arduousness of the path, none of them give in to the temptation to lie down, knowing they may not wake up if they do. They pass by two sleeping men, one of whom is Too-bold, who were less careful and who now appear doomed to sleep forever. As they are about to leave the ground and enter the Land of Beulah, they encounter another pilgrim praying upon his knees. This is Standfast, who moments before was delivered from the allurements of a dangerous temptress called Madam Bubble. He is on his knees because he was offering thanks to God.

Now free of the Enchanted Ground, the pilgrims arrive in the Land of Beulah, where they are welcomed as Christian was before them. Waiting for their appointed time, they one by one receive summons to cross over the River of Life to the Celestial City. Christiana goes first, after bequeathing her earthly possessions to her fellow pilgrims and saying goodbye to her children. Ready-to-halt is summoned next, then Feeble-mind, then Despondency and Much-Afraid at the same time. Honest follows, then Valiant-for-truth, and finally Standfast, leaving Christiana's sons to follow someday.

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Analysis

The name *Beulah*, here used for a land of abundance and ease, originally appears as a synonym for Jerusalem in the biblical Book of Isaiah. This prophetic book has a broad narrative arc of exile and redemption, similar in some respects to the journeys described in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The book of the prophet Isaiah in the Hebrew Bible speaks primarily of the fate of the Israelites during the Babylonian captivity, construed as a punishment for straying from God. About midway through the book, however, the tone of lament and recrimination gives way to hope for a renewal of God's favor.

In Isaiah 62:4, where the name *Beulah* is used, the prophet predicts a radical reversal of fortunes for the then-captive Israelites. Once called Forsaken, they shall now be called Hephzibah ("My Delight Is in Her"), and their land, once called Desolate, will be renamed Beulah ("Married"). The marital imagery continues a longstanding trope in which God presents himself as a bridegroom who is loving and faithful toward his people. Present throughout the Hebrew Bible, not just in Isaiah, this conceit of God's betrothal or marriage to his people recurs in the New Testament as well.

All of this, in turn, fits with the way Beulah is used in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, both at the end of Part 1 and here at the end of Part 2. In both parts of Bunyan's work, Beulah is depicted as the land nearest to the Celestial City, that is, the closest one can get to heaven in this earthly life. It is thus a fitting place for God's chosen people—a label Bunyan, like many of his time, attaches to the Christian elect. Like the Israelites of old, Bunyan seems to say here that the Christians have a special relationship to God: a betrothal, accompanied by abundant blessings.

Quotes

> *"Dark clouds bring waters, when the bright bring none."*

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

In the opening poem of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan is eager to defend his decision to write and publish a religious allegory. Here, he offers a metaphor to explain why a "dark" (i.e., obscure) way of writing may nonetheless be fruitful for the reader. Sometimes, he asserts, good things—like rainwater—come from a source that does not appear outwardly promising—like dark clouds.

> *"What shall I do to be saved?"*

— Christian, Part 1, Chapter 1

Christian begins *The Pilgrim's Progress* in a state of great distress because he has learned that his hometown, the City of Destruction, will be destroyed by fire. Within the context of the book, Christian's outcry, "What shall I do to be saved?" is a response to the looming physical threat of a fiery death. The line is originally a verse from the Acts of the Apostles, where it refers to salvation of the soul rather than of the body. The answer given there is to believe in Jesus (Acts 16:31). Cultivating this faith and answering its demands is the main challenge of Christian's subsequent pilgrimage.

> *"Knock and it shall be opened unto you."*

— John Bunyan, Part 1, Chapter 2

This phrase, inscribed on the Wicket-Gate, comes from the Sermon on the Mount, the longest single discourse given by Jesus in the Bible. The verse immediately following reads: "For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:8). Bunyan follows the mainstream interpretation of these verses as metaphors for persistent prayer. Christian, and later his wife, Christiana, knock repeatedly at the gate (i.e., pray fervently to God) and are admitted (i.e., saved).

> *"Though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."*

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— Unidentified voice, Part 1, Chapter 4

As Christian walks through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, he hears a voice ahead of him uttering a prayer of trust in God's protection. The prayer, like the whole concept of the "Valley of the Shadow of Death," is taken from Psalm 23, one of the best-known passages in the Hebrew Bible. The psalm, read in full, expresses a blissful confidence that God will provide and protect; there, the valley is a single dark spot (Verse 4) in an otherwise brightly reassuring poem.

> *"For there is a knowledge that is not attended with doing: "He that knoweth his Master's will, and doeth it not.""*

— Faithful, Part 1, Chapter 6

Here, Faithful chides Talkative by pointing out the distinction made in the Bible between knowledge of what is good and actual obedience to God's will. This paves the way for a larger discussion of the role of faith and good works, both of which Bunyan construes as necessary for salvation.

> *"Let us be wise as serpents."*

— Mr. Hold-the-world, Part 1, Chapter 7

This advice is, in itself, not as sinister as it might sound; in fact, it has a biblical precedent. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus enjoins his disciples to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt 10:16) in the face of the coming persecution. What makes Mr. Hold-the-world's advice poisonous is that he takes Jesus's injunction out of context and applies it in a self-serving manner. He is happy to be "wise as serpents" in saving himself from hardship, but he is unwilling to embrace the other, more self-sacrificial aspects of Christian living.

> *"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool."*

— Christian, Part 1, Chapter 9

Here, Christian is quoting from the Book of Proverbs (28:26). The immediate context of his remark is a debate with Ignorance, who trusts that he has done enough to secure a place in the Celestial City. To Christian, this is dubious reasoning because people are quite capable of deluding themselves with false reassurances.

> *"Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."*

— Chorus of Saints, Part 1, Chapter 10

This text comes from Chapter 5 of the Book of Revelation, the biblical prophetic narrative of the apocalypse and final judgment. There, the phrase is uttered by the multitude of saints saved by God from the wrath of the final days. Here, it underscores the Celestial City's status as a representation of heaven. Populated by the faithful, it is a place protected by God's power from the evils encountered on earth.

> *"The bitter is before the sweet."*

— Christiana, Part 2, Pilgrimage of Christiana and Her Children

Christiana hears this phrase from the visitor who brings her an invitation to the Celestial City. She repeats it to her doubting neighbors as a defense against their attempts to dissuade her from her pilgrimage. It may be true, she reasons, that a pilgrim's path is a bitter one, but the bitterness is, for Bunyan, a necessary prelude to future joys.

> *"God speaks once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not."*

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— Christiana, Part 2, Chapter 4

Here, Christiana is attempting to reassure Mercy, who continues to harbor some doubts about her salvation. Mercy has had a wonderful dream in which she was welcomed into the Celestial City, and she shares it with Christiana, evidently unsure of whether it should be seen as a sign. Christiana quotes Scripture—specifically, the Book of Job—to argue that God does "speak" to people in their dreams.

> *"He that is down, needs fear no fall; he that is low, no pride."*

— Shepherd boy, Part 2, Chapter 5

This comes from one of the many spontaneous songs into which the characters of *The Pilgrim's Progress* tend to break. The singer, a humble shepherd boy, is extolling the virtues of a simple life. Those who have little, he declares, have little to fear.

> *"The heart knoweth its own bitterness; and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy."*

— Christiana, Part 2, Chapter 5

This is another quotation from the biblical book of Proverbs (14:10). Here, Christiana is reflecting on the fact that she only now can understand the suffering her husband went through on his pilgrimage. There are limits to human empathy, she affirms, to the ability of one "heart" to appreciate the joys and sorrows of another.

> *"This I have resolved on ... to run when I can, to go when I cannot run, and to creep when I cannot go."*

— Feeble-mind, Part 2, Chapter 6

Feeble-mind's resolution here is essentially to keep moving forward on his pilgrimage as fast as he is able. (To "go," in this 17th-century sense, is to "walk.") Bunyan adds a marginal note—"Mark this"—in the original text to show that he thinks Feeble-mind's example is especially noteworthy.

> *"He that watereth, shall be watered himself."*

— Shepherds, Part 2, Chapter 7

In the Delectable Mountains, the shepherds show Christiana and her party several wonders with spiritual meaning. One of these is a man who cuts garments for the poor out of a magically endless roll of cloth. The moral: God will provide for those who give to the poor.

> *"For he that goeth away in a sleep, begins that journey with desire and pleasure."*

— Standfast, Part 2, Chapter 8

In this quotation, Standfast explains the meaning of the Enchanted Ground, which makes those passing through extremely drowsy. The Ground, as he explains it, represents all those worldly temptations that are not outwardly evil, but pleasant and innocent seeming. One can drift off into such temptations, to the detriment of one's soul, without even realizing that one is going to "sleep."

Symbols

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Two Cities

The settings of *The Pilgrim's Progress* are diverse, ranging from smoke-filled chasms to bucolic hillsides. Most of these places are fairly simple and self-explanatory in their allegorical implications. The Slough of Despond, for example, is a treacherous bog land, as difficult to escape from as despondency itself. Two cities, however, stand out as the "anchors" of Christian's journey—the ends, so to speak, of the moral tightrope he must walk to secure his place among the blessed. These are the City of Destruction, which symbolizes all that is alluring about earthly life, and the Celestial City, which is a lavish allegorical depiction of heaven. In Part 1 Christian struggles to escape the former, wends his way through the varied country described above, and at last arrives safely in the latter. Christiana in Part 2 repeats her husband's journey, and her narrative adds detail to the description of both places while reaffirming their centrality to Bunyan's allegory.

Christian (also known as Graceless) starts his journey in the City of Destruction, his hometown. There, he lives a life of unthinking sinfulness alongside neighbors with such names as Lechery and Obstinate. Even after he is convinced the city will be destroyed, he is hard-pressed to find somewhere else to go, in part because he does not *know* there is another place to go. Christiana and her children in Part 2 have the benefit of knowing, through rumors, of the Celestial City's existence. They realize there is another, even better, place for them, but they are put off by the many dangers and inconveniences of traveling from one city to another. For them the extent of the difference between the two cities seems to get lost in translation so that it is hard for them to appreciate why the journey is worth the hassle.

Moreover, the City of Destruction is not described as an outwardly hellish place. Rather, Bunyan paints it as a pleasant if mundane city in which his typically middle-class characters can enjoy the good things of this world in relative comfort. The problem with the City of Destruction, as Bunyan portrays it, is that the citizens fall into the trap of thinking they can live there forever—that earthly life is all there is, and their sins are of no consequence. This is not to say that Bunyan's characters are atheists except, of course, for the character who is actually named "Atheist." Rather, they are Christians who procrastinate, putting off the painful but necessary journey that leads to heaven. They want one more dance, one more drink, one more day of unrepentance before they are ready to mend their ways.

The Celestial City is the opposite of the City of Destruction. It is everlasting, whereas the latter is doomed to perish in flames. It is beautiful, not in a mundane, "postcard" way but in a way that defies Bunyan's ability to describe. Everything in the Celestial City takes place on a grand scale and is saturated with light and music, opulence and ceremony. Such description as Bunyan provides follows directly from biblical precedent: the Book of Revelation speaks of "the holy city," the "new Jerusalem" (Rev 21:2) as the final dwelling place of God and his people. This city is lit from within, so that night and day are indistinguishable; it is made of a material that resembles both "pure gold" and "clear glass" and is "garnished" with precious stones of all sorts (21:18–19). In his own description, Bunyan combines the accretion of wondrous details à la Revelation with the idea of an earthly king's court. The Celestial City is, he affirms, like the best possible version of an earthly city, and life there is the best possible version of life in the service of a human monarch.

Crown of Righteousness

Clothing is another area in which *The Pilgrim's Progress* offers great symbolic variety, from the armor of faith to the rags that Christian casts off to be clothed anew. Within the book's metaphorical wardrobe, however, no single item gets as much attention as the crown. Early on, Christian is shown an allegorical painting in which a long-suffering saint is about to receive a golden crown as a divine reward for his perseverance. Later, Christian and his fellow pilgrims are promised crowns of their own once they reach the Celestial City. The crowns are mentioned again at particularly tough points in the pilgrims' journey, as if to evoke an "eyes-on-the-prize" mentality among the believers. In the closing pomp and circumstance of Part 1, Christian indeed receives a crown of gold adorned with pearls, which are commonly used to symbolize purity. The "shining ones" (saints) in the city wear similar crowns, suggesting that this is the common reward for righteousness in life.

Many elements of Bunyan's crown symbolism—the crown as ultimate prize, the injunction to persevere, and so forth—can be traced back directly to the New Testament letters of Peter,

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James, and Paul and to the Book of Revelation. The latter is the Bible's most detailed description of the end times and is even more richly—and bewilderingly—allegorical than Bunyan's writings. In Revelation 1, Jesus appears in glory to judge the living and the dead. In Revelation 2, he sends messages to various early Christian churches, promising one group of believers that if they are "faithful unto death" he will give them "a crown of life" (Rev 2:10). Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians uses fundamentally similar language in Chapter 9, Verse 25.

Although the crown is a traditional symbol of power and dominion, neither the Bible nor *The Pilgrim's Progress* use it to mean that the righteous are rulers in their own right. Rather, they are participants in the Kingdom of God, crowned not so much because they are the masters of themselves as because they have accepted his mastery over them. It's worth noting in this connection that the "crown" (from the Greek *stephanos*) of which the New Testament epistles (letters to early believers) speak can also in many cases be interpreted as the wreath of victory placed on the heads of the winners of ancient Greek athletic contests. Thus, for the writers of these letters the crown may be a prize for "leaving it all on the field" through self-denial or even martyrdom. Bunyan chooses to depict a metallic crown of the type worn by European monarchs, not a wreath of leaves, but it is safe to say that he envisions this crown more as a symbolic reward than as a conferral of authority.

Themes

Path to Salvation

Throughout *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian is engaged in an ongoing process of spiritual discernment. Specifically, he learns through his trials to distinguish the heart of Christian life from the many things that are inessential or even detrimental to salvation. In the beginning, he carries a great many mistaken notions about what is necessary for him to be saved; his encounters throughout his pilgrimage pluck these misconceptions away like leaves from an artichoke. Mere piety, he discovers, is insufficient, as is the cultivation of personal virtue. No model of right living—being civil to one's neighbors, obeying the law, or striving to be a moral person—is adequate without divine grace.

In dramatizing this process of discovery, John Bunyan (1628–88), a Separatist, is weighing in on a longstanding dispute about a question first posed in the Acts of the Apostles: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). The answer given in Acts is simple: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (16:31). However, the exact role of faith in salvation has been debated much more intensely through the centuries than this answer might seem to imply. The Catholic position (and thus the position of *the* Church in the medieval West) is that both faith and good works are necessary: the works demonstrate, or prove, the person's faith. This position was attacked as incompatible with Scripture during the Protestant Reformation, and the official stance of German religious leader Martin Luther (1483–1546) and his fellow reformers was *sola fide, sola gratia*: "faith alone, grace alone." That is, only through God's grace can a person be saved, and only through faith can a person participate in that grace—although this *sola fide* position is not supported by the Christian Bible. From the Lutheran—and, for that matter, the Calvinist—viewpoint, the performance of good deeds on earth is an expression of God's grace, never a way of "earning" it.

By the 17th century, however, Protestantism had itself become a diverse set of denominations, united as much in their rejection of Catholicism as in their embrace of any shared theological principle. The Separatists, along with the Puritans and a growing number of other Protestant sects, rejected the *sola fide* position as too extreme and reaffirmed the role of good works in salvation. This is the viewpoint espoused throughout *The Pilgrim's Progress*, where those who express faith in God but fail to follow his commandments are not merely called out as hypocrites but threatened with damnation. That faith is necessary, meanwhile, is never in doubt for Bunyan: those who merely try to be good people without God's help are missing an essential ingredient for salvation.

Bunyan, however, does not simply come out and say that faith without works is insufficient, a claim he is happy to make for "works without faith." He is well aware of Acts 16:31, a verse that seems to make an open-and-shut case regarding the criteria for salvation. He gets around this potential scriptural roadblock in a time-honored fashion: if a person *truly* has faith in God, he says, that person will avoid sin and live virtuously. A faith too weak to manifest itself in good works is, Bunyan

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seems to argue, not the kind of faith envisioned in the Acts of the Apostles. This position is especially evident when Bunyan's protagonists encounter lip-service Christians who have read the Bible and claim to believe but whose "conversation" (i.e., their manner of living) is a godless one.

Because he is writing an allegory and not a theological treatise, Bunyan is ultimately spared from having to articulate a precise position in the faith-and-works debate. It is clear, however, that he holds out little hope for those who *say* they believe but fail, or refuse, to act accordingly.

No Shortcuts, No Detours

In addition to the "faith and works" debate Bunyan dramatizes throughout *The Pilgrim's Progress*, there are several characters who simply attempt to cheat their way into the Celestial City. First to appear are Formalist and Hypocrisy, who briefly join Christian just after he passes through the Wicket-Gate in Part 1, Chapter 3. Unlike him, they have gotten in by climbing over the wall, thus bypassing the gate entirely. He explains, as he was told by Evangelist, that only those who come through the Wicket-Gate will be saved. Formalist and Hypocrisy scoff at him and counter that their people have been coming in over the wall for centuries. The broad point here is that, in Bunyan's Protestant theology, those who are called by God must still respond via the proper means; namely, faith in Jesus Christ. This faith must be an inwardly held conviction, not a mere ritualistic performance (Formalist) or outward profession (Hypocrisy).

Perhaps the most notable shortcut taker, however, is Ignorance, who appears in the final two chapters of Part 1. His story is significant because he is evidently unaware of having done anything wrong, unlike some of the other false pilgrims. When he pushes back against the reasoning offered by Christian and Hopeful, he seems to be arguing in good faith, if at times a little high-handedly. His main crime, as allegorized by Bunyan, consists in having joined the pilgrims' way via a "crooked lane" from his home country rather than walking the entire long road from the Wicket-Gate onward. Ignorance later hires a ferry to carry him over the River of Life, which seems like a sensible way of overcoming a physical obstacle but is, of course, against the rules of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In fact, for Christian and Hopeful the ease with which Ignorance "gets over" death is a bad sign, since saints are supposed to suffer right up to the end. When Ignorance is condemned to hell for taking the easy way out, Bunyan drives home his point: neither shortcuts nor detours are permitted on the pilgrimage to heaven.

"Dark" Means May Lead to Holy Ends

From the very beginning of his book, Bunyan is engaged in a battle against detractors real and imagined. He is preoccupied—not necessarily unreasonably—by the idea that *The Pilgrim's Progress* will be rejected because it is an allegorical work, expressing religious truths through extended symbolism instead of stating them plainly and literally. Even the title page of the original edition reflects this concern: "I have used similitudes," Bunyan quotes from the biblical Book of Hosea (12:10). A *similitude* here is a metaphor or, as it is usually rendered in modern translations of the Bible, a parable. Thus, from page one Bunyan is proactively justifying his own use of similitudes by pointing out that God himself sanctions the practice.

In the apology (introductory poem) to Part 1, Bunyan offers a much more detailed defense of his use of allegory. He repeats the point, suggested on the title page, that symbolic language appears in numerous instances large and small throughout the Bible. In addition, Bunyan offers some metaphors of his own to explain why a "dark" (i.e., obscure) manner of writing or speaking may nonetheless bear fruit: crops are nourished by rain, he points out, whether it falls from "dark" clouds or light ones. Bunyan also cites non-Scriptural works, both literary and philosophical, to show that many wise people have viewed "dark" symbolism as a worthy means of conveying important ideas. The apology to Part 2 ("The Author's Way of Sending Forth ... ") reinforces and partly repeats this argument to justify the publication of a second volume in a similar style.

In the house of the Interpreter, Bunyan takes things one step further: he gets, to use a modern term, metafictional. Both Christian in Part 1 and Christiana in Part 2 visit the Interpreter soon after they pass through the Wicket-Gate. In his house,

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each is escorted through a veritable museum of different religious symbols. They view paintings, witness dramatic scenes, and contemplate natural and man-made landscapes, all with the Interpreter standing by to explain the spiritual meaning of what they behold. In introducing such a character, Bunyan does more than provide himself with a convenient way of stuffing even more symbolism into his book. He also justifies the place of symbolism itself in religious instruction (after all, his heroes repeatedly profit from such instruction) and sanctions his own role as an "interpreter" for his readers.

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