

Our Baptist History

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS "I Will Print It"

The time from the birth of John Bunyan on November 30, 1628, until his entrance into the "Celestial City" August 31, 1688, was a period of religious controversy, political unrest, and social violence. Being a man of deep religious faith and conviction, Bunyan was soon caught up in the conflagration, even though in his heart, he despised confrontation. In one of his treatises he wrote, "Jars and divisions, wranglings and prejudices, eat out the growth, if not the life of religion. These are those waters of Marsh that embitter our spirits, arid quench the Spirit of God. Unity and peace is said to be like the dew of Hermon (Psalm 133:3), and as a dew that descended upon Zion, when the Lord promised His blessing."

Controversy also surrounded his writing of *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was licensed December 22, 1677. For several years, it had lain in his drawer as he had numerous consultations with various associates and friends as to whether it was worthy of

publication. The responses were numerous and varied. Some had a sense of impropriety, that the allegory was too trifling a way to express such a somber subject as a way of escaping from destruction. The result of these consultations was his determination, "I will print it." The book's publication not only raised an imperishable monument to his memory but also brought multitudes to serious consideration of their peril as they read such a serious presentation expressed in a colloquial manner.



John Bunyan In Prison

Pilgrim's Progress met with such popularity that the tenth edition was published by 1685. Some of these editions included illustrations and a few additions to the text. The rapidity with which these editions succeeded one another caused Bunyan to prefix the second part, *Christiana*, with, "Some have, of late, to counterfeit My

Pilgrim, to their own, my title set; Yea, others, half my name, and title too, Have stitched to their books, to make them do." This statement indicates that some endeavored to counterfeit his writings for personal profit.

Also, some attacked his integrity and accused him of copying the works of others. He defended himself by prefacing his *Holy War* with a verse which began,

*Some say the Pilgrim's Progress is not mine,
Insinuating as if I would shine
In name and fame by the worth of another,
Like some made rich by robbing their brother.*

He continued by declaring:

*It came from mine own heart, so to my head,
And thence into my fingers trickled,
Then to my pen, from whence immediately
On Paper I did dribble it daintily.*

Because of some criticism relating to his motives for writing *Pilgrim's Progress* and the allegorical method he employed, he prefaced the work with *The Author's Apology for His Book*. This is not an apology in the sense of

asking forgiveness for writing it, but an apology is a defense. Among other things that he wrote in this defense, he indicted,

*I find that holy writ in many places.
Hath semblance with this method,
where the cases
Do call for one thing to set forth another:
Use it I may, then, and yet nothing smother
Truth's golden beams: nay, by this method may
Make it cast forth its rays as light as day.
And now, before I put up my pen,
I'll show the profit of my book; and then
Commit both thee and it unto that hand
That pulls the strong down, and makes weak ones stand.*

Though Bunyan's library at one time consisted only of the Holy Bible and *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, his writings, and in particular *Pilgrim's Progress*, grace private and public libraries the world over, by the thousands, and in many languages. This demonstrates what God can do with a tinker when, in a time when all circumstances seem to be against him, he yields his will to his Lord and stands firm upon the principles of God's Word.

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