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Notes on the Early Editions of "Grace Abounding."

JOHN BUNYAN'S *Grace Abounding* has been produced in so many editions that it would be an unenviable task to deal with them beyond the eighteenth century. Even in the year 1804 a 50th edition appeared. It has always been the "runner up" of *The Pilgrim's Progress*; and justly so, for both works are autobiographical and complementary one to the other, each in its own way depicting the author's spiritual growth and experiences.¹ After Bunyan had written *Grace Abounding* (and the Account of his Imprisonment) he set aside some other book upon which he was engaged—unquestionably *The Heavenly Footman*—the forecast of the Pilgrim story which henceforward absorbed his attention; for, evidently satisfied as to its inferiority, Bunyan allowed *The Heavenly Footman* to remain in manuscript until Charles Doe acquired and printed it in 1698, ten years after its author's death.

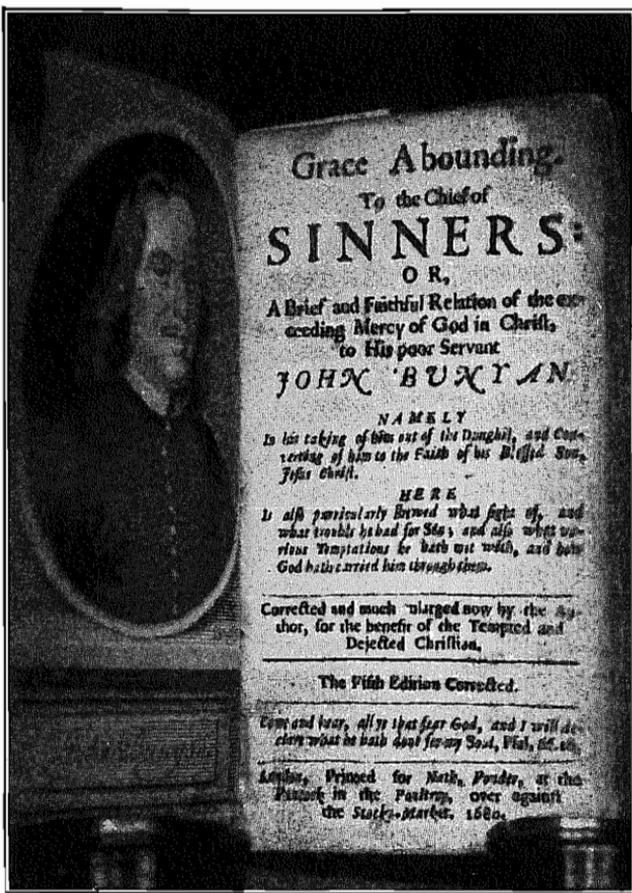
Grace Abounding was first published in 1666, although Bunyan certainly wrote it in the early days of his first imprisonment, that is, between 1660 and 1666—in which latter year he had a brief respite from prison, after which he was reincarcerated for a further six years, until 1672. During this second period *The* called for".² And yet, up to the present time (1943) only three books in those years are known to have come from his pen. In the first six years he wrote, and had printed, six books and two broadsheets.

Bunyan having thus employed the earlier part of his imprisonment by recalling his life experiences and recounting his own Trial, it is not surprising that his sympathisers eagerly bought up the copies of the first edition of *Grace Abounding*: perhaps to an extent which justifies the unverified statement that it "at once became popular, and the year of its issue saw several editions called for".² And yet, up to the present time (1943) only three copies of the "first" are extant: two in America, and one—not quite perfect—in the British Museum.³ Before this last named

¹ Professor J. W. Mackail acknowledges *Grace Abounding* to be "the greatest of all spiritual autobiographies."—"The Pilgrim's Progress; A Lecture delivered at the Royal Institution . . . London: Longmans, 1924."

² Canon Venables, in "Bunyan: *The Pilgrim's Progress, Grace Abounding, etc.*"—Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879, p. li.

³ P.M. C 37. d. 53. According to George Offor, this copy at one time belonged to a Mr. Sherring. Offor notes the pp. missing. (B.M., P.M. 4411. cc. 22).



Grace Abounding
To the Chief of
SINNERS:
O R,

A Brief and Faithful Relation of the exceeding Mercy of God in Christ, to His poor Servant

JOHN BUNYAN.

N A M E L Y

In his taking of him out of the Dungeon, and Converting of him to the Faith of his Blessed Son, Jesus Christ.

H E R E

Is also particularly Express'd what signs of, and what troubles he had for Sin, and also what various Temptations he hath met with, and how God hath tried him through them.

Corrected and much enlarged now by the Author, for the benefit of the Tempted and Dejected Christian.

The Fifth Edition Corrected.

Com and bear, All ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my Soul, Psalm, lxxviii.

London, Printed for Nath. Ponder, at the Picture in the Parterre, over against the Stocks-Market. 1680.

copy was found by the late Henry Stevens, in 1883, none of the first edition had come to light.

As the original issue of *Grace Abounding* sold so readily, its scarcity is somewhat amazing. But that some of its copies and unbound sheets might have perished in the Great Fire of 1666 is not improbable, for it is stated that Bunyan's shared the fate of innumerable other books.⁴

After the first, which was octavo, most of the early editions of *Grace Abounding* were duodecimo. The "first" came from the press of George Larkin. That someone else was responsible for the subsequent edition (or editions) is highly probable, for Larkin—a young man of four and twenty, and only just established in business as a publisher "and perhaps printer",⁵—had (in 1668) run amok of the law, from the difficulties of which he was not entirely extricated until 1683. As the Term Catalogues do not begin before 1668, no second edition of *Grace Abounding* is therein recorded, nor is an existing copy known. It is therefore not possible to conjecture its publisher's name. A third edition, however, is represented by a single copy now in the Pierpont Morgan Library at New York. This was registered in the Trinity Term Catalogue for 1679, under the caption "Reprinted". This might mean either an entirely fresh issue, or the repetition of an earlier "third." It would be helpful to establish the certainty of the case, because the copy here mentioned does not contain expected paragraphs which, from its date, should be included, because to Bunyan's original text are added, in the Pierpont Morgan copy of this "third", no less than fifty-six extra paragraphs or sections; and to the fifth edition (1680) still further sections are inserted, making a total of sixty-seven. These extra paragraphs to the first edition are 12 and 13; 33 and 34; 130 and 131. Those from 310 to 317 are devoted to the author's claims for personal chastity, as Bunyan had, in 1674, experienced an ordeal of persecution over an episode in connexion with a Church member, Agnes Beaumont.⁶ It was a clear case of calumny, mainly brought about through malevolent religious intolerance and jealousy on the part of a parish priest; so it therefore seems incredible that Bunyan should have allowed the infamous charge to remain unchallenged for five years;—and yet the sections of *Grace Abounding* justifying his innocence are not found in the extant, undated, third edition of 1679. The second edition, if issued (as has been assumed) prior to 1674, could not have included these

⁴ See *The McAlpin Coll. of Brit. Hist. and Theology*. Vol. VII., No. 2, Jan. 1924.

⁵ Plomer's *Booksellers and Printers, 1668-1725*. (Bibliog. Soc. 1922).

⁶ See *The Narrative of the Persecution of Agnes Beaumont*, ed. by G. B. Harrison. London: Constable, n.d.

latest added paragraphs; but they may reasonably have appeared in the missing fourth edition whose date and publisher are unknown. This then leads to the conjecture that the 1679 third edition was but a reprint of its earlier form, issued (or re-issued) by Francis Smith.

As the text of *Grace Abounding* is comprised of numbered sections or paragraphs, it is interesting to note that the first (1666) edition has one (127) repeated, and one (161) lacking. The final paragraph is 272. The third edition (1679) contains 322 paragraphs, with an additional six as "Conclusion"; whereas in the fifth (1680) the number of section 73 is skipped over; so the total of the sections in the fifth—as well as in the sixth, seventh, and eighth editions,—instead of being 340, as numbered, should be 339. The wonder is that the incorrect numberings were not rectified in these later printings. They appear correct in the eighteenth century and subsequent issues.

The early editions of *Grace Abounding* are far more scarce and not so easily definable as are those of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, there being, as already stated, only three copies of the First, one of the Third, none of the Second and Fourth, and but two of the (1680) Fifth. So from the first edition onwards difficulties arise as to what—if any—intermediate printings there were. Doe reckoned, in 1698, that the book had been printed seven times⁷: an appropriate estimate, as two of the eighth editions are—one, undated, (?1693), and the other, dated, 1695.

The earliest of editions of *Grace Abounding* as at present established, may be thus classified: 1st, 1666; 2nd (queried by the B.M. 1672); 3rd ("Reprinted" 1679); 4th (queried by the B.M. 1680); 5th, 1680; another 5th, 1685, and apparently a further 5th, 1686; 6th 1688 (the year of John Bunyan's death) an unnumbered edition, 1691; 7th, four issues, two printed for Robert Ponder, 1692, another 1695, and a fourth (Robert Ponder) 1698⁸; 8th n.d. (?1693), 1695, and 1701; 9th (with crude portrait of the author) 1716; followed by three 10ths in 1726, 1759, and 1764. Between these 10ths is an unnumbered edition dated 1734.⁹ The 11th of 1761 overlaps the 12th (with portrait of "John Bunnyan") of 1749, whilst another 12th (with the "sleeping" portrait) is dated 1771. These were followed by two 13ths, one in 1776, and the other in 1778. Unspecified editions

⁷ A Chronological List of Bunyan's Works, "Printed by Charles Doe," as an Appendix to *The Heavenly Footman*, 1698. (See Brown's *John Bunyan: His Life, Times and Works*, 1928 edn., p. 469.)

⁸ The only known copy of this edn. is in the collection of the late Sir Leicester Harmsworth, Bart.

⁹ The second edition of Doe's Folio (1692) contains *Grace Abounding* and was issued in 1736-7. The work appears also in the Third Folio, of 1767-8. It was not included in the 1692 issue.

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To the Chief of
SINNERS:

OR,

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exceeding Mercy of God in
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J O H N B U N Y A N.

Wherein is particularly shewed, The manner of his Conversion, his fight and trouble for Sin, his dreadful Temptations, & also how he departed of Gods Mercy, and how the Lord at length through Christ, did deliver him from all the guilt and terrour that lay upon him.

All which was written by his own hand, and now
published for the support of the weak and
tempted People of God.

The Third Edition, Corrected and much enlarged
by the Author.

*Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare
what he hath done for my soul, Psal. 66. 16.*

London, Printed for F. Smith at the Elephant and
Castle near the Royal Exchange in Cornhill,
At 1s Bound.

bear the following dates: 1762, 1771, 1775, 1778, (?1780), and 1785. A 14th edition was issued in 1791, but no 15th has as yet been recorded. The 16th is queried as 1799. Two Leeds editions were published, one in 1792, and the other in 1798. With these exceptions, all the above enumerated editions were issued from London. They were interspersed by a few from Scotland and Ireland: one a "6th", printed by Robert Sanders of Glasgow, in 1697, and an "8th" from Edinburgh in 1707. There were also editions from Glasgow in 1735, 1745, (1750), 1755 and 1758, followed by a "14th" in 1791, and, in the same year, by another "Printed for the Booksellers". One edition came from Berwick in 1760, and one from Belfast (c. 1731).

The scanty information at present available gives the earliest known American editions as having been printed at Boston in 1717, from whence issued also a "10th" in 1729, and a "13th" in 1732. These were followed by unnumbered editions in 1735, 1739, and 1791; whilst two were published in New York in 1794 and 1797. The numberings of the Boston issues are difficult to understand, unless other American editions have yet to be discovered; or else perhaps that an attempt was made to follow up the English numberings.

The first "foreign" edition of *Grace Abounding* was printed in Amsterdam in 1689. French, Welsh, and other translations began to appear in the early part of the nineteenth century.

Many of the eighteenth century productions of *Grace Abounding* were slovenly printed as chapbooks, and too often there were deletions either through careless editing or by deliberate intention. In fact, the text of the book became grossly mutilated as the editions proceeded: especially noticeable are the typographical and punctuation discrepancies; most of which have since been remedied.

The accompanying reproductions of the title pages of the three earliest known editions of *Grace Abounding* form an interesting study. That of the First (1666) does not comply with Moxon's statement that "A good *Compositer* is ambitious . . . to make his Work shew graceful to the Eye"¹⁰ The undue emphasis of certain words thereon is noticeably changed in the Third and Fifth editions. Larkin, as before suggested, was an apparent novice in the art of printing. Speed of production could not alone account for his crude set out.¹¹ Francis Smith's title page of the Third edition is more distinctive; but the "fifth" (1680)—the first known edition to bear the imprint of Nathaniel Ponder

¹⁰ Moxon, sec. xxii, numb. xv, par. 5. (*The Library*, Vol. XXII, No. 1, 1941, p. 57.)

¹¹ Bunyan's title pages were invariably well displayed, despite the XVIIth century verbiage.

is a still more satisfying display; and the book is, of all the available early editions, the choicest, being a dainty little volume, carefully printed, with an engraved portrait of Bunyan by John Sturt. The last seven paragraphs, forming the "Conclusion", are condensed in smaller types to bring the text within the allotted number of sheets. The sixth edition (1688), also with a portrait, is a creditable production. This, too, was issued by Nathaniel Ponder, as was also the unnumbered edition in 1691. Lamentable deterioration in production is found in the two "sevenths" of 1692, which bear the name of Robert Ponder—assumably Nathaniel's son. The author, John Bunyan, had passed to his rest: Nathaniel Ponder was in straitened circumstances, and the book was still in demand. These 1692 "sevenths" began the downward grade. Typographically, these two editions are page for page almost identical, but what is evidently the second issue shows some variations in word spacing, and italics displace roman capitals, indicating hasty printing with letters borrowed from other formes. The exact resemblance of nearly every page denotes that only in parts was there a resetting of type. The continuation of John Bunyan's "life", which supplements the seventh edition, is of unidentified authorship.

Nathaniel Ponder's own name ceases its connexion with *Grace Abounding* with an edition (?1695) which is stated to be "Printed for N. Ponder, and are to be sold by the Booksellers of London and Westminster". By this time he had fallen on evil days, and he died in 1699. There was one other edition, evasively described as "Printed for W. P.[onder] and are to be sold by Nat. Ponder"—at his bookstall in London Yard.

Grace Abounding is a worthy English classic. It has been appropriately described as "primarily emotional: really a bit of a man's innermost heart."¹² In a word, *Grace Abounding*, from its spiritual, as well as from its literary aspect, is succinctly summed up by one of its commentators—"Austere words lie closest to stern realities".

FRANK MOTT HARRISON.

¹² John C. Foster, in *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, Vol. IV, 1914-15.

GRACE

Abounding to the chief of Sinners :

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Of the Exceeding Mercy of God in Christ,
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JOHN BUNTAN.

Wherein is particularly shewed, The manner of his Conversion, his fight and trouble for Sin, his Dreadful Temptations, also how he despaired of Gods mercy, and how the Lord at length thorow Christ did deliver him from all the guilt and terrour that lay upon him.

Whereunto is added,

A brief Relation of his Call to the Work of the Ministry, of his Temptations therein, as also what he hath met with in Prison.

All which was written by his own hand there, and now published for the support of the weak and tempted People of God.

Come and hear, all ye that fear God; and I will declare what he hath done for my soul, Psal. 66. 16.

L O N D O N :

Printed by George Larkin. 1666.