

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

Bunyan's "Map."

VISUAL symbols, whether in word or in drawing dominate the religious literature of the Middle Ages. Few who have studied the subject have not come upon the colourful reds, blues and golds, and the verbal descriptions of trees, branches, roots and angels' wings which controlled men's thoughts on religion. When Calvinism replaced Catholic discipline, its formulations were rigid and impersonal, and the warm colouring tended to die away: any church which entitled dogmatic theology to so high a place in its provisions had to come to terms with the Catholic method whether it used, adapted or rejected it. So it is that the charts of religious instruction which I have recently been studying came into being; if we are to understand the popular presentation of theology and the effect of it upon the English mind, we must give these black and white maps and charts more attention than has been the case heretofore.

Medieval manuscripts exist which are veritable spiritual encyclopedias in artistic form and reach beyond mere categorisation of spiritual states into a depiction of social and economic grievances in the same way as Langland did when he composed *Piers Plowman*. The best example of this type of manuscript is that discussed at length by F. Saxl in *Warburg Institute Journal* (Vol. v.) to which I must refer my reader. This contains many things: a psychomachia, a *danse macabre* and various groups of allegorical figures representing clerical piety and impiety, greed and poverty, Christ and Antichrist. These pictures were to be "read" for their literary and didactic content, and so, too, were the Calvinist maps and charts. Our experience of reading pictures in this way—abhorrent to those who hold isolationist theories of art—may perhaps be confined to the study of cartoons in the press. Do we realise that this most popular form of entertainment-art has traditional roots which may be described in the artistic appreciation of Medieval religious orders?

How the sectarians came to adapt Medieval notions demands widespread research. In the case of religious illustration one influence is the logical work of Petrus Ramus. One has merely to open his most popular books to see the architectonic structure of his discussion procedure: the influence which this had on religious thought is much more debatable. The logic of Calvinism demanded that someone should represent the divine

decrees in this immutable and scientific pattern. Theodore Beza, the second dictator at Geneva, himself published a chart entitled *Summa Totius Christianismi*¹ which might have been suitable for work upon a blackboard and designed *et ad clericum et ad populum* in different ways. The seminal mind in English Calvinism is William Perkins and it is to his *Survey* (of which I hope to publish an account elsewhere) that we may look for model of English engravings upon the same pattern. Beza and Ramus may indeed have both influenced Perkins, but it is the former that would have carried greater weight. The connexion between Perkins and Medieval allegorical pictures is not an obvious one. The *Survey* consists of no pictures, but is a large sheet covered in vertical lines and chains of circles, divided primarily into the two dispensations for the human soul with the life-line of Christ stretching down the centre. At a rapid glance, the chart by John Bunyan is of the same pattern; both are fine examples of the restrictions upon religious art in the 17th century.

Bunyan's *Map showing the Order & Causes of Salvation & Damnation* is not known to exist in a contemporary edition, so that we cannot compare originals of the two English charts. It is headed by the triangle which is the emblem of the Trinity; at the foot are the twin destinies of Everyman. The middle of the chart is covered with small circles with numerous commentaries within and without them, in prose, doggerel verse and scriptural texts. The line of Christ is omitted altogether, and with it, by comparison with Perkins's publication, vanishes evidence of the author's mental distinction. Beneath the Trinity extend two lines, one in outline and the other in thick black, and these two lead to the Covenants of Grace and Works. As in a doom painting the elect are on our left and God's right, and opposite them the reprobate with a legend:—

These lines are black and so are those
That do eternal life oppose
Which those will do most willingly
Whom God doth leave to live and die

So would those on the other side
Also if God did not them guide
He helps the one then by his grace
And leaves the other to his rage.

The moment of creation is distinguished by a circle placed immediately beneath the Trinity which represents another human one—Adam, Abel and Cain. Divine decrees are entirely independent of personalities and precede creation—this, which Bunyan might have learned from Perkins, was a simple spatial method of

¹ In *Theodori Besae Vezelii Volumen Primum* (Geneva, 1582) p. 170.

handling the central tenet of Calvinism, for the chart is drawn to depict this time-lag between concept of creator and creation itself. The central line which proceeds from these symbolic men is marked "Passage into and out of the World," and it concludes laconically enough with "The End" and a small circle divided between rays of glory and flames of hell.

It is convenient to consider the elect first of all. Twenty-four circles arranged in horizontal branches tell the story of the successful ones of God. Of these the one numbered (3) brings the miracle of election down to the individual soul with the phrase "effectual calling". Texts and verses for which we have no space accompany this statement. Circles (4) and (5) stand together and lead to that conviction of sin which Bunyan also expressed (earlier or later we cannot tell) in Christian's scene at the wicket-gate. Circle (7) is labeled "which occasioneth Satan to despair" (referring to the working of Grace in the soul) and has the comment beneath: "he goeth about like a roaring lion." Either phrase can be found in Christian's plea for admittance. The next stage in the spiritual progress must be temptation and the "very heart of loss" which are essential to the life of the elect. The elected soul has to find his way out of the morass and this is given on the Map with a group of four circles on faith with "strengtheneth faith," "encourageth to pray," "causeth God to hear" and "driveth the soul to the promise." If we wish to interpret the chart again in allegorical terms, it will be the moment after the Valley of the Shadow of Death—that Dark Night of the Soul—when Christian emerges into the light.

The next branch consists of five circles, for they increase in length and content up to this point. This group reads: "working true love to holinesse," "humility at the sight of sin," "watchfulness against it," and "patience under the cross" and "which brings more experience of God's goodness." As if to underline the meaning of these four neat oblong boxes are drawn in, stressing humility, love, patience and adoration, and the whole branch is summed up in the marginal poem:

Have love to God
A watchful eye
Bear you his rod
And sweetly die.

Christian exercise and discipline are similar in all souls; their struggles all must undergo.

By the eighteenth circle faith has been permanently confirmed. It will be recalled that Evangelist's task grew unnecessary as Christian sped along on his own feet; that he became the master

of his own fate and had the old mentor there only to urge him onward. This self-sufficiency is presented on the chart in these words: "herein I do exercise myself." Circles (19) to (21) depict the operation of Hope in the breasts of those whose Faith is entirely adequate, for here is enacted in Bunyan's figurations that moment in Despair's castle when Christian used in distress the key which promised deliverance when he was permitted to remember that it lay in his keeping. The essence of Hope is perhaps a form of static contemplation of God's promises and past exemplifications of His word. It is a spiritual exercise which presumes a sophisticated outlook and not within the reach of the "wayfaring Christian" who had much ado to keep himself from falling. For such men the exercises of the mystic are derelictions of practical duty—at least, they appeared to many 17th century secretarians in this light. In Bunyan the contemplative tone is heard but seldom; an absence which has been noticed and occasioned many attacks from critics who have not accepted the rigours of striving which go to perfecting within the soul the graces and lights which God has supplied and lit.

Circles (22) to (24) lead to the space marked ETERNITY and to the semi-circle of glory, beneath which is written:—

Come, weary saint,
Come into the light
Thou didst not faint
Walk thou in white.

The hero of the Christian journey is received into the company of the men in white robes, and the chart concludes its condensed narrative.

The fate of the non-elect is encircled with black lines, but is otherwise cut to the same pattern and number of circles. The Covenant of the Law which allows no man relief from his conscience stands at the head of the column. In this case the man is allowed a deluded belief in personal sanctity. Perkins in his masterly exposition of the situation calls it briefly "A Taste"; for Bunyan it is a circle labelled "God in mercy gives some tastes of life." Carelessness and looseness of life are entered next under the heading "God hath given them the spirit of slumber," a variety of the sin of security which is personified in *The Holy War*, which he further colloquially characterises "Like the Dog to his vomit." Atheism, contempt for God and final carelessness and heedlessness ensue as the climax of the chart is reached again, together with a desire "to work all uncleanness with greediness." Small boxes beneath the inscribed circles supply the deadening words: Persecution, Apostasy and Sin against the Holy Ghost.

Circle (22) states that the only future for the convicted soul

is its "fearful looking for judgment." and in the last entry (24), the words "under which the reprobate lies to ETERNITY." Marginal annotations are severe: "That man had better neer have been than to receive this fruit of sin." The final decree comes in the words of the Devil himself:—

Come sinner come
Thou art my right
I am thy home
Grace thou didst slight.

The small scene of fires burning receives the black line at the end, and in order to show God's happiness at the implementation of his plan is a couplet:—

Whether to Heaven or Hell you bend
God will have glory in the end.

If Bunyan's Map were easier to obtain there would be little point in writing upon it in this way. Unfortunately it has been totally neglected by all modern scholars; even the comprehensive account of Bunyan's work by Henri Talon omits mention of it, although with it one understands how the terrifying doctrines of Calvinism made their initial impact on the people. That Perkins and Bunyan, men so distinct in their backgrounds and education, should have both succeeded in this art is remarkable. It was the genius of the former that he could command both extremes in his public and that while writing treatises in Latin (now quite scandalously neglected) he could compose dialogues in colloquial English (similarly so). Bunyan's philosophy or "thought" is negligible, but his adaptations of the tough doctrine in chart form and in words are triumphs which have rarely received sufficient academic study. His Map may be recommended as a good form of popularisation; one which tries to present faith in palatable form without casting a sentimental smear over it or in any other way softening the impact.

This note upon the map is designed largely to recall its existence to the minds of those for whom it may still have its own interest and value. The genre of religious charts is not dead although the only ones that have come my way recently have been confined to the genealogical tables of the creation and consummation of the world. Could an original copy be found it would have great charm as an antique. There or in the reprint to be found in George Offor's three-volume edition of Bunyan, the compression of the author's wisdom would be apparent.

MAURICE HUSSEY.