

I pine, I faint with longing
 for the courts of the Lord's temple;
 my whole being cries out with joy
 to the living God . . .
 Happy are those who dwell in thy house;
 they never cease from praising thee."

MICHAEL WALKER.

The Pilgrim's Progress: A Puritan Fiction

IN his history of the English novel, Walter Allen opines, with reference to Bunyan, that when "reality did enter English fiction it came from the least expected of quarters and in the least expected of forms". Walter Allen is clearly puzzled by the phenomenon of *The Pilgrim's Progress*: he concludes it is inexplicable. The books Bunyan read, we are told, "do not matter in the least. Bunyan was a transcendent genius . . . and his work is as original as anything in literature can be": "The kind of work he wrote was completely unheralded".¹ What so surprised and impressed Walter Allen in *The Pilgrim's Progress* was its fictional realism, its kinship to the novel. Bunyan, of course, did not think he was writing a novel. He was upon the same evangelical and pastoral business as in those other treatises now being republished by the Clarendon Press as his *Miscellaneous Works*. The result is that, as a novel, *The Pilgrim's Progress* is imperfect. An inhibiting and incongruous didacticism will keep destroying the imaginative consistency of the fable and suspending the narrative for long passages of discourse in which all pretence at colloquial dialogue between human characters is abandoned. Biblical warrant is relentlessly adduced for 'disturbingly confident and minute theological analyses of human experience. This reminds us not of the novel, but of the vast library of Puritan practical divinity to which Bunyan thought he was contributing. For Walter Allen, however, what Bunyan thus owed to earlier divines is not only incidental to the achievement of the book, it has nothing to do with the creation of that achievement. He finds no connexion between what he sees as artistically accomplished and these didactic features. How or why a work of practical

divinity should suddenly show every sign of turning into a novel is a mystery.

Walter Allen is by no means unusual in isolating the anticipations of the novel in *The Pilgrim's Progress* from its indebtedness to the Puritan tradition. The dramatic vividness, psychological accuracy and fictional realism are implicitly allowed to be as unheralded as he claimed by those histories of the English novel which contrive to handle Bunyan and its formative years without mentioning any Puritan contribution to the development of realism.² Curiously, the influence of Puritanism on Defoe's fiction has been appreciated.³ To admit this influence, however, is to run no risk of suggesting that Defoe is anything other than a writer of honest-to-goodness novels. In Bunyan's case, the Puritan commitment is inescapable. Dare we suspect it is the very proximity of *The Pilgrim's Progress* to Puritan treatises which puts critics on to distinguishing the novelistic features from the didacticism it shares with those treatises that they may the more confidently present Bunyan as unimpeachably a creative writer? Yet the schizophrenic Bunyan is not the peculiar possession of critics of the novel. It is the "contrast between the universal appeal . . . and the uncompromising dogmatism of the author's religious belief" which strikes a scholar who prefers to relate the book to the folk-tale rather than to the novel. In the tercentenary lecture in which he develops this theme, Professor Sharrock carefully distinguishes "what is permanent and powerful in the book", which he locates in its manipulation of the archetypal quest pattern, from the "less dramatic passages, closer to evangelical sermonizing", which are shaped by Bunyan's indebtedness to the methods of the Puritan sermon and treatise.⁴

It seems at first improbable that an author, setting out on a particular task with well-defined models and methods of which he makes obvious use, should create a work whose excellencies are unrelated to those models and methods. Yet the view that the book reaches beyond the limited audience to which the Puritan homiletic and exegetical method would appeal because Bunyan's natural genius led him to break with precedent may derive some force from Bunyan's own account of the composition of Part I of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. For him, there was something unusual about this work: it was not the book he had intended to write. In the "Author's Apology" he tells us that, falling "suddenly into an allegory", ideas so multiplied in his head, "Like sparks that from the coals of fire do fly", that they threatened to "eat out/The book that I already am about". He put aside the treatise he was engaged upon, and having once given his imagination its head, he found that "Still as I pulled it came".⁵ Bunyan realised that this irresistible inspiration had so taken charge of him as to lead to the composition of a book which his readers might not at first recognise as an edificatory piece of theological exposition. Indeed, the alternating tone of defiance and anxiety in the Apology's justification of his method suggests that he himself was not altogether sure about the result. That the work was withheld from publication

for several years similarly suggests misgivings.⁶ Nor did its publication in 1678 testify to any confident resolve on the part of its author, either pastoral or artistic. Confronted with conflicting advice from friends, Bunyan resolved to have it printed "To prove then who advised for the best" (p. 32). This sounds like the expedient of a man who can neither quite trust what he has created nor yet bear to put away what had involved him so intimately in the writing. We can almost sense the relief in the exaltation with which, in the preface to Part II (1684), Bunyan triumphantly records the success of the first part (pp. 213-4).

It looks, then, as though we might very reasonably say that, from Bunyan's point of view, his inspiration *had* betrayed him: the artist in him triumphed over the preacher and the result was a work whose every merit tends away from the sermon. These are, of course, the terms of Coleridge's judgement that in his "admirable Allegory" Bunyan's "piety was baffled by his genius, and the Bunyan of Parnassus had the better of the Bunyan of the Conventicle".⁷ To agree with Coleridge that *The Pilgrim's Progress* surpasses any other Puritan treatise in its drama and narrative skill is not, however, necessarily to agree that the Bunyan of Parnassus "had the better" of the Bunyan of the Conventicle. After all, there is general agreement that many of the materials and methods used by the Bunyan of Parnassus do derive from the Conventicle. We know that *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666) belongs to the type of seventeenth century spiritual autobiography,⁸ and that in Part I of *The Pilgrim's Progress* Bunyan reworked this same material. Hence, the stages of Christian's progress conform to the stages of spiritual progress as represented in many Puritan autobiographies and codified in innumerable treatises.⁹ We know, too, that many of Bunyan's metaphors were common currency, and that the essential ones of the spiritual war and the journey were not original with him. The title of John Downname's *The Christian Warfare* (1609) comes readily to mind, as do Milton's famous words on "the true warfaring Christian": "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd & unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat".¹⁰ The style, too, we recognise as belonging to the Puritan tradition of plain, often colloquially based, prose which its preachers had deliberately employed for nearly a century in direct opposition to the "metaphysical" style of a Lancelot Andrews and the "tropical" style of a Jeremy Taylor. And Bunyan had been anticipated too in the use of convincingly colloquial dialogue.¹¹ All this raises the possibility that the Bunyan of Parnassus led the Bunyan of the Conventicle not to break the bounds of the tradition within which he worked (save for some regrettable lapses into sermonizing), but to utilise that tradition to capture the Puritan Gospel more finely and memorably than had earlier and lesser writers. Were the fictional realism also to derive from the Conventicle, we should have the clue we need to suggest that *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a complete Puritan masterpiece, more con-

sistently unified in purpose and inspiration than the distinctions made by Coleridge, Allen and Sharrock allow.

The Puritan tradition reinforced the distrust shared by early Protestants for speculative and metaphysical theology. As Milton told us in the passage quoted above, salvation is worked out in the world. Not only had religion to be brought out of the monasteries, but theology, if it was to instruct in the real business of living a Christian life, had to be brought down from the skies. Scholasticism was rejected as firmly as monasticism. "Christianity", declared Richard Baxter, "is a practical Religion". The "holy practical Christian is the best and only true Christian". If it is to promote true Christianity, then, theology must perforce be practical: "It was never the will of God that bare *speculation* should be the end of his Revelations, or of our *belief*. Divinity is an *Affective practical Science*".¹² Just so, Faithful points out to Talkative that "there is therefore knowledge, and knowledge. Knowledge that resteth in the bare speculation of things, and knowledge that is accompanied with the grace of faith and love, which puts a man upon doing even the will of God from the heart"; this latter is the mark of the "true Christian" (p. 118). Baxter agreed: that man

"that hath a double measure of the knowledge of God in Christ, and the clearest, and deepest, and most effectual apprehensions of the Riches of Grace and the Glory to come, and yet never heard of most of the Questions in *Scotus*, or *Ockham* or *Aquinas's* sums, is far richer in knowledge, and a much wiser man than he that hath those Controversies at his fingers ends."

To stray from practical divinity, the "soul of all our Studies", is to lay oneself open to "the Philosophical fooleries of wrangling and ill-moulded wits" who divert men from the practice of their faith by unsettling and perplexing them with "a multitude of uncertainties and falsities".¹³

In thus taking theology out of the schools, Puritan divines addressed themselves not to their fellow divines but to common people. They practised no academic discipline but a science which bore directly upon common lives. So the Puritan patriarch John Dod was remembered for having taken great care "to speak to the meanest capacity and to feed the Lambs, saying, he must stoop to the lowest capacity".¹⁴ In their preface to John Preston's posthumous *The New Covenant* (1629) Richard Sibbes and John Davenport commended their author for framing "his conceits so, as might sute with ordinary vnderstandings".¹⁵ Baxter's work was published "for the Vulgar principally" and he

"had rather it might be numbred with those Bookes that are carryed up and downe the Country from doore to doore in Pedlers Packs, then with those that lye on Booksellers Stalls, or are set up in the Libraries of learned Divines."¹⁶

It was the regeneration of the ordinary life which was sought. Where-

as "among the Papists, to be a *Religious man* is to be a *Perfectist*" above the common run of believers, "with us men are taught that they must be Religious themselves in sincerity if ever they will be saved . . . and that they are not sincere if they desire not to be perfect".¹⁷ Everyman is being challenged to become a saint: theology is being "given to the layman".¹⁸

An obvious consequence follows: to be practical, to apply to ordinary men, counsel must be realistic. It is no way to help men to pretend either that they are other than they are, or that the world is other than it is. When Baxter defended the minute discriminations of his works on the grounds that "the real difference of particular cases is so great, as maketh it *necessary*, unless wee will deceive men" he testified to this determination to face facts. "The very same Doubts and Complaints may come from severall Causes in severall Persons, and therefore admit not of the same way of Cure . . . The differences of Natures as well as of actual Cases must be considered".¹⁹ Particularity is hence characteristic of the Puritan divine's method. He will, as is well known and a little too much insisted upon, remark the general state of the world's fallen condition, dwelling on mutability, transience and death, but he follows the implications of this into the details of human experience and into the recesses of the human mind. He is sympathetic to the confusions, perplexities and deceptions to which men are subject, and so is fully aware that moral questions seldom present themselves as clear choices between good and evil which are easily decided. The encyclopaedic magnitude of Baxter's casuistical *Christian Directory* (1673) is a direct result of this refusal to simplify, as is, in a very different context, Milton's rejection, in the opening of Bk. IX of *Paradise Lost*, of the morally straightforward world of older epic and romance. Satan, observed William Spurstowe, goes about his business cunningly: he

"casts none down suddenly from the Pinnacle of an high profession into the lowest Abyss of wickedness, but leads them rather by oblique descents and turnings, lower and lower, until their steps at last take hold on hell. The beginnings of sin, as well as of grace, may fitly be resembled to a grain of Mustard-seed."²⁰

To assess accurately the truth about our thoughts and acts is hence no simple task. If Satan slyly leads us, we may serve ourselves no better: Jeremiah 17: 9 was a favourite text. "The heart is deceivable about all things", declared Arthur Dent.²¹ We need, therefore, to scrutinize ourselves very closely: "look well to your own hearts", Evangelist warns Christian and Faithful, "and to the lusts thereof; for they are deceitful above all things" (p. 123). Hence the careful analyses of spiritual and psychological states in the many treatises on that crucial case of conscience, the question of election. In their treatment of human lives and human character these divines were, as L. B. Wright remarked of William Perkins, "realists":²² it is hardly coincidence critics are impressed by the verisimilitude, the accurate characterization and psychological penetration of Bunyan's book.

This realism in Bunyan is not merely a matter of incidental detail, telling though that can be (the response of Pliable's neighbours to his return is, for example, true to the very life (pp. 47, 102)). It was to be by the relentless accuracy of innumerable details that Defoe would blind his readers to the improbabilities of the story and the inconsistencies of his hero's mental attitudes and spiritual convictions in *Robinson Crusoe*, but in Bunyan there is no such woolliness at the heart of the tale. His realism is far more deeply interfused. It is evident in his refusal to categorize. This may seem an odd thing to say about an allegorical work founded on Calvinism, that most discriminatory of theologies. Yet neither the method nor the theology leads Bunyan to make implausibly rigid demarcations. On the one hand, our villains are never impressive in their villainy, never wholly and consummately evil. Evil in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a pervasive pettiness, meanness and selfishness, which yet allows a kind of friendliness (notice how often the false pilgrims are in pairs) and even kindness (Worldly Wiseman is trying to help Christian in the only way he knows how). Evil in Bunyan is neither a defiant amorality nor a deliberate policy nor a demonic power (though that is its source). We shall find nothing to compare with Marlowe's Faustus and Mephistophilis, Shakespeare's Iago, Tourneur's Vendice, Webster's Vittoria Corombona or Milton's Satan. What we do find is far more familiar: the narrow-mindedness of Obstinate, which has no patience with "crazed-headed coxcombs" (p. 42); the smugness of Formalist and Hypocrisy who look at each other and laugh at Christian's strict adherence to the way (p. 73); the snobbery of Shame who, anxious to be in the social swim, objects to religion as a "pitiful, low, sneaking business" unbecoming "the brave spirits of the times" (p. 107); the practical commonsense of Mrs. Timorous ("while we are out of danger, we are out, but when we are in, we are in" (pp. 229-30)) and Mrs. Inconsiderate ("twas never a good world since these whimsical fools dwelt in it" (p. 231)). Similarly, our saints are not rare exempla: when Evangelist rejoices that Christian and Faithful have continued in the way, he yet recognises "many weaknesses" in them (p. 123). We need hardly enlarge on this: anyone who doubts that Bunyan was keenly aware that faith co-exists with failings need only read over the stories of Little-faith and Mr. Fearing, true pilgrims both (pp. 164-6, 302-9). Indeed, what is remarkable about the pilgrim band in Part II is that it is composed of such very ordinary people. Can these be our heroes? Of course, they are: Bunyan is in no doubt about that, nor that there is one crucial difference between them and "ordinary" people: they are in the way. Yet they hardly look any different, and that is both the theological point and the source of the fictional verisimilitude. As Christian says, "all the King's subjects are not his champions; nor can they, when tried, do such feats of war as he" (p. 169). That they are people like us implies we, like them, might be destined for glory if we will: that they are people like us is what fascinates us as we read. We cannot here distinguish realism from

evangelism, story from point.

The same holds true of Christian himself. Although many commentators have distinguished Part I from Part II as "epic",²³ Christian is not really cast in the heroic mould. It is only in Part II, when the pilgrims have the benefit of his example to guide them, that he is likened to Hercules (p. 292): in Part I itself, Christian trembles for fear of the lions before House Beautiful (p. 78). He is, in fact, always fallible, very much the back-slider who loses his roll in the arbour on Hill Difficulty (p. 75) and gets caught by Giant Despair (pp. 149-57). Bunyan, remaining true to actual experience, refuses to offer us a simple progress.²⁴ Christian confesses to Prudence that "when I would be doing of that which is best, that which is worst is with me" and that the "golden hours" of pure devotion come "but seldom" (p. 83). Even at the end, he nearly drowns in the River of Death (pp. 198-9). It is this fallibility which arouses our sympathy and creates tension in the book, but this is also the point Bunyan, like his Puritan predecessors, would impress upon us. Christian can hardly be said to *deserve* salvation; he would never have achieved the quest but through grace, working on him now directly, now through Evangelist or Hopeful or whomsoever. Yet he *does* achieve the quest, quite against the odds: the grace of God is sufficient. Thus does the fiction embody theological orthodoxy and convey encouragement to the reader to turn and "play the man". Bunyan's concrete realisation of the Puritan conviction that any man may become a Christian hero does here create the hero of realistic story, but only incidentally. It is the fortunate literary consequence of a theological conviction, not the creation of an artist liberated from his theology.

One great consolation and comfort Christian receives on the way is that of companionship. The store Bunyan set on this is still more evident in Part II. This companionship is sustaining in a human and entirely natural way: in the Valley of the Shadow of Death Christian is greatly relieved by the sound of Faithful's voice since it means he is not alone in that terrible place (p. 98). Equally, these friendships are entirely credible: Christian's "plain dealing" puts a severe strain upon his relationship with Hopeful (pp. 166-8). Even in this sensitive handling of human relationships, though, Bunyan is making a point: as Hopeful prevents Christian from committing suicide in Doubting Castle (pp. 152-5), so Christian prevents Hopeful from sleeping on the Enchanted Ground (pp. 175-6); just as it was "the loss of my husband" which first prompted Christiana to pilgrimage (p. 253), so it was that Mercy's "bowels yearned over Christiana" (pp. 229, 255) which prevented her from deserting her friend. Bunyan continues a great Puritan theme: that the divine mercy works through our natural affections. It is true that the creature is not to be preferred to the creator (Adam's sin in Bk. IX of *Paradise Lost*), but we are not to deny ourselves fellowship, anymore than we are called to an extreme or ascetic denial of our natural senses and appetites. (That both Christian and Christiana and her companions are refreshed on the way

with food and drink is no more incidental detail than the music played at supper in the Interpreter's House (pp. 252-3)). As Hopeful says, in the words of Ecclesiastes 4:9, "*Two are better than one*" (p. 176). This utilisation, rather than rejection, of our natures, especially as it bears on domestic life, is the thrust of treatises such as William Gouge's *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622), the second book of Baxter's *Christian Directory* and Bunyan's own *Christian Behaviour* (1663). The unaffected intimacy of Anne Bradstreet's love lyrics, addressed explicitly to her husband, in contrast to the amorality of both metaphysical and Cavalier love poetry, is a consequence of this tradition, as is her capacity to handle in poetry the ordinary things of domestic life. The marital relationship depicted in Lucy Hutchinson's *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson* is another case in point, as is Milton's remarkably companionable and domestic Eden and the hymn to wedded love (specifically rejecting both celibate abstinence and *l'amour courtois*) in Bk. IV of *Paradise Lost*. Thus, when Bunyan handles so accurately domestic and corporate life in Part II of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, he is not being led astray, away from his theme and towards the novel, by his love of story and delight in realistic depiction for its own sake. He is deliberately depicting the Christian life as a commitment which involves all aspects of human intercourse. Hence, his explicit rejection of a common prejudice in his defence of the role of women (pp. 315-6) is no incongruous intrusion: it merely specifies in one particular connexion what is implicit in the tenor of the whole fiction.

As these are Puritan saints, their fellowship involves something more. The substance of their conversation is remarkably consistent: it is their own, or some one else's, experience, recounted and assessed in the light of Scripture. They indulge in what William Haller nicely called "spiritual gossip" and bear out Baxter's assertion that "Its a precious thriving course for Christians to be communicating experiences".²⁵ We can hardly overestimate the store set by Puritan divines on the need to notice, to evaluate and to communicate experience. It is a consequence of the conviction that Providence is actively at work. So Puritan preachers themselves have constant recourse to autobiographical evidence to illustrate their points, and to anecdotal accounts of others. *Mr. Badman* is a collection of such stories, in which, Bunyan tells us, he has "as little as may be gone out of the road of mine own observation of things".²⁶ The believer is repeatedly encouraged to "follow the search of his heart both night and day" until he is convinced of his election, and, if possible, "to record this sentence so passed; write it down, or at least write it in our memories".²⁷ By such a record he might comfort himself in periods of depression and determine the genuineness of his conversion. Ideally, though, the Puritan diary would do more than record conversion: it would be a continuous thing which, in addition to the spiritual state of its writer, would record his experiences and those of the community at large. This would enable him, as Oliver Heywood put it, "to owne and

honour god" in mercies enjoyed by both the individual and society, and would, to quote Heywood again, make it possible

"to compare my past and present state and observe my proficiency in christianity, to see whether I be better this year then the last, whether grace be stronger, corruptions weaker, my heart more soft, conscience more tender, wil more bowed, rectified, resolved, and my life more reformed."²⁸

To this end, as William Spurstowe warned us, the least occurrence needs to be noticed. Great-heart has no doubts about what can be gained from noting and recollecting experience: "Pilgrims should watch and remember what they have already received under their greatest enjoyments; but for want of doing so, oft times their rejoicing ends in tears and their sunshine in a cloud" (p. 267).

The result was a mass of journals, diaries, autobiographical and biographical works. Bunyan himself wrote *Grace Abounding*: the crucial moment in this, his own story, illustrates admirably how efficacious the habit of recollecting, discussing and communicating experience could be. Bunyan's meeting with the poor women of Bedford, "sitting at a door in the sun, and talking about the things of God" was the turning point of his life, for their discussion of their own experiences first showed him that he was a stranger to the "new birth" and so began (through "the good Providence of God") the movement to a true conversion.²⁹ No wonder, then, that as soon as Christian and Faithful meet, Christian wants to hear all about the origin and course of Faithful's own pilgrimage, which is recounted at length (pp. 101-10), nor that, going through a wilderness, it is by "talking of what they had seen by the way" that they "made that way easy" (p. 122). No wonder that when a "profitable question" is proposed for discussion it proves to turn on some one's experience, as when Hopeful expounds "the reason of the sudden backsliding" of Temporary (pp. 192-5), nor that before supper at the House Beautiful they talk of Christian's experiences "to better ourselves" (p. 80). Significantly, it is when, at Christian's suggestion, Faithful turns the conversation to experience that Talkative falters, blushes and finally breaks away (pp. 116-21). Experimental confessions of faith are not his line, but by just such means Christian gained admittance to the House Beautiful, as to a congregational church (pp. 79-80). Christiana is greatly cheered by Mr. Fearing's history, since she finds she is not alone in her spiritual difficulties (p. 308). We may have some sympathy with Talkative's objection to Faithful's reliance upon gossip and rumour (p. 116), but Bunyan clearly sees it as a duty to "make your reports of men" (p. 114). He is, however, alive to the dangers involved when it is our own experience which we recount: "when thou talkest of thy journey", says Apollyon to Christian, "thou art inwardly desirous of vainglory", and Christian admits the charge (p. 92).

These analytical and evaluative accounts include many of those passages which critics feel interrupt the story with dull sermonizing. Yet, were it not for the habit of thoughtful reflection upon experience

to which they bear witness, and which they would encourage in the reader, there never would have been a story, and that in two ways. Firstly, Bunyan would not have been capable of writing it. If he had "a genius for realistic observation",³⁰ it was by no means merely the consequence of his mental disposition: it was a faculty actively encouraged to develop by the insistence of his religious tradition that the true Christian is one who constantly scrutinizes his experience. The way Faithful handles Talkative is a model of the kind of careful and discerning seriousness the Puritan would bring to bear on all he sees and hears. And Faithful's analogies ("Some cry out against sin even as the mother cries out against her child in her lap, when she calleth it slut and naughty girl, and then falls to hugging and kissing it" (p 117)) are of exactly the realistic and apt kind such observation engenders. The story of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is but such an analogy writ large.

More than this, though, these passages *are* the story in that it is here real progress occurs. Christian has the limited understanding of what happens to him which is common to all of us in our lives. The confident recognition of continuing progress is not his: how could it be, when he is so bedevilled with doubts and temptations? When Faithful details the ways whereby the "work of grace discovereth itself. . . To him that hath it", he has to admit that seldom can any man confidently detect it because of "his corruptions now, and his abused reason" (p. 119). Bunyan, however, gives the reader the privilege of an over-view, and he can detect, more surely than Christian, a developing maturity in the pilgrim's awareness and understanding of human experience. At the beginning, Christian falls easy prey to Mr. Worldly-Wiseman and has need of Evangelist to set him back on the way (pp. 47-56). Later, however, he is able to see through Talkative and to generalise on the encounter with him with a new authority (p. 121). His growing firmness of judgement is evident in his easy dismissal of the casuistry of Mr. Money-love (pp. 142-3), until we come to the wisdom, prudence and generosity of his comments on Little-faith (pp. 168-71). Christian may yet be prone to spiritual doubt, but he has achieved a finer and more discerning perception which renders him less liable to be deceived by the world in which he moves.

This has come about only because Christian has persisted in noticing, recalling and relating to God's revealed will all that occurs. Not to exercise constant watchfulness and use experience in this way is, Bunyan clearly implies, to be less than a man and a Christian. This watchfulness consists in more than simple observation: it involves reflection upon and consideration of what is observed. Bunyan does not suppose that in themselves events imply any significance or constitute any sort of moral or artistic sense: it is the human mind which, by fathoming them, on the one hand perceives their divine significance, and on the other creates story, that is, a coherent and meaningful sequence of incidents. As it is only the human mind (in Bunyan

constantly alert and waiting on the guidance of the Spirit) which can, by collecting, comparing and assessing experiences, give purpose and order to a life, so it is in the responses of the hero's mind that the true story lies. That is why Christian is forever discussing what he encounters on the way: there is a *progress* only because it is a *pilgrim* who goes on the journey. This is not to say the progress (insofar as he perceives it) is an illusion of Christian's imagination: in Bunyan the believing mind is guided to a true perception of the purposes behind all creation. That is the difference between the perception of a Christian and an Atheist. But the perception is still granted only as the reward of intellectual effort: faith does not put our mental faculties into retirement. The exercise of them in faith improves the quality of the perception. Hence, the reader who would have recourse to the fiction alone, and would isolate it as what is valuable in the book, not only misses the point of Bunyan's depiction (that watchfulness is the means by which a saint grows in grace); he has also fallen prey to the temptation to prefer mere acceptance of "reality" to the strenuous intellectual analysis of it which Bunyan sees as constituting true maturity. Choosing, as he thinks, what is living and vital, such a reader has in fact opted for shadows and dreams, a meaningless succession of chance encounters. And it is specifically to ward off that drowsiness that Christian puts Hopeful to recounting his spiritual autobiography (p. 176).

This watchfulness, though, ranges more widely. It was not only human experience which assumed a new significance and dignity under Puritan teaching: since God created and sustains all things, everything is a fit object for reflective meditation. In William Spurstowe's book *The Spiritual Chymist* (1666) the alchemy consists in taking "all object and providences, [and] turning every thing by a Divine Chymistry, *in succum, & sanguinem*, into spirit and nourishment". "A good Christian", wrote Thomas Adams,

"that like the Bee workes honey from euery flower, suffers no action, demonstration, euent, to slip by him without a question. All objects to a meditating *Solomon*, are like wings to reare and mount vp his thoughts to Heauen."

Christians can "make vse of anything. As Trauellers in forraine Countries, make euery slight obiect a lesson: so let vs thriue in grace by euery (presented) worke of Nature". We cannot but think of Wordsworth's intention to rescue the familiar and commonplace from our inattention when we find Baxter directing us to observe God in his "ordinary works" as much as in his "extraordinary", to look at the recurring and the everyday and admire God in them "as if this were the first time that ever we had seen them". Thomas Taylor had only to walk out in the morning to find matter for reflection: "I see a morning dew and suddaine raine soon dried up: I must looke to the soundness of my grace, faith and comfort". As Anne Bradstreet put it, "Ther is no object that we see; no action that we doe; no evill that we feele, or fear, but we may make some spiritual advantage

of all; and he that makes such improvement is wise, as well as pious."

Bunyan agreed: suggesting, in *Solomon's Temple Spiritualised* (1688), that the cedar which lined the inner temple (I Kings 6:16) signifies perfection, he wrote:

"since it is the wisdom of God to speak to us oftentimes by trees, gold, silver, stones, beasts, fowls, fishes, spiders, ants, frogs, flies, lice, dust, &c., and here by wood; how should we by them understand his voice, if we count there is no meaning in them?"³¹

It is hence no surprise that in *A Book for Boys and Girls: Divine Emblems, or Temporal Things Spiritualised* (1688) Bunyan can draw benefit from eggs, candles, frogs, snails, sheets of paper and their like.³²

That Bunyan should take as the materials for his allegory the features of common life was hence almost inevitable. His religious allegiance encouraged him to be not only a shrewd observer of men, aware of the social and physical geography in which they moved, but also to strive to detect significance in what he observed. He writes realistic allegory with little tension and no indecorousness since he was habituated to treating the world as an allegory. Prudence's answers to Matthew's questions exemplify precisely Spurstowe's chemistry in the morals they draw from natural phenomena (pp. 282-4). Muddy roads, boys stealing apples, tavern suppers serve him, as Herbert put it, "for lights even of Heavenly Truths";³³ since the supernatural interpenetrated the natural. Where Spenser turned to the imaginary realm of romance for his images, Bunyan had only to look around him. Indeed, *only* by looking around him could he be faithful to his theology. "Let us take notice of what we see here for our help for time to come" says Hopeful to Christian at the pillar of Lot's wife (p. 147): that is both the method and the message of the book. To be sure, we do have Apollyon and the giants and, as Professor Sharrock argues, the basic quest pattern of folk-tale. But the general quality of the journey is neither that of romance or folk-tale, not even in moments which derive most obviously from such sources: when Christian faces Apollyon it is because he "considered again that he had no armour for his back" (p. 90); when he and Hopeful escape from Doubting Castle they have to deal with rusty locks (p. 156). As Bunyan invests the real with spiritual significance, so he brings the romantic within the domain of the real.

There remains the strategy of a fictional narrative. It is one thing to analyse human nature and actions, albeit realistically and with anecdotal illustration, as Bunyan's predecessors had done: it is quite another to represent them imaginatively. Yet even here Bunyan makes no surprising break with tradition. It is a mistake to suppose that Calvinism, and Calvinist derived theologies, are antipathetical to narrative treatments of human life. The imaginative model they foster is one of two sharply contrasted states of the human condition, but neither state is spiritually static. In the unregenerate state there is

the certainty of either regression or progression; in the regenerate, in some theologies the possibility of regression, but certainly the possibility of progression. Even the contrast, as we have seen, need not be simplistic: human nature is an infinitely varied thing. Although some autobiographies might, like *Grace Abounding*, by concentrating on the transition from one state to the other, give the impression that there is no more story to be told, what we repeatedly hear from seventeenth century divines is the need for constant endeavour, continual striving, watchfulness and progression in grace. It is this which is captured in those favourite images of journeying and warfare. God is "resolved to bring us to Glory . . . by perseverance in Holiness and diligent obedience . . . and he will never save us by any other way". Those who suppose that after conversion "they are so sure in the hands of Christ, that they have no more care to take, nor no more danger to be afraid of, and at last think that they have no more to do, as of necessity to Salvation . . . thus prove that indeed they were never sanctified". Perfection lies beyond the grave (the depiction of Bunyan's saints has shown that): yet "*your Conversion is not sound if you are not heartily desirous to encrease. Grace is not true, if there be not a desire after more; yea, if you desire not perfection it self*".³⁴ Divines might argue, and argue heatedly, about the exact significance of the saints' moral effort in the scheme of salvation: their soteriological disputes on faith and works make sorry reading. But only the most extreme antinomian would claim it had no bearing on salvation. And although to a theologian of Baxter's temper (whom I have been quoting) Bunyan himself appeared to be an antinomian,³⁵ we, removed from the heat of their controversies, can see the congruence of their moral teaching. After all, Bunyan's *Christian Behaviour* was written to show "the beauty and excellency" of good works in answer to the charge that he preached "looseness of life".³⁶ The fate of Ignorance should not blind us to Christian's declaration "The soul of religion is the practice part" (p. 115), nor to Faithful's exposition: "When Christ said, 'Do you know all these things?' And the disciples had answered, 'Yes', he addeth, 'Blessed are ye if ye do them'. He doth not lay the blessing in the knowing of them, but in the doing of them" (p. 118). No wonder that "sleeping in the day time" results in the loss of Christian's roll (p. 76). What marks out the saints finally is that, like Little-faith, they keep on going.

It is, though, autobiographies which witness most clearly to the narrative nature of the Puritan vision of experience. It is a curious thing that Puritan autobiographies show very little interest in the self as a recognisable and distinct individual character: in place of character analysis we find analysis of what the self did in response to a series of situations. That is to say, these autobiographies are evaluative histories of a series of decisions. This was evidently Oliver Heywood's intention: he himself is of no importance; the quality of his obedience and the mercy of God's providence towards him are the subjects of his autobiography. This emphasis on the need to progress

explains why, as Owen Watkins has observed, "the Puritan self was most adequately expressed in the form of narrative rather than in self-portraiture or meditation".³⁷ The interest is not in the individuality of a personality but in a person in the process of *becoming*. Hence, Baxter's famous self-review in *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696) does not endeavour to fix his character but to assess those changes which time and experience have made to his opinions.³⁸ The story which the Puritan thus so readily discerned in human life was shaped by the apparently haphazard incidents of individual experience: Bunyan's chance meeting with the women of Bedford, or Hopeful's with Faithful (pp. 180-1); Bunyan's trial, or Christian's and Faithful's before Lord Hategood (pp. 129-35); the ministry of a John Gifford or a Great-heart. Of course, these things are not accidents: that Hopeful and Christian come to the pillar of salt immediately after meeting Demas is no coincidence; the pilgrims fully appreciate the fearful relevance of what they see to their own experience (pp. 146-8). It is Bunyan's mastery to keep a firm hold on the providential guidance of men while accurately reflecting the apparently inconsequential course of their lives.

Once we allow the incipient narrative tendencies of Puritan teaching—and they had, of course, been developed before in the oft-cited cases of Richard Bernard's *Isle of Man* (1627) and Arthur Dent's *Plaine Mans Pathway to Heaven* (1601), and the less well-known case of Baxter's *Poor Man's Family Book* (1674)—we need make no problem over the image of the journey. It is as old as spiritual striving and was handled repeatedly in Puritan writings. What is often held to be peculiarly Bunyan's is the *kind* of spiritual journey he gives us, and yet it is precisely this which witnesses that, so far from being iconoclastically and inexplicably original, his genius recognised the artistic implications of Puritan teaching. If his book was, as he intended, to serve as a work of practical divinity, its pilgrimage could be no Grail quest: it had to be a humdrum, recognisable journey which, though it allowed the possibility of martyrdom, in the main showed common, ordinary experience being turned to Christian purpose. Realistic fiction is an inevitable literary consequence of Puritanism: this is what Bunyan has given us in what is, in all its aspects, a Puritan pilgrimage.

NOTES

¹ Walter Allen, *The English Novel* (1954; rpt. Harmondsworth, 1958), pp. 31-2.

² e.g. Lionel Stevenson, *The English Novel*, 2nd ed. (1961), pp. 28-53; Arnold Kettle, *An Introduction to the English Novel*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (1967), i, 19-43; Ernest A. Baker, *The History of the English Novel*, 10 Vols. (1924-36; rpt. New York, 1968-9), iii, 38-78. In a short piece, "The Precursors of Defoe: Puritanism and the Rise of the Novel", in *On the Novel*, ed. B. S. Benediktz (1971), pp. 206-17, Arnold Kettle does point to the secularization of spiritual autobiography and the increasingly mercenary interests of Puritan-

ism as contributing to the development of realism, but he does not hold that the theological writings of the Puritans had any contribution to make.

³ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957; rpt. Harmondsworth, 1963), pp. 73-88; G. A. Starr, *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography* (Princeton, 1965) and *Defoe and Casuistry* (Princeton, 1971).

⁴ Roger Sharrock, *Life and Story in The Pilgrim's Progress*, Friends of Dr. Williams's Library 32nd Lecture (1978), pp. 6, 11.

⁵ *The Pilgrim's Progress*, ed. Roger Sharrock (Harmondsworth, 1965), p. 31; all references in the text are to this Penguin edition.

⁶ For the dating of the composition of Part I see Professor Sharrock's argument in his revision of J. B. Wharey's edition of *The Pilgrim's Progress* for the Oxford English Texts series, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1960), pp. xxi-xxxv.

⁷ Roberta Florence Brinkley (ed.), *Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1968), p. 475.

⁸ B. J. Mandel, "Bunyan and the Autobiographer's Artistic Purpose", *Criticism*, 10 (1968), 225-43; Owen Watkins, *The Puritan Experience* (1972), pp. 9, 37-49, 101-20; G. A. Starr, *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography*, pp. 16-17, 36ff.; Roger Sharrock, *John Bunyan* (1954; rpt. 1968), pp. 55-6, 61-4.

⁹ Roger Sharrock, "Spiritual Autobiography in *The Pilgrim's Progress*", *Review of English Studies*, 24 (1948), 102-20.

¹⁰ John Milton, *Areopagitica* (1644) in *Selected Prose*, ed. C. A. Patrides (Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 213 (some texts read "wayfaring" for "war-faring": the uncertainty happily makes the point); Roger Sharrock, *John Bunyan*, pp. 194-6; William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (1938; rpt. New York, 1957), pp. 142-72.

¹¹ Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: the Seventeenth Century* (1939; rpt. Boston, 1961), pp. 331-62; L. A. Sasek, *The Literary Temper of the English Puritans* (1961; rpt. New York, 1969), pp. 39-56; Kenneth B. Murdock, *Literature and Theology in Colonial New England* (1949; rpt. New York, 1963), pp. 34-65; Katherine Koller, "The Puritan Preacher's Contribution to Fiction", *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 11 (1948), 321-40.

¹² Richard Baxter, *The Crucifying of the World by the Cross of Christ* (1658), preface, ff. a2v-a3; *id.*, *A Treatise of Knowledge and Love Compared* (1689), p. 261; *id.*, *Directions for Weak Distempered Christians* (1669), pt. 1, pp. 97-8; see Perry Miller, *New England Mind*, p. 48, for identical statements from William Ames, John Preston and Thomas Hooker.

¹³ Richard Baxter, *Directions for Weak Christians*, pt. i, pp. 106-7; *id.*, *A Christian Directory* (1673), I, vi, 320; *id.*, *The Life of Faith*, enlarged ed. (1670), pp. 158-62. On the general diffusion of this preference for practical divinity, see H. R. McAdoo, *The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology* (1948), pp. xi, 13.

¹⁴ Samuel Clarke, *A General Martyrologie*, 2nd ed. (1660), p. 28; Clarke uses the same words of William Gouge and Richard Harris in his *Collection of the Lives of Ten Eminent Divines* (1662), pp. 106, 311, thus testifying to the store set on this evangelical concern for ordinary people.

¹⁵ John Preston, *op. cit.*, preface, f.A3.

¹⁶ *True Christianity* (1655), p. 120.

¹⁷ James Janeway, *Invisibles, Realities . . . in the . . . Life . . . of Mr. John Janeway* (1673), preface, ff. A6v-A7.

¹⁸ H. R. McAdoo, *Caroline Moral Theology*, p. 15.

¹⁹ Richard Baxter, "Directions", appended to Thomas Gouge, *Christian Directions* (1664), pp. 80-1; *id.*, *The Right Method for a Settled Peace of Conscience* (1653), pp. 4-5.

²⁰ William Spurstowe, *Satana Noemata: or the Wiles of Satan* (1666), pp. 40-1.

²¹ Arthur Dent, *The Plaine Mans Path-way*, 16th impression (1617), p. 29.

²² L. B. Wright, "William Perkins", *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 3 (1940), 196.

²³ e.g. E. M. W. Tillyard, *The English Epic and its Background* (1954),

p. 393 and, in slightly different terms, Henri Talon, *John Bunyan*, trans. Barbara Wall (1951), p. 219; Roger Sharrock, *John Bunyan*, p. 138.

²⁴ This is not to go as far as Stanley E. Fish, who, in *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1972), pp. 224-64, argued against any kind of progress in *The Pilgrim's Progress*; he has been ably answered by J. R. Knott, "Bunyan's Gospel Day: A Reading of *The Pilgrim's Progress*", *English Literary Renaissance*, 3 (1973), 443-61.

²⁵ William Haller, *Rise of Puritanism*, p. 96; Richard Baxter, *A Treatise of Self-Denyall* (1660), p. 124.

²⁶ John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding & The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, Everyman's Library (1928), preface to *Mr. Badman*, p. 139 (Bunyan, *The Works*, ed. G. Offor, 3 vols. (1860-2), iii, 590).

²⁷ Richard Baxter, *The Saints Everlasting Rest* (1650), p. 420; Isaac Ambrose, *Media: the Middle Things*, 3rd ed. (1657), p. 84.

²⁸ Oliver Heywood, *Autobiography*, ed. J. H. Turner, 4 vols. (1882-5), i, 151.

²⁹ John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding . . .*, §§ 37-42, pp. 16-17 (*Works*, i, 10-11).

³⁰ Roger Sharrock, *John Bunyan*, p. 89.

³¹ William Spurstowe, *op. cit.*, preface, f.A3v; Thomas Adams, "The Sinner's Passing Bell", in *The Workes* (1629), pp. 252-3; Richard Baxter, *Life of Faith*, p. 183; Thomas Taylor, *Meditations, from the Creatures* (1628), p. 74; *Poems of Anne Bradstreet*, ed. R. Hutchinson (New York, 1969), p. 187; Bunyan, *Works*, iii, 500 (quoted in Sharrock, *John Bunyan*, p. 100). On the general dissemination of this attitude see the admirable study, which does firmly relate Bunyan to the Puritan tradition, by U. M. Kaufmann, *The Pilgrim's Progress and Traditions in Puritan Meditation* (New Haven, 1966), esp. pp. 175-95 and Perry Miller, *New England Mind*, pp. 207-35.

³² *Bunyan, Works*, iii, 747ff.

³³ George Herbert, *A Priest to the Temple* (1652), in *The Works*, ed. F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford, 1941), p. 257.

³⁴ Richard Baxter, *Directions for Weak Christians*, ff.G8-G8v and pt. i, 17-18.

³⁵ Richard Baxter, *The Scripture Gospel Defended . . . against the Libertines* (1690), preface to pt. i, f.A2: Baxter's *How Far Holiness is the Design of Christianity* (1671) was written as a sympathetic gloss on Edward Fowler's *The Design of Christianity* (1670) to allay the fears of those who thought Fowler wrote against the "Glory of Free Justification": such a one was Bunyan in *A Defence of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith* (1672) which attacked Fowler with considerable heat. (*Works*, ii, 280ff.).

³⁶ Bunyan, *Works*, ii, 549; *A Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity* (1684), (*Works*, ii, 507ff.) has a similar thrust.

³⁷ Owen Watkins, *The Puritan Experience*, p. 227.

³⁸ Richard Baxter, *Autobiography*, abridged J. M. Lloyd Thomas (1925; rpt. 1974), pp. 103-32.

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