

THE AUTHOR'S APOLOGY

FOR HIS BOOK

"PILGRIM'S PROGRESS"

BY

JOHN BUNYAN

Copyright (Public Domain)

www.reformedontheweb.com/home/.html

(Reformed on the Web)

THE AUTHOR'S APOLOGY FOR HIS BOOK

When at the first I took my Pen in hand,
Thus for to write; I did not understand
That I at all should make a little Book
In such a mode; Nay, I had undertook
To make another, which, when almost done,
Before I was aware, I this begun.

And thus it was: I writing of the Way
And Race of Saints in this our Gospel-Day,
Fell suddenly into an Allegory
About their Journey, and the way to Glory,
In more than twenty things, which I set down;
This done, I twenty more had in my Crown,
And they again began to multiply,
Like sparks that from the coals of Fire do flie.
Nay then, thought I, if that you breed so fast,
I'll put you by your selves, lest you at last
Should prove *ad infinitum*, and eat out
The Book that I already am about.

Well, so I did; but yet I did not think
To shew to all the World my Pen and Ink
In such a mode; I only thought to make
I knew not what: nor did I undertake
Thereby to please my Neighbour; no, not I,
I did it mine own self to gratifie.

Neither did I but vacant seasons spend
In this my Scribble; Nor did I intend
But to divert my self in doing this,
From worser thoughts, which make me do amiss.

Thus I set Pen to Paper with delight,
And quickly had my thoughts in black and white.

For having now my Method by the end;
Still as I pull'd, it came; and so I penn'd
It down, until it came at last to be
For length and breadth the bigness which you see.

Well, when I had thus put mine ends together,
I shew'd them others, that I might see whether
They would condemn them, or them justifie:
And some said, let them live; some, let them die:
Some said, John, print it; others said, Not so:
Some said, It might do good; others said, No.

Now was I in a straight, and did not see
Which was the best thing to be done by me:
At last I thought, Since you are thus divided,
I print it will, and so the case decided.

For, thought I; Some I see would have it done,
Though others in that Channel do not run;
To prove then who advised for the best,
Thus I thought fit to put it to the test.

I further thought, if now I did deny
Those that would have it thus, to gratifie,
I did not know, but hinder them I might,
Of that which would to them be great delight.

For those that were not for its coming forth;
I said to them, *Offend you I am loth*;
Yet since your Brethren pleased with it be,
Forbear to judge, till you do further see.

If that thou wilt not read, let it alone;
Some love the meat, some love to pick the bone:
Yea, that I might them better palliate,^[1]
I did too with them thus Expostulate.

May I not write in such a stile as this?
In such a method too, and yet not miss
Mine end, thy good? why may it not be done?

Dark Clouds bring Waters, when the bright bring none;

Yea, dark or bright, if they their silver drops
Cause to descend, the Earth, by yielding Crops,
Gives praise to both, and carpeth not at either,
But treasures up the Fruit they yield together:

Yea, so commixes both, that in her Fruit
None can distinguish this from that, they suit
Her well, when hungry: but if she be full,
She spues out both, and makes their blessing null.

You see the ways the Fisher-man doth take
To catch the Fish; what Engins doth he make?
Behold! how he ingageth all his Wits;
Also his Snares, Lines, Angles, Hooks and Nets:
Yet Fish there be, that neither Hook nor Line,
Nor Snare, nor Net, nor Engin can make thine;
They must be grop'd for, and be tickled too,
Or they will not be catcht, what e'er you do.

How doth the Fowler seek to catch his Game,
By divers means, all which one cannot name?
His Gun, his Nets, his Lime-twigs, light and bell:
He creeps, he goes, he stands; yea, who can tell
Of all his postures? Yet there's none of these
Will make him master of what Fowls he please.
Yea, he must Pipe, and Whistle, to catch this;
Yet if he does so, that Bird he will miss.

If that a Pearl may in a Toads-head dwell,
And may be found too in an Oister-shell;
If things that promise nothing, do contain
What better is then Gold; who will disdain,
That have an inkling^[2] of it, there to look,
That they may find it? Now my little Book,
(Tho void of all those paintings^[3] that may make
It with this or the other man to take,)
Is not without those things that do excel,
What do in brave,^[4] but empty notions dwell.

Well, yet I am not fully satisfied,
That this your Book will stand, when soundly try'd.

Why, what's the matter? It is dark. What tho?^[5]

But it is feigned, What of that I trow?

Some men by feigning words as dark as mine,
Make truth to spangle, and its rays to shine.

But they want solidness. Speak man thy mind:
They drown'd the weak; Metaphors make us blind.

Solidity, indeed becomes the Pen
Of him that writeth things Divine to men:
But must I needs want solidness, because
By Metaphors I speak; was not Gods Laws,
His Gospel-laws in older time held forth
By Types, Shadows and Metaphors? Yet loth
Will any sober man be to find fault
With them, lest he be found for to assault
The highest Wisdom. No, he rather stoops,
And seeks to find out what by pins and loops,
By Calves, and Sheep; by Heifers, and by Rams;
By Birds and Herbs, and by the blood of Lambs;
God speaketh to him: And happy is he
That finds the light, and grace that in them be.

Be not too forward therefore to conclude,
That I want solidness; that I am rude:
All things solid in shew, not solid be;
All things in parables despise not we,
Lest things most hurtful lightly we receive;
And things that good are, of our souls bereave.

My dark and cloudy words they do but hold
The Truth, as Cabinets inclose the Gold.

The prophets used much by Metaphors
To set forth Truth; Yea, who so considers
Christ, his Apostles too, shall plainly see,
That Truths to this day in such Mantles be.

Am I afraid to say that holy Writ,
Which for its Stile, and Phrase, puts down all Wit,
Is every where so full of all these things,
(Dark Figures, Allegories,) yet there springs
From that same Book,^[6] that lustre, and those rayes
Of light, that turns our darkest nights to days.

Come, let my Carper, to his Life now look,
And find There darker Lines, than in my Book
He findeth any. Yea, and let him know,
That in his best things there are worse lines too.

May we but stand before impartial men,
To his poor One, I durst adventure Ten,
That they will take my meaning in these lines
Far better then his lies in Silver Shrines.
Come, Truth, although in Swadling-clouts, I find
Informs the Judgement, rectifies the Mind,
Pleases the Understanding, makes the Will
Submit; the Memory too it doth fill
With what doth our Imagination please;
Likewise, it tends our troubles to appease.

Sound words I know Timothy is to use;
And old Wives Fables he is to refuse,
But yet grave Paul him no where doth forbid
The use of Parables; in which lay hid
That Gold, those Pearls, and precious stones that were
Worth digging for; and that with greatest care.

Let me add one word more, O Man of God!
Art thou offended? dost thou wish I had
Put forth my matter in another dress,
Or that I had in things been more express?
Three things let me propound, then I submit
To those that are my betters, (as is fit.)

1. I find not that I am denied the use
Of this my method, so I no abuse

Put on the Words, Things, Readers, or be rude
In handling Figure or Similitude,
In application; but, all that I may,
Seek the advance of Truth, this or that way:
Denied did I say? Nay, I have leave,
(Example too, and that from them that have
God better pleased by their words or ways,
Then any Man that breatheth now adays,)
Thus to express my mind, thus to declare
Things unto thee that excellentest are.

2. I find that men (as high as Trees) will write
Dialogue-wise; yet no Man doth them slight
For writing so: Indeed if they abuse
Truth, cursed be they, and the craft they use
To that intent; but yet let Truth be free
To make her Salleys upon Thee, and Me,
Which way it pleases God. For who knows how,
Better then he that taught us first to Plow,
To guide our Mind and Pens for his Design?
And he makes base things usher in Divine.

3. I find that holy Writ in many places,
Hath semblance with this method, where the cases
Doth call for one thing to set forth another:
Use it I may then, and yet nothing smother
Truths golden beams; Nay, by this method may
Make it cast forth its rayes as light as day.

And now, before I do put up my Pen,
I'll shew 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.

This Book it chaulketh out before thine eyes,
The man that seeks the everlasting Prize:
It shews you whence he comes, whither he goes,
What he leaves undone; also what he does:
It also shews you how he runs, and runs,

Till he unto the Gate of Glory comes.

It shews too, who sets out for life amain,
As if the lasting Crown they would attain:
Here also you may see the reason why
They lose their labour, and like fools do die.

This Book will make a Traveller of thee,
If by its Counsel thou wilt ruled be;
It will direct thee to the Holy Land,
If thou wilt its Directions understand:
Yea, it will make the sloathful, active be;
The Blind also, delightful things to see.^[7]

Art thou for something rare, and profitable?
Wouldest thou see a Truth within a Fable?
Art thou forgetful? wouldest thou remember
From New-Years-day to the last of December?
Then read my fancies, they will stick like Burs,
And may be to the Helpless, Comforters.

This Book is writ in such a Dialect,
As may the minds of listless men affect:
It seems a Novelty, and yet contains
Nothing but sound and honest Gospel-strains.

Wouldst thou divert thy self from Melancholly?
Would'st thou be pleasant, yet be far from folly?
Would'st thou read Riddles, and their Explanation?
Or else be drowned in thy Contemplation?
Dost thou love picking-meat? or would'st thou see
A man i' th Clouds, and hear him speak to thee?
Would'st thou be in a Dream, and yet not sleep?
Or would'st thou in a moment Laugh and Weep?
Wouldest thou lose thy self, and catch no harm?
And find thy self again without a charm?
Would'st read thy self, and read thou know'st not what
And yet know whether thou art blest or not,
By reading the same lines? O then come hither,

And lay my Book, thy Head and Heart together.

JOHN BUNYAN

FOOTNOTES:

[1] In the first eight editions published by Bunyan, the word ‘palliate’ is used; but in the ninth (1684), and subsequently, it was altered to ‘moderate.’ — Ed.

[2] ‘Inkling;’ intimation, slight knowledge. — Ed.

[3] The first and second editions of the Pilgrim's Progress had no cuts, not even the sleeping portrait. — Ed.

[4] ‘Brave;’ showy, ostentatious. — Ed.

[5] What though [it be dark]? — Ed.

[6] ‘That same book’ made a prison a far happier place than a palace without it. Wondrous book! happy is that soul which is enlightened to ‘behold wondrous things out of God's law,’ Ps. cxix. 18. — Ed.

[7] Many there have been to whom, by loss of sight, all this world has been shut up in darkness, but who have richly enjoyed a spiritual vision of God, of heaven, and of eternal bliss. — Ed.