

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>

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

the *privod* or introduction to the doctrines of the sect, and the *radenia* or religious exercises. Connected with these are the *svalni griekh* and the strange eucharistic celebrations. There is also an account of their communistic doctrines and lives in monasteries.

Of these sectarians there are many forms, such as the *Skakuni*, the leapers, who seem to have come originally from the Baltic provinces, and the *Malyovantsi*, who show Khlistism influenced by Stundism. It is somewhat curious that among these sects is one the followers of which pray to Napoleon, reminding us of the fanatics who follow the *cultus* of Nicholson, the English general slain at Delhi.

The author calls attention to the great influence of foreign sects upon the Russians. How could the *muzhik* have acquired such mystic conceptions of religion, when the more educated classes of his country seem only to have grasped the outward and material rites of Christianity? The answer seems to be, that many of the forms of heresy prevalent in the West passed over into Russia, such as the Flagellants, Shakers, and others. In the same way, in the early period of Polish history, we

have the great spread of the doctrines of the Unitarians from the West.

The notions of witchcraft came to the Slav from the Finn. We know from Horsey's account of Ivan the Terrible, that witches were especially brought from Lapland. The work concludes with an account of the Bogomile heresy, so famous in the earlier Slavonic days. These doctrines spread all over Europe. They are considered by many the chief source from which the teaching of the *Khlisti* arose. They came from Byzantium and Bulgaria, and moved westward. Many of the strange apocryphal books in Old Slavonic are ascribed to the Bogomiles. Their writings contain mixtures of Christian and heathen beliefs, and all the legends which have grown round the history of Christ, such as the story of the tree from which the cross was made, the account of how Christ ploughed, and similar narratives. With the Bogomiles this first volume of the work of Herr Grass ends. Some valuable appendices and a complete bibliography are added. We shall await with interest the volume which treats of the *Skoptsi*.

W. R. MORFILL.

Oxford.

The Pilgrim's Progress.

BY THE REV. JOHN KELMAN, M.A., D.D., EDINBURGH.

Vanity Fair.

THIS passage is one of the permanent and priceless gifts of religion to literature. The world is very sensitive, and all ordinary and direct criticisms of it are keenly resented. But in this brilliant picture it has consented to recognize itself. The genius manifest alike in the name and in the description is so irresistible, the mingled sarcasm and pathos of the passages so true to life, that no course was open for the world but to adopt the title or to change its ways; and, when frankness and repentance were the only alternatives which John Bunyan had left to it, it boldly chose the former.

Bunyan's trade had led him to know well the country fairs of his time and neighbourhood, and his natural disposition had led him to love them

only too well. From *Horne's Year-book*, published in 1786, we have the following graphic account of the Fair of Sturbridge, near Bedford:—'The shops or booths are built in rows like streets, having each its name; as Garlick Row, Booksellers' Row, Book Row, etc. Here are all sorts of traders, who sell by wholesale or retail; as goldsmiths, toymen, braziers, turners, milliners, haberdashers, hatters, mercers, drapers, pewterers, china warehouses, and, in a word, most trades that can be found in London. Here also are taverns, coffee-houses, and eating-houses in great plenty. The chief diversions are puppets, rope-dancing, and music-booths. To this fair, people from Bedfordshire and the adjoining counties still resort. Similar kinds of fairs are now kept at Frankfort and Leipzig. These mercantile fairs were very injurious to morals; but not to the extent of debauchery and villainy, which

reign in our present annual fairs, near the metropolises and large cities.'

John Bunyan has elsewhere expounded pretty fully his views on trade. In *The Holy War* we find that Mansoul was 'a market town, much given to commerce,' and so 'cumbered with abundance that they shall be forced to make their castle a warehouse.' In *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, we have an exposition of an extraordinary number of mean tricks in petty commerce—tricks with weights and measures, with the manipulation of accounts, with dishonest bankruptcy, with selling under cost price, and so on. The lines laid down by Mr. Wiseman for Christian trading would, we fear, be regarded in many quarters as naïve to-day: 'If thou sellest do not commend; if thou buyest do not dispraise, any otherwise but to give the thing that thou hast to do with its just value and worth. Art thou a seller and do things grow cheap? set not thy hand to help or hold them up higher. Art thou a buyer and do things grow dear? use no cunning or deceitful language to pull them down. Leave things to the Providence of God, and do thou with moderation submit to His hand.'

Our walk through Vanity Fair fortunately does not lay upon us the duty of settling the relations between Providence and Political Economy. The main thing which it stands for in the allegory is the change from inward to external life. This is the first crowd we meet with. The introspective aspect of Christian life comes more naturally to the Puritan author, and he has kept largely to that. The public aspect, however, must also be dealt with. The allegory has to locate this, and so it comes to pass that almost all the worldliness and folly which a Christian has to meet with in a lifetime is concentrated in the streets and buildings of this Fair. As it happens, this is a city—'the City of Destruction in gala dress,' and, as we have already noticed, there is here the contrast between city life and life on the highway. The passage is thus specially intended for young people coming from the country to the town, and for all who are called forth to more public situations in shop, factory, office, or university. Yet big cities are not the only places of worldliness, temptation, and sin. Vanity Fair is a relative idea, and all its deadliness and danger may be found in many a quite small compass. It may be, and often is, a country fair.

The picture is evidently intended to represent 'European society as it existed in the days of Charles II.'—honest and dishonest, quiet and outrageous alike. The various rows represent the types of worldliness cultivated by each of the several countries at that time. Yet certainly the special reference is to England. Cheever (p. 10) quotes a remarkable passage from Hume, in which that historian sympathetically describes the relaxation of Puritan strictness at the Restoration, and in the figures of these two pilgrims austere walking through the noisy streets of Vanity, we can see the forms of such men as Owen, Baxter, Goodwin, and Home, walking apart amidst the dance of contemporary English life. These plainly-clad men have long ago entered among the splendours of the Celestial City, and as we look back into the past, the sadness gathers not on them, but on the faded colours and quenched lights of the world from which they kept aloof. There is no pathos more tragic than that of an ancient Vanity Fair. As we walk through the streets of Pompeii or Herculaneum, as we pore over an old wood-engraving of the Villa of Mæcenas, or as we read such a poem as Browning's 'Toccata of Galuppi's,' we feel the full force of this. They were so intensely alive, these 'dear dead women,' and these men—and now they are so dead. More common than this sentiment of the Vanity Fairs of the past, is the habit of bringing Vanity Fair up to date, and describing it as it may be seen to-day. Thackeray's great classic is, of course, the supreme example of this. But Hawthorne has done it in a few masterly touches which form the cleverest part of his Celestial Railroad. Cheever does it, allegorizing on his own account in some striking pages; and, indeed, the idea is too obvious to have him omitted by any commentator. It is noteworthy that in these modern versions the religion of Vanity Fair is usually marked out for special attention. Thackeray's clergymen, Hawthorne's, and Cheever's, are all of the same school, to which belongs also Meredith's 'Rev. Groseman Buttermore.'

Ancient and modern, Vanity Fair is to some a place of infinite boredom, and presents to them no temptation. To others it is so tempting as to utterly intoxicate them until they openly ask, 'If this be vanity, who'd be wise? Vanity let it be.' But the solemn lesson which Bunyan proclaims at the beginning in his 'lighter than vanity,' must be learned sooner or later. There is a tale of a

great Italian lawyer, who had staked his fortune and career on a famous case he was to plead. In the pleading he surpassed himself, and all seemed secure. But in the progress of the case it became clear that he had based his whole argument on the mistaken reading of a statute. At first he resisted the conviction, but eventually he saw that it was so indeed. In bitterness he turned to leave the court, and as he passed they heard him say, 'World, I've found thee out!' To which may be added the words of Thackeray, in which he describes Miss Crawley's deathbed: 'Picture to yourself, oh fair young reader, a worldly, selfish, graceless, thankless, religionless old woman, writhing in pain and fear, and without her wig. Picture her yourself, and, e'er you be old, learn to love and pray.'

Beelzebub.

It is characteristic of Bunyan that, in spite of his abnormally developed imagination and the literary fashion of his day, his demonology is so restrained. We have already pointed out, that while Milton's Satan, sometimes indeed represented as a toad or reptile, is sometimes a great and really magnificently princely figure, no devil of John Bunyan's is ever admirable. His Beelzebub is purposely kept out of sight. We see his works, and hear his laughter from the empty air or behind the palace wall, but himself we do not see. But he is always loathsome, despicable, and hated with a deadly hate. He is liker Luther's devil than Milton's—not a literary creation, but a terrifying memory of experience. Bunyan could never have drawn Mephistopheles, that 'familiarily devilish' creation of Goethe's. His Beelzebub is indeed a monarch of vast power. Yet the emphasis is always laid not so much on the power as on the malignancy of it, and on the despicable meanness of its exercise. He is coarse and scoundrelly, nearer Milton's toad than his archfiend. The weird conception of the city owned by a devil reminds us of Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame*, and of one especially of the carved demons whose stony leer, as he looks down upon the city, seems still to say, 'It is mine, and I shall claim my own.'

The Merchandise.

The bitter words of Tacitus come to mind as we read this list of wares, that 'at Rome anything may be had for money.' There is the same combination of solid material reality and meretricious

brilliance, which always characterizes the picture of the Pursuit of Pleasure. It needs some strength of moral fibre to resist the power of that impression, and in Part III. it is a stroke almost of genius that makes Yielding mistake this Fair for the Celestial City, and forthwith enter a tavern, where he gets drunk and dies in the night.

Beelzebub 'governs by amusing,' like a sort of infernal music hall manager. It is a secret that can always be made profitable. It was the policy of the later Roman Empire, as the ruined amphitheatres that lie on the hillsides of many lands still attest. In every age when the disease of pleasure-loving has become epidemic in certain sections of the community, Beelzebub and his representatives find that he who can amuse can rule. The appeal to the lust of pleasure is a potent force in politics as well as elsewhere, and Vanity Fair stands for great and terrible facts in public life. 'There was a sort of stock or scrip called Conscience,' says the author of the Celestial Railroad, 'which seemed to be in great demand and would purchase almost anything. Indeed, few rich commodities were to be obtained without paying a heavy sum in this particular stock, and a man's business was seldom very lucrative unless he knew precisely when and how to throw his hoard of Conscience into the market. . . . Occasionally a member of Congress recruited his pocket by the sale of his constituents, and I was assured that public officers have often sold their country at very moderate prices. . . . Tracts of land and golden mansions situate in the Celestial City were often exchanged at very disadvantageous rates for a few years' lease of small, dismal, inconvenient tenements in Vanity Fair. . . . I once had the pleasure to see him [Beelzebub] bargaining with a miser for his soul, which, after much ingenious skirmishing on both sides, His Highness succeeded in obtaining at about the value of sixpence. The prince remarked, with a smile, that he was a loser by the transaction.'

Every word of this strange catalogue of sale has public or private history behind it. One has not to seek long among the records of European diplomacy to find the names of countries that have been bought and sold. As to wives and husbands, the story of Napoleon and Josephine is but a conspicuous instance of much that is done in humbler places. Richter, in his *Levana*, describes the tricks of the matrimonial market not

too bitterly when he speaks of fashionable mothers and daughters who sacrifice hearts to gain a fashionable alliance as 'shooting wildfowl with diamonds.' As to the 'souls' that were for sale, that is the ghastliest touch of all, and the most patent fact.

One article of commerce is omitted, and yet it is implicit in all the rest. In *Grace Abounding* we read that John Bunyan's great temptation at one time was 'To sell and part with this most blessed Christ, to exchange Him for the things of this life, for anything.' It was this suggestion that became for a whole year almost an insanity with Bunyan, so that 'I could neither eat my food, stoop for a pin, chop a stick, or cast mine eyes to look on this or that, but still the temptation would come, "Sell Christ for this, or sell Christ for that; sell Him, sell Him." There is no word of this in the present passage, yet this is what it all implies. The men were very poor. Their one possession was Christ. Would they play the part of Judas? Put thus, the temptation seems so disproportionate and monstrously unreasonable that one would think it must cease to be a temptation at all. Yet many men sell Christ for trifles offered in their own Vanity Fair, and that is often a pitiable market enough.

The rows are national in their names, every country having its own form of Vanity. But Rome receives special notice, in view of the struggles of the time between the fashionable ritualism and the unfashionable Protestant worship. Perhaps there may be an allusion to the sale of indulgences, but more probably the reference is to the sensuous as opposed to the spiritual ways of religion. If the sneer at Rome seem to some uncalled for, it is to be remembered that this was written during the reign of that King of England who 'was crowned in his youth with the Covenant in his hand, and died with the Host sticking in his throat.'

The Pilgrims.

Their way lay just through this town of Vanity. Not that there were not other ways, as in the case of the Hill Difficulty, which would have led them round the walls. Every religious faith has found it necessary to provide for the unsocial and ascetic moods of its professors. The Roman faith has done this by its conventual and hermitage life; the Protestant by such hymns as Cowper's—

'Far from the world, O Lord, I flee
From strife and tumult far,
From scenes where Satan wages still
His most successful war.'

These soft ways of evading the world are tempting enough at times. As occasional luxuries, they are not only legitimate but very helpful, as one of these Pilgrims had already found in the House Beautiful. But in the main the way lies up the face of Hill Difficulty and just through Vanity Fair. If it were not so, Satan would always and everywhere 'wage his most successful war.' As Bunyan reminds us, Jesus Christ Himself had found His course to lie that way; and tempted men may well tremble to think what would have been the consequence to them had He avoided the danger of the direct path. When, however, we try to translate our allegory into plain terms, and inquire into the meaning of this walk just through the Fair, we find ourselves at once among subtle questions of casuistry. If it be the mark of a Christian to be obviously and violently different from the world, the easy expedient of non-conformity in every detail of speech, manner, and conduct is open to him. So we have at once that fantastic and exaggerated mannerism which advertises a peculiar people. The solution of the problem seems to be that nonconformity, as well as conformity, may be a snare to Christian men. Either, when it becomes an end in itself, is a means of 'taking the eye off the object.' Looking to Jesus, and to the straight path of His will, one learns to disregard the conventionalities either of the world or of its enemies, to judge each detail of conduct by one's own light, and so to be original in the sense of direct dealing with conscience and with God. While this is so upon essential matters, one finds, as a rule, that in things non-essential the most profitable and worthy course is that which is the least conspicuous. There is no virtue in my painting my front door red because my godless neighbour happens to have painted his green.

These men, however, walking through the street with no parade of protest or of difference, soon attracted the notice of the natives. It is surely an insecure condition of affairs in which men raise a hubbub about any whom they see unlike themselves. There is not so much to break the monotony of life for most of us, that we should so resent an innovation *a priori*. It is to be feared that a restless conscience must have been at work

here to account for the attack. Three points of difference had attracted their attention.

1. *Their raiment.*—‘You, sir, I entertain for one of my Hundred; only, I do not like the fashion of your garments: you will say, they are Persian; but let them be changed’ (*King Lear*, quoted for *Ferishtah's Fancies*). It is curious that after the fight with Apollyon, we never again hear of Christian’s armour. The exigencies of the allegory are sufficient to explain this, and we may conceive of the two in Vanity Fair clad in those robes of righteousness which the shining one gives to pilgrims at the Cross.

There is nothing in which, then and now, there has been less freedom of action than in clothes. Men are accustomed to treat the bondage of fashion in dress as weakness exclusively cultivated by the other sex. Let any man to-day dress himself in the early Victorian garments of John Leech’s pictures, and venture but once down the quietest street in his district, and he will find himself less emancipated than he thought. In his *Foundations of Belief*, Mr. A. J. Balfour has a clever and instructive chapter upon fashions, which is not without its bearing upon this part of the *Pilgrim’s Progress*. In Bunyan’s day the Puritan was a marked man by his dress, and no doubt this picture is drawn directly from the life.

Yet it was not merely the cut of the Pilgrims’ garments which disgusted these well-dressed people. They wore old and tattered garments—an inexcusable thing to observe in the streets of any self-respecting community. Yet old and tattered flags are hung in cathedrals, and if the uniform of a soldier back from the wars excites the ridicule of dandies who have been hanging about the antechambers of the Court while he was fighting for them, well, so much the worse for the dandies. There is many a lad and many a girl whose clothes are worn till they are shabby, that they may help their parents, or contribute towards the scanty income of the family. And there is many a life that is intellectually and artistically threadbare because it has spent its resources on others.

But besides all this, which, after all, is accidental, the very fact of the robe of righteousness is an offence to the men of the world. With all its tinsel, their clothing is not keeping out the rain or the wind from them, and they know well enough which is the better cloth when they see men protected by it from the weather.

All these things offended the men of the Fair, and so they called the Pilgrims ‘Bedlams.’ It is an easy taunt, this name of lunatic. In most men’s mouths it means simply ‘different from myself,’ at least ‘unlike other people.’ The Pharisees used it of the Master Himself; and their descendants, and the populace who echo their words, still use it of His followers. It is a taunt very hard to bear. A man who can be indifferent to scurrility and immune to the vilest slanders, may yet find it almost intolerable to find himself not taken seriously at all. Those are wise who remember that this of lunacy is a double-edged accusation. Either they or their accusers are beside themselves. And the taunt often expresses nothing more than a shrewd suspicion on the part of those who use it, that their own judgment is not too securely seated. God has, after all, set Eternity in the hearts of men, and those who live for the things of time, in those few years that are so obviously hastening into the unknown, can hardly escape such doubts in their bad quarters of an hour.

2. The pilgrims’ *speech* also irritated them. The men of the Fair doubtless said that it was their Puritan drawl which got upon their nerves, and that they disliked men who talked sanctimoniously. But it was such speech as that which he had heard the two poor women of Bedford use that Bunyan meant, of which he says in *Grace Abounding*, ‘Methought they spake as if joy did make them speak; they spake with such pleasantness of Scripture language, and with such appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me as if they had found a new world.’ That was the real trouble of it—the feel of a new world. Vanity Fair is above all things provincial, a place of the narrowest outlook and the most intensely local spirit. In its littleness and vulgarity it resents and despises everything foreign, and those who know something of the true breadth of the world of human interests are sure to offend its insularity.

3. *The pilgrims set light by their wares.*—There is a touch from real life, for we are told that Holy Hunt of Hitchin, a friend of Bunyan’s, passing the market-place where mountebanks were performing, one cried after him, ‘Look there, Mr. Hunt!’ Turning his head another way, he replied, ‘Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.’ If it be replied that Holy Hunt of Hitchin was perhaps an unlikely person to judge fairly of such things as Art, or

Literature, or Science, and that these also are good gifts of God, and may be looked on as the inheritance of His saints, Bunyan's reply is in his Pilgrims' words, 'We buy the Truth.' The finest gifts of the world may or may not be part of the Truth. It is easy for the inhabitants to speak of them in lofty and solemn terms as the true gifts of heaven. But all depends upon whether they are seen and sought after in the light of time or in the light of Eternity. 'Truth,' as has been memorably said, 'is the cry of all, but the game of only a few.' Vanity Fair, seeking eagerly after many good things as well as many bad ones, seeks them only for the enrichment and pleasure of this earthly life. That motive turns them at best into half-truths, which for practical purposes, and in their effect on the spirit, become the most dangerous kinds of lies.

It is no wonder that this retort angered the townsmen. Had the Pilgrims called their ideals wicked, they would have cared less. But to

call them false—empty and passing shows, which only deluded men would follow as they were doing—that touched their vanity and struck home.

Very striking and far-reaching in its suggestiveness is this conception of the Christian's course as a lifelong purchase of truth. It reminds us of the pilgrimage of Piers the Plowman, and the goal of Truth to which it led. Half-truths and lies, which can pass the hour pleasantly, are always cheap: truth is dear, and may be had only at a great price. The searcher for truth, whether it be scientific or religious, always finds it costly. The poem 'A Grammarian's Funeral' is Browning's great statement of its price. It costs prejudice, self-will, and habits of thought that have to be surrendered; pleasures and much time that have to be sacrificed; health perhaps, and inclination certainly, if study is to be efficient. Those who buy the truth are a standing conscience to all intellectual, moral, and spiritual dilettantes.

The Burning Bush.

BY THE REV. W. O. E. OESTERLEY, M.A., B.D., LONDON.

I.

THE phenomenon of the Burning Bush¹ is represented as having occurred on the 'mountain of God,' *i.e.* Mount Horeb. It will not be necessary to insist on so obvious a truth that the name Horeb must originally have been, in some way or other, connected with a god;² whether a god Horeb existed, after whom the mount was called, or whether (as is more likely) the character of the locality suggested the name, which later on became attached to a god,—whichever of these two suppositions be correct, is a matter of secondary importance; the important point is that a god Horeb (whether this be a proper name or merely an appellative) was believed to have his dwelling-place upon this mountain. The name 'Horeb' comes from the root חרב (*ḥārabh*), 'to dry up.' If, as appears probable, Mount Horeb and Mount Sinai

are not to be differentiated geographically,³ then one is perhaps justified in regarding Horeb as a descriptive appellative of Sin, the Moon-god. Again, if, with many authorities,⁴ we locate Sinai-Horeb on the north-west coast of Arabia, looking on to the Aelanitic gulf, the appropriateness of the presence there of the sanctuary of a god, one of whose characteristics was that of 'drying up,' is very marked, for the ebb and flow of the tides in this gulf are of a striking character. The god who dwelt on the mount was clearly, therefore, regarded as one who was, in some sense, antagonistic to the element of water. It is not an unreasonable deduction to argue, further, that a belief must have existed in a connexion between this god of the mount and the element of fire; we shall return to this point presently. These

³ See the *Oxford Hebrew Lexicon*, *s.v.* חרב; Sayce, *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, pp. 269 ff.; Jeremias, *Das A. T. im Lichte des alten Orients*, p. 258; it is disputed by von Gall, *Altisraelitische Kultstätten*, pp. 15 ff.

⁴ *E.g.* Moore, *Judges*, p. 140; Stade, *Biblische Theologie des A. T.* i. 29.

¹ For parallels, see Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*, i. 490.

² For parallels, see Nielsen, *Die altarabische Mondreligion und die mosaische Ueberlieferung*, pp. 132, 133.