

Luther's *Commentary* on Paul's Galatians and its Elizabethan translation, John Bunyan's 'wounded conscience', and Arthur Dent's *Plaine Mans Pathway to Heaven*.

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Luther gave his lectures on Paul's Galatians in 1534. They offered a rather different theology from his thunderous predestinarian refutation of Erasmus in *De servo arbitrio* (1525). An English translation of the *Commentary* on Galatians appeared in 1575, a tattered copy of which fell into the hands of John Bunyan in the 1650s, and is mentioned lovingly in his autobiography for its capacity to assuage the troubled conscience. Luther was Bunyan's coach in his battles with Satan – his doubts about his election: the Apollyon episode in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, with its flaming darts, is central to the allegory and its chief link to Luther's *Commentary*. How Marxist critics avoid this raises interesting questions about literary criticism. Another issue is whether Bunyan, under the influence of Luther's *Commentary*, moves away from the Calvinist scholasticism of Arthur Dent's *The Plaine Mans Pathway to Heaven* (1601) and of how his own experience and his pastoral practice came to be modified. Was Bunyan "Lutheran" or Calvinist? Was Richard Greave, our chief student of his theology, on the mark? And did Bunyan undergo something similar to the 'tower experience' which later scholars have attributed to Luther?

Doubtless to spread honours in both directions, Luther used to refer to Paul's epistle to the Galatians by the name of the nun he married: his Katie von Bora of biblical texts, so one has to expect

his commentary on Galatians to hold a special place.¹ How did Paul's epistle chime so sweetly with Luther's situation? The Galatians, having been converted, were in Paul's absence shaken in their confidence and felt it necessary to take out a form of insurance by seeking safety in Mount Sinai and the Jewish law and undergoing circumcision. The enraged Paul, former champion of orthodoxy turned radical reformer, apostle to the Gentiles, to recall them to his teaching invokes the pre-Sinaitic figure of Abraham, recipient of God's promise and supreme exemplar of faith preceding the practice of circumcision, and allegorizes the story of the free woman (the Jerusalem above) and the bond woman (Hagar, that is Sinai) and their sons. Bunyan's allegorical pilgrim, part offspring of Luther's commentary on Paul, finds himself at one stage in a state of terror under a fiery Mount Sinai, and escapes from Giant Despair's castle dungeon by means of the 'Key Promise', the Abrahamic promise so trenchantly proclaimed by Paul and followed by Luther in his *Galatians Commentary* – though the lock, in Bunyan's memorable phrase, 'went damnably hard'.

Paul's rejection of salvation by the law, or works, is the key to Luther's theology, and is expanded and paralleled by his rejection of Catholicism and, in particular, the strict discipline of monasticism. But the world was too much with him. Luther owed his survival to the secular power of Frederick III of Saxony; he was faced not only with the might of Rome but with the apocalyptic radicalism of the prophet Münzer and the peasant revolt with its antinomian excess, and then the Anabaptists, and with the super-piety of some of the other reformers.² The civil law and secular power and (alas!) the moral

¹ In *Epistolam S. Pauli ad Galatas Commentarius, ex praelectione D. Martini Luth. collectus* (Wittenberg, 1535), to be referred to as *Galatians Commentary*, whether in Latin or English. For the Elizabethan English translation, two texts have been used: *A Commentarie of M. Doctor Martin Luther upon the Epistle of S. Paule to the Galathians: first collected and gathered word for word out of his preaching, and now out of Latine faithfully translated into English for the unlearned. Diligently rectified, corrected, and newly printed again by Thomas Vautroullier* (London, 1580) and *A Commentary on St Paul's Epistles to the Galatians: A revised and completed translation based on the "Middleton" edition of the English version of 1575*, ed. Philip S. Watson (first published 1953; London, 1972). Unless otherwise specified, all quotations refer to the Watson edition.

² Notably Karlstadt, in whom we have the beginnings of puritanism. Zealotry and strenuous piety only too easily become self-justification. The law is protean: it makes a come-back in many forms.

law had to be given their carefully defined rightful places, which the *Galatians Commentary* does, while Luther himself had to face severe accusations of antinomianism, for the godly could be far too godly while, on the other hand, those in the Spirit were far too sure of their spiritual superiority.

The lectures that formed the commentary were given in 1531. Luther never wrote them down. Whose is the text? Luther's Latin was recorded by three disciples who had developed a shorthand for the purpose. When the transcription took place, Luther wryly remarked in his Preface that he did not realise that he had been so verbose. A version got to England and certain modestly anonymous translators got to work, the first edition appearing in 1575, put out by Vautroullier, that most significant London Huguenot publisher, with a commendatory letter from the Bishop of London, Edwin Sandys. The chief point in the episcopal statement was the efficacy of Luther's work for an 'afflicted conscience'. The phrase should be rightly understood. It did not mean a guilty conscience at having done something wrong, in the modern sense; it meant a troubled mind because of uncertainty of divine acceptance, of being of the elect. The English reformation was modestly Calvinistic. This involved, among other things, the searching of the heart for evidences of God's election, often a long and tormented process, perhaps bordering on despair. Luther did not believe in the freedom of the will in the matter of redemption (as witness his exchange with Erasmus); but he did not expound, like Calvin, and especially his multitude of followers (and not least his English followers), a tight, extensive theory of election with its concomitant psychology of conversion. All the same, Luther's commitment to, and then rejection of, monasticism had been an enormously stressful experience, augmented by his own depressive temperament. The *Galatians Commentary*, however, is an ebullient, heartening rejection of anxious, pious endeavour. The startling view of the religious life in the commentary is backed up in the English translation by a vigour of expression to which Bunyan was eventually to owe much as writer, as well as theologian and agonised convertee.

What we have in Sandys's commendation and, much later, in the strong praise by John Bunyan, is a commingling of Luther with something else. A very youthful Bunyan, released from garrison duty at Newport Pagnell, married a girl who brought him, as part of her meagre dowry, Dent's *The Plaine Man's Pathway to Heaven* (1601),

one of English Calvinism's bestsellers, in fact a sophisticated and accomplished work and a tribute to the 'plaine man' of the seventeenth century.³ It is mentioned only briefly in Bunyan's autobiography, but its influence was great. It taught him the use of conversation and debate between characters and, let it be said, piercing interrogation as a literary form, and with it, characterization. Above all, Dent instructed Bunyan in the logic of Calvinism. On the other hand, it was Luther's lengthy exposition of Paul on Abraham, the free woman and the bond woman, that taught Bunyan about allegory.⁴ It was Luther who coached Bunyan in combat with the devil and probably gave him the key to a final break-through, who taught him to beware of the wrong kind of piety and even, with time, to prefer 'sinners of a lusty size'.⁵ Furthermore, Luther's English translators afforded Bunyan ample example of vigorous English, although Dent was also instructive in certain aspects of literary creation.

Bunyan and Arthur Dent's *Plaine Man's Pathway to Heaven*

Before continuing with Bunyan and Luther, it will be worth spending a little time on Dent. It will give an idea of what Bunyan had to contend with and of how different Luther was, and also of some of the literary capacities that Bunyan learnt to apply in *The Pilgrim's Progress*.⁶ *The Plaine Man's Pathway to Heaven* sounds a welcoming enough title. The sub-title strikes a very different note: 'Wherein every man may clearly see, whether he be saved or damned'. It is likely to provoke the very 'afflicted conscience' that Luther's *Galatians Commentary* sets out to assuage. Luther's path was away from the scholasticism that had been part of his monastic and academic training. Dent's plain man had to tread a path through the new scholasticism bred

³ Arthur Dent, *The Plaine Mans Pathway to Heaven* (1601), 7th Edition (London, 1605). Parenthetic references are made to this edition.

⁴ There are indications that he had read Richard Bernard's *The Isle of Man* which, among other things, contains a scriptural defence of allegory: *The Isle of Man: or, The Legall Proceeding in Manshire against Sinne* (London, 1626).

⁵ John Bunyan, *Good News for the Vilest of Men* (1688; renamed *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved*), ed. Richard L. Greaves, in *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*, ed. Roger Sharrock et al., 13 vols (Oxford 1976–1994), XI (1985), 38.

⁶ It should be noted that the dowry also included Lewis Bayly's *The Practice of Pietie* (London, 1613), but Dent's work is the more fruitful.

in Geneva. To give Dent his due, he sometimes allows his reprobates to argue well, and Dent's replies to their points, looked at objectively, are not always very satisfactory. There are two main objects to the debate. First, the complacently pious Asunetus has to be brought to understand the shallowness of his religion and to experience a proper conviction of sin, the first step in the *ordo salutis*, and second, an early form of "Arminianism", the questioning of the logic and justice of election by Asunetus and, particularly, by Antilegon (the 'caviller'), has to be confuted. The plain man is shaped emotionally and armed intellectually.

Dent's Theologus is fierce in his attacks on 'an honest civil life', an 'outward honesty and civilitie without the inward regeneration of the spirit' (p. 32). Perhaps this anticipates Bunyan's 'pretty young man Civility', son of Mr Legality, of Worldly Wiseman's recommendation. Dent's Asunetus is characterized by a kind of sing-song, whining piety:

As long as I serve God and say my prayers duly and truly,
morning and evening and have a good faith in God . . .
(p. 25).

Eventually, however, he is shaken out of his self-satisfaction and the required conviction of sin is achieved, followed by the desired recovery from near despair by belief in the promise. The consummation follows somewhat too tritely.

Antilegon is another matter. He is engaged in fierce question and answer with Theologus, who is never satisfied with his protestations and evasions.

Theol: How do you know that Christ died for you particularly
and by name?

Antil: Christ died for all men: and therefore for me.

Theol: But all men shall not be saved, by Christ. How therefore
do you know you are one of them, that have special interest in
Christ, and shall be saved by his death?

Antil: This I know, that, we are all sinners, and cannot be saved
by any other, than by Christ.

Theol: Answer directly to my question. How do you know in yourself, and for yourself, that you are one of the elect, and one of those for whom Christ died? (p. 230)

The doctrine of limited atonement is in question. The relentless, insistent battering goes on. Antilegon can never give satisfaction but he makes good points, 'How do you know God's secrets?' (i.e. the decrees). 'God did not make us to condemn us.' The unperturbed reply is in fact not very satisfactory: there are few in heaven, hell is full (p. 265). Elsewhere Dent makes Antilegon ask: 'What reason, justice or equity is there, that sentence of death should be passed upon men before they be borne, and before they have done good or evil?' Dent was supremely confident in his replies. Here his Theologus says that God's will is righteousness, that every man is a sinner and hence justly condemned (p. 278). It is the standard riposte.

The most knotty point is Adam's guilt. (The treatise, one might note, is set forth for the better understanding of the 'simple'!)

[Theol.] Thus then I do determine that Adam sinned necessarily if you respect the decree, or event: but if you respect the first mover and inherent cause which was his own will, then he sinned voluntarily and contingently, for the decree of God did not take away his will or the contingency thereof: but only order and dispose it. Therefore (as a learned writer saith) *Volens peccavit et motu*. He sinned willingly, and for his own motion. And therefore no evil is to be attributed unto God or his decree. (p. 283)

A gloss tells us that the 'learned writer' is Beza, Calvin's successor. Some of the same kind of highly technical argument is occasionally to be found in Bunyan's major theological treatise *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded* (1659).⁷

Such, then, at an exceedingly youthful stage, was Bunyan's contact with Calvinism. If we are to guess at sequence from the evidence of the autobiography, contact with Dent preceded contact with Luther, and the 'wounded conscience' Bunyan talks about in relation to Luther's

⁷ John Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, ed. Richard L. Greaves, in *Miscellaneous Works*, II (1976). This relatively early, but substantial, treatise, was written before Bunyan's imprisonment and so before the autobiography and allegory. Much is encouragement for the 'wounded conscience' and hence shows the still-to-come conversion account already objectified.

Galatians Commentary may have been partly the consequence of reading Dent, for which later acquaintance with Luther offered some welcome relief. I shall return to these arguments later.

Bunyan's Encounter with Luther: *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*

Bunyan's description in his autobiography of his first encounter with Luther's *Galatians Commentary* is worth looking at in some detail. We should remember that the autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666),⁸ has the wisdom of hindsight. In the turbulence of his struggle for assurance he wanted 'some ancient, godly author,' for contemporary authors 'studied to answer such objections as they perceived others were perplexed with or without going down themselves into the deep.' Elsewhere he records a conversation with a godly elder who, he afterwards concludes, was 'a stranger to much combat with the devil.' Then 'God did cast into his hand' Luther's *Galatians Commentary*, 'so old that it was ready to fall piece from piece.' He naively feels that the very age of the book is a guarantee of genuineness. The book tells him, rather luridly, of 'Desperation, the law of Moses, the Devil, death and Hell.' The conclusion is: 'I must let fall before all men, I do prefer this book of Mr. Luther upon the *Galatians* (excepting the Holy Bible) before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience.'

The 'wounded conscience' is Bishop Sandys's 'afflicted conscience,' echoed by Bunyan in gaol nearly a century later for holding a conventicle and refusing to use the Book of Common Prayer. Bunyan is not merely parroting the bishop. Of his response to Luther, he writes that when he had 'but a little way perused, I found my condition in his experience so largely and profoundly handled, as if his book had been written out of my heart.' '[B]ut a little way perused' leads one back to the startling early pages of Luther's *Galatians Commentary*, to his concept of Christian righteousness, which the Devil wants us to think should involve zealous endeavour and the moral law, what Luther calls the 'fury of self-righteousness' an 'evil deep rooted in us,' but in reality consists in the 'passive righteousness of faith.' This word 'passive' is used again and again in the early pages, for example, 'a

⁸ John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, ed. Roger Sharrock (Oxford, 1962), paras 129–30.

mere passive righteousness'. It is against the dictates of reason: 'it is a thing very strange and unknown to the world, to teach Christians to learn to be ignorant of the law, and so to live before God, as if there were no law' (p. 23). The horrified thunderers of Sinai would level the accusation of antinomianism.

One must 'lay hold' of the 'promise of grace', available by 'mere imputation', Luther asserts. In this consists justification, the core of his soteriology. 'Laying hold', 'holding fast', become thematic phrases; in fact the passivity is not without its own kind of effort.⁹ But those who 'earnestly urge the law, works and the active righteousness', ironically dubbed the 'justiciaries', are not of God's people. The schoolmen talk of 'merit of congruence and worthiness' and have made Christ a 'judge and tormentor'. By contrast, we are justified freely by his grace, 'wherefore it is a great matter, by faith to lay hold upon Christ bearing the sins of the whole world. And this faith alone is counted for righteousness' (p. 137); '[b]ut in the agony and conflict of conscience to hold this fast and to practice it indeed, it is a hard matter' (p. 84). One can see the appeal to Bunyan. 'This is the merit' – and here Luther is jabbing at the schoolmen – 'whereby we obtain the remission of sins. Because thou believest in me, saith the Lord, and thy faith layeth hold upon Christ . . . be thou justified and righteous' (p. 137). The formulation reflects the so-called 'tower experience' that will be discussed later.

But there is that 'cunning juggler' Satan, that 'peevish holy Satan', who wants to make us holy: 'I say not this for nought, for I have often proved by experience, and I still daily find what an hard matter it is to believe (especially in the conflict of conscience) that Christ was given, not for the holy, righteous, worthy, and such as were his friends, but for the ungodly, for sinners, and for his enemies, which have deserved God's wrath and everlasting death' (p. 50). This is the Satan who 'never ceaseth to tempt us inwardly by his fiery darts and outwardly by his false apostles' (p. 77). Note that the fiery darts are described by Luther as a 'temptation, aided and abetted outwardly by the false apostles. The temptation is to piety and legality as an escape from the wounded conscience; the false apostles are those who aid Satan in his perversion of the true gospel. Much more will be said about the fiery darts later. The fiery darts are in fact not from Luther's *Galatians Commentary* but

⁹ Luther, *Galatians Commentary*, ed. Watson, 137.

from the well-known passage in Ephesians on spiritual warfare: 'above all taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked' (Eph. 6: 16, KJV). We have to be coached to answer this devil. 'Thou art a sinner and therefore art thou damned . . . Because thou sayest I am a sinner, therefore will I be righteous and saved. Nay . . . thou shalt be damned. No (say I) for I fly unto Christ . . . In that thou sayest I am a sinner thou givest me a weapon against thyself that with thine own sword I may cut thy throat . . . Wherefore, when thou sayest I am a sinner, thou dost not terrify me, but comfort me above measure. Whoso knoweth this one point of cunning well, shall easily avoid all the engines and snares of the devil . . .' (pp. 50–51). This exchange has been heavily truncated. Later we shall note how Bunyan imitates it.

This is all part of Luther's polemic against his monastic past: 'Such are the deserts and merits of all men, and especially of those old dotards who exercise themselves wholly in the stinking puddles of man's own righteousness' (p. 83), 'Satan loveth such saints and accounteth them for his dear darlings . . .' (p. 82). The Elizabethan translators obviously enjoyed themselves: 'There was not one of us but he was a blood sucker.' The paradox that Satan 'loveth such saints' stands conventional notions of Christianity on their heads, and is central to the whole argument.

The appeal of Luther's *Galatians Commentary* to Bunyan is no doubt partly due to its strong autobiographical element. In Bunyan's phrase, Luther had 'gone down into the deep'. Bunyan's own autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, is, however, clearly Calvinist, frequently talking about his fears of not being of the elect. Luther's controversy with Erasmus on the freedom of the will was much earlier than the *Galatians Commentary*. There are brief hints of it in the latter work (p. 83), but they are lost in the body of ebullient exposition of justification. One must note that while Bunyan says that 'he had but a little way perused' before finding help, he does not use the word 'passive' that is so prominent in the early pages of the translation. But Luther's paradoxical strenuousness of 'holding fast', pointed out earlier, Bunyan did learn. He would 'labour to take hold' or struggle where there was 'neither hold for hand or foot . . . O the combats and conflicts that I then did meet with; as I strove to hold by this word, that of Esau would flie in my face, like to lightening', as he put it in *Grace Abounding* (paragraphs 198, 191). Esau sold his birthright for

a mess of pottage – the episode haunts Bunyan. Worst of all is the internal crisis to, as he puts it, ‘sell Christ’, the opposite of holding fast, and at one point he eventually says ‘let him go’, the most telling echo of Luther, by absence, there could be (paragraph 139).

And then there was the combat with the Devil: ‘But O how Satan now did lay about him for to bring me down again’ (paragraph 189). ‘The Tempter then laid at me again very sore.’ Like Luther’s fiendish acquaintance, he is pious. The autobiography is, of course, hindsight. He remembers, for example, an incident when he was at table and had an impulse born of overwrought piety to jump up and go to pray: ‘so counterfeit holy would this Divel be’ (paragraph 138). The pious impulse is in fact a ‘temptation of the Devil’; ‘you must do it now or you will displease God, and despise Christ’. On another occasion, after a successful encounter, he actually sees how the defeated Satan ‘sneaks and leers away’.

At the end of his life – and this is significant because this is the mature Bunyan, perhaps one could say with the lessons of Luther well learnt – he wrote a work called *Good News for the Vilest of Men* (1688). In it, a pious, scandalized Satan complains: ‘’Tis enough to make Angels blush saith Satan, to see so vile a one knock at Heaven’s gate for mercy.’ Heaven wants ‘sinners of a lusty size’, not ‘pious professors’, as Bunyan explains.¹⁰ The genial good humour and comedy testify to how the earlier agonies have been put in focus.

Interpreting the Apollyon Episode

From Luther Bunyan learned verbal exchanges with the Fiend. ‘But said the Tempter, your sin is unpardonable. Well said I, I will pray.’ ‘Tis no boot, said he. Yet said I, I will pray.’¹¹ The operations of the Tempter here should be remembered in relation to discussion in the following pages of this article about the nature of temptation, Satan’s fiery darts, and the crucial Apollyon episode in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. The other forms of Satanic encounter mentioned earlier are also relevant: the Fiend’s ‘laying about him’, or the temptation to ridiculous piety.

As Luther gave coaching lessons on how to outwit the wiles of Satan, so does Bunyan. *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*

¹⁰ Bunyan, *Good News for the Vilest of Men*, 38.

¹¹ Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, para. 200.

has an extensive take-off of the Luther passage of a little earlier, though not as lively as that of Luther's translators. Bunyan calls it instruction in 'how to out-shoot the Devil in his own bow, and to cut off his head with his own sword . . .'. The following is a sample:

Doth Satan tell thee thou prayest but faintly, and with very cold devotion; answer him thus, and say, I am glad you told me, for this will make me trust the more to Christ's prayers, and the less to my own . . .¹²

Luther's theology of looking to Christ and not to one's own efforts is well rendered. However, perhaps at this point the struggle seems a little too easy. The struggle with Apollyon shows it otherwise.

Battles with Satan are encapsulated in the Apollyon episode in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Christian has recently come from the House Beautiful where he has been accepted, after due scrutiny, into the community, that is, the church (more particularly the Bedford separatist congregation). However, going downhill afterwards (he is heading for the Valley of Humiliation) he makes a few little 'slips'. The euphoria is about to be severely challenged.¹³ Apollyon comes across the field towards him, perhaps like a landowner, and they parley about allegiance, wages and whose highway it is. The pilgrim says that he does not like the wages, quoting Romans 6:23: 'the wages of sin is death'. He also says that he was 'born in your Dominions' but that he now serves a 'King of Princes' and that the highway is the 'Kings Highway'. The word 'Dominions' is an echo of Romans 6:14: 'For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.' While this text is not cited here, Bunyan uses it in his most extensive theological work, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*.¹⁴ The primary significance of Apollyon would appear to be sin. Apollyon's arguments in the battle of wits are that the pilgrim has just had some slips coming down the hill, and there are all the mistakes made earlier in the pilgrimage. We are on familiar Luther territory that we cannot be saved by the law, good behaviour, though

¹² Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, 219; cf. *Galatians Commentary*, 50–51, quoted above (p. 95).

¹³ For what follows, see Bunyan, *The Pilgrims Progress, Parts One and Two* (1678–82), ed. Roger Sharrock (Oxford, 1966), pp. 184–88.

¹⁴ Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, 85.

Satan tempts us to try, or rather, suggests that our case is hopeless because we can not. However, to hold fast to this saving truth is a terrifying struggle.

When Christian refuses to submit to argument, Apollyon 'strodles' across the road and starts hurling fiery darts. These are the darts Bunyan gets from Luther, though doubtless also directly from Luther's source, Ephesians. They are the darts to be 'quenched' by the 'shield of faith', in the Authorized Version (KJV: see above, p. 95). Luther's translators wrote: 'he never ceaseth to tempt us with his fiery darts'. The fiery dart is a 'temptation', especially when one realizes that the temptation is not to lurid sin but to the lure of legalism, of righteous conduct, the 'fury of self-righteousness' mentioned earlier. But the ultimate temptation is to doubt one's election. The pilgrim's shield, the 'shield of faith' is inadequate. He is wounded three times; his understanding, faith and behaviour are found wanting, and he begins to weaken. It is the old struggle with self-doubt, the 'wounded' or 'afflicted' conscience. Is he justified, is he really a member of the community into which he has just been admitted (by virtue of being able to give a satisfactory account of his sense of justification, as with Bunyan's own Independent congregation)? In the very late *Good News for the Vilest of Men*, 'temptation', 'Satan's maul' (cf. Giant Maul in Part Two of *The Pilgrim's Progress*), is described as 'Satan's master argument': 'thou art a horrible sinner, a hypocrite . . . one that is an utter stranger to a work of grace'.¹⁵

Apollyon closes with him and wrestles him to the ground. His sword – in Pauline terms the 'sword of the spirit' – slips from his hand. Apollyon is about to deliver the final blow. The pilgrim is saved, as Bunyan himself (as recorded in his autobiography) is so frequently saved at moments of crisis, by crucial biblical texts that burst into his mind. It is, after all, an inward struggle! The texts are glossed in the margin of the allegory. The pilgrim regains his sword, 'the sword of the Spirit'. It is described further as a 'two-edged' sword. The detail is biblical: it occurs in Hebrews 4:12 ('the word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword'), and in the opening chapter of the book of Revelation, where a 'sharp two-edged sword' comes out of the mouth of the terrifying Christ figure, presumably again the Word (Rev. 1:16). The pilgrim gives Apollyon a deadly thrust and the Fiend 'spread forth

¹⁵ Bunyan, *Good News for the Vilest of Men*, 76. A maul is a hammer.

his dragon wings and sped him away'. In the end it is not the shield of faith that has saved him, his own strength, but the intervention of the Spirit himself, by means of Scripture. Marginalia provide texts. By the time Bunyan wrote *Good News for the Vilest of Men*, the struggle has become less desperate: a disconsolate Satan is frightened to 'put a sword in the hand' of a vile but well instructed and coached sinner.¹⁶

This temptation is explained in the much earlier *Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*. The context is the long wait for assurance that one is elect, which could lead one to think that all is in vain: 'it is but the temptation of the Devil to make thee think so, that he might drive thee to despair . . .' The remedy that follows is, however, a rather crude piece of argumentation that is much like pulling oneself up by one's own bootstraps: 'Thou must first get acquainted with God in Christ . . . thou must believe in Jesus Christ so really . . . that there shall be life begotten in thy soul'.¹⁷ There are times when Bunyan forgot his Luther, the exhortation to passivity, in favour of what would appear to be intense effort.

There is a kind of dialectic in Bunyan between grace and effort. This is shown by the emblems the pilgrim sees in the Interpreter's House. One is a fire which Satan tries to extinguish but which is secretly fed with oil by Christ. This indicates divine assistance. By contrast there is 'a man of a very stout countenance' who fights his way through a number of opponents. There is also the terrible figure of the man in the iron cage sunk in hopeless despair. The word 'stout' is quite possibly an echo of Luther's translators: in defence of 'the liberty which we have in Christ', meaning liberty from the law, we are told in the *Galatians Commentary*, 'our stoutness in this matter is godly, and holy' (p. 100). A rather pugnacious passage follows in *Law and Grace Unfolded*, rather at odds with Luther's earlier emphasis on passivity. But it is in defence of the doctrine that 'only faith in Christ justifieth'. We should be rebellious against 'kings, princes, Pope, world, flesh, blood, reason'. The argument moves on to a passage about 'the principal article of all Christian doctrine': not what I ought to 'do', for that is the proper office of the law, 'but what Jesus Christ the Son of God hath done for me'. At the beginning of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the

¹⁶ Ibid., 38.

¹⁷ Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, 213–14.

pilgrim cries ‘What shall I *do*?’ (my emphasis).¹⁸ In a way, it is the wrong question.

The ‘principal article of all Christian doctrine’ requires a particular kind of stoutness. Luther had to face the might of the papacy. Bunyan had to face the local magistrate and long imprisonment, and his pilgrims have to face the depraved bench of Vanity Fair, just as certain puritans had to face the depraved bench of Restoration England. However, the pilgrim, after he has been loosed of his burden, clothed in raiment and given his scroll (apparently some kind of guarantee), and after he has been accepted into a congregation and duly armed, has his stoutness tested in the severest encounter of the pilgrimage. What kind of stoutness is tested in the battle with Apollyon? What kind of “doing” is this?

The Apollyon episode has been of interest to some Marxist critics. Their readings, which have held considerable sway, have their value, but have obscured the significance of what is the central episode of the allegory, and the one closest to the Luther/Bunyan relationship. E. P. Thompson considered *The Pilgrim’s Progress* one of the ‘founding texts’ of the English working-class movement, because its popularity helped preserve a ‘slumbering radicalism’ through the eighteenth century – this despite ‘the egotistic pursuit of personal salvation’ and the ‘unction.’ Apollyon represents the ‘powers of the state’: in this case, the country gentleman, the magistrate, before whom Bunyan appeared after arrest for preaching in a barn to a humble little congregation at Lower Samsell. Like the magistrate (who offered Bunyan the chance to conform) Apollyon first tries to tempt the pilgrim back into his dominions – ‘if thou wilt turn again and go back’ – before resorting to violence.¹⁹ The fiery darts, the subsequent struggle, the shield and the two-edged sword that gives victory are not only not explained by Thompson but not even mentioned! It is an exceedingly partial, dare one suggest evasive, reading.

Thompson tries to have his cake and eat it, have his dissenting tinker hero and discredit the religious aspects of dissent, Hamlet without the Prince. Bunyan’s courage in facing gaol (if he had assented to use the

¹⁸ See Thomas Hyatt Luxon, ‘The Pilgrim’s Passive Progress, Luther and Bunyan on Talking and Doing, Word and Way’, *English Literary History* 53 (1986): 73–96 (p. 79).

¹⁹ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (first published 1963; Harmondsworth, 1984), pp. 35–37.

Book of Common Prayer he might not have been charged) and his long years of endurance for the sake of conscience can hardly be dismissed as the 'egotistical pursuit of personal salvation', least of all as 'unction'. Neither do these phrases really do justice to the states of anxiety (even terror) that Bunyan experienced, even should one wish to explain them as delusion or neurosis. For example, for Jack Lindsay, a fellow Marxist, Apollyon and the other giants and threatening creatures and persons of the story are all simultaneously projections of Bunyan's hated father, the monsters of deep folk imagination and folk tale and, of course, of class oppressors: religion being a false consciousness that conceals the underlying reality of shifting social forces in that crucial period for Marxist theory, the English seventeenth century.²⁰ Certainly, Bunyan records his having had nightmares as a child, and a love of folk literature. To return to Thompson, and surer ground, his observations on Bunyan's satirical picture of Mr By-Ends and his companions as showing dissent degenerating into a mercenary commercial class towards the end of the century, are indeed to the point.

Christopher Hill, that giant of seventeenth century studies, with the aid of a very useful article by James Turner ('the most helpful analysis of *The Pilgrim's Progress* I have read for a long time')²¹ treats the Apollyon episode rather more successfully. He acknowledges that the sword is the sword of the Spirit, adding the useful point that when the pilgrim emerges from the House Beautiful in armour and carrying a sword he is, in seventeenth century terms, armigerous, which a humble member of the lower classes could not normally expect to be (p. 199). Apollyon is understood to be the power of sin (p. 203). When, in the parley before the fight, the pilgrim says to the monster 'give place to me that I may dwell', Hill points out that this has radical political implications. At this point, the sociological and the Lutheran blur. Elsewhere in the landscape of the pilgrimage, the Delectable Mountains for example, there is land rent free and things are held in common. There are hints of the puritan radicalism of Winstanley

²⁰ Jack Lindsay, *John Bunyan, Maker of Myths* (New York and London, 1937), *passim*.

²¹ Christopher Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious, and Factious People: John Bunyan and his Church, 1628–1688* (Oxford, 1988), p. 219, referring to James Turner, 'Bunyan's Sense of Place,' in *The Pilgrim's Progress: Critical and Historical Views*, ed. Vincent Newey (Liverpool, 1980), 93–110.

and others of the 1640s. On the wages issue, Turner points out that wages in rural areas were fixed by the Justices of the Peace, who were of course the local gentry and landowners, with an interest in keeping wages down and vagabonds off the roads. Turner points out that Giant Maul, too, is concerned to keep pilgrims off his domains. Property seems to be a sub-text; to Turner evidently, more than a sub-text.

In the course of his arguments Turner mentions Giant Despair, who arrests Christian and Hopeful for trespass and locks them in the dungeon of his castle, as the type of the big landowner. Why the castle is called Doubting Castle is not explained. Undoubtedly, there are sociological undertones to this episode, but when Turner writes: 'Despair is less an abstract or existential inner state than the emotional response of the poor Christian to repression and social contempt,' one suspects overstatement.²² Despair is the final stage of reprobation, from the realization that one is not elect. Bunyan is haunted by the case of Francis Spira in the autobiography.²³ In fact, much of *Grace Abounding* is dominated by his doubts of his own election, and *Law and Grace Unfolded* contains long arguments that can be used to help those with similar fears. The escape from the dungeon of Doubting Castle is by remembering the 'Key Promise', the Abrahamic and Pauline promise that the pilgrim is heir to, although 'the lock went damnable hard'. The whole message of Paul and Luther is involved, the efficacy of Luther's commentary for the 'afflicted' or 'wounded' conscience. To show that an 'existential inner state' is indeed uppermost, reference could also be made to Part Two of the *Progress* where the group of pilgrims under Mr Greatheart, after Giant Despair's castle has been demolished, produce musical instruments, and Mr Ready-to-Halt and Much-Afraid, the daughter of Despondencie, dance in the road for joy, in one of the most touching little scenes in the whole two parts.

In fact, Luther's *Galatians Commentary* is strongly apparent here. Doubting Castle demolished, there is a gaiety absent from Part One. The desperate battle with Apollyon is noted by a monument the group passes, instructed by Mr Greatheart's sermon on justification and imputed righteousness. The moment when (those parodies of puritan names) Ready-to-Halt takes Much-Afraid by the hand 'and to dancing they went in the road', while he, although still with one crutch, 'footed

²² Cited by Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious, and Factious People*, 220.

²³ Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, para. 163.

it well' and 'the Girl was to be commended, for she answered the music handsomely', says volumes about Bunyan's puritanism, and deserves to be remembered alongside such severer moments as 'the lock went damnable hard' or when 'the Fiend spread forth his dragon wings and sped him away'.

In the interests of a sociological reading, Hill quotes Turner on Giant Despair without any qualification. He might also have gone into more detail on Christian's battle with Apollyon. Elsewhere, indeed, he does quote Luther on fiery darts while expounding Bunyan's theology,²⁴ and he does explain earlier that the monster is the power of sin and that the sword is the sword of the Spirit, but his comments on the Apollyon episode itself are confined entirely to the political and sociological. That the episode encapsulates Bunyan's struggles to win through to some sense of assurance (and even the whole of Luther's *Galatians Commentary*) is not explained, whether through evasion or because the significance is not fully grasped. The failure is the stranger because Hill's study of the autobiography is sympathetic.

To what extent can we all manufacture our own texts in our readings? Certainly, Hill has a point when he writes: 'The social emphases of *The Pilgrim's Progress* have long been recognized but perhaps they have been insufficiently stressed in accounting for the book's popularity.' In part, this corroborates E.P. Thompson's point, that *The Pilgrim's Progress* kept radicalism alive during the eighteenth century. There is undoubtedly a wealth of social comment in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and we should be grateful to Turner and Hill for information that illuminates the text, even at the cost of their neglect of so much else that is also to be found, let it be noted, in the text. What are neglected are not only the battle details, as pointed out above, but also crucial details in the parley before the battle, the pilgrim's statement that 'the wages of sin is death', that he serves the 'King's Highway' and the possible echoes of the word 'Dominions'. These take the meaning of the parley far beyond the matter of wages set by Justices of the Peace, although this sociological sub-text cannot be denied. The question is whether a reader may 'by-pass' prominent details in the text and the meanings that flow from them because they do not fit a desired template.

²⁴ Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious, and Factious People*, 159.

Bunyan and Luther's 'tower experience'

We owe Apollyon to a mixture of Dent and Luther, the anxiety consequent on the logic of election and Luther's bracing counter; only more distantly to the stresses and strains of the class system of Bunyan's time, as sociological critics would have it. The battle with Apollyon is first and foremost an inward battle for assurance. This is not to deny the case for sociological or secular readings. Bunyan takes over from Luther the paradoxical image of fiery darts as 'temptations', not to lurid sin but to doubt what Christ has done. There are many such moments in Bunyan's own autobiography but there is one in particular that seems to have been a turning point, both emotionally and theologically, and a moment that bears, in some small way, a resemblance (imitation is not suggested) to Luther's seminal so-called 'tower experience', the tower being part of the geography of Wittenberg University.²⁵ It might be briefly interpolated, as James Cargill Thompson reminds us, that the term 'tower experience' is an appellation of much later scholarship and that we owe its description by Luther himself rather to his later life, than to his writings at the actual time.²⁶ The English translators of the *Galatians Commentary* would seem to have inherited some of this tradition at its very early stages.

Luther, in the *Galatians Commentary*, does not mention the event, but his English translators, in their anonymous preface, tell the story of Luther's lying for three days on his bed wrestling with the text from Romans 3:26, *ad ostendendam iustitiam suam*, the revolutionary flash of insight being that Christ is not the judge, 'the executor of the law' of medieval theology, but that the justice of God is to be executed upon the Son, there being a subtle play on justice over against justification.²⁷ Bunyan, in describing his crucial experience, does not refer to this account in the translators' Preface, but he may not have read it.²⁸

²⁵ 'Geography' is one of the euphemisms for "lavatory". In Osborne's play *Luther*, the moment of illumination is cloacal. Could the tower have been a privy?

²⁶ W.J.D. Cargill Thompson, 'The Problem of Luther's "Tower Experience" and its place in his Intellectual Development', in his *Studies in the Reformation, Luther to Hooker*, ed. C.W. Dugmore (London, 1980), pp. 76 ff.

²⁷ *A Commentarie of M. Doctor Martin Luther Upon The Epistle of S. Paule to the Galathians*, ed. Vautroullier, fol. Aijj. The Vulgate reads: *ad ostensionem iustitiae eius* ('to declare . . . his righteousness', KJV).

²⁸ What text did he have? There is a puzzle here beyond the resources of the present

More modern commentators than Luther's Elizabethan translators have argued for a longer exegetical and less ecstatic revelation. Heinrich Boehmer argues for a process whereby the *In iustitia tua libera me* of Psalm 30/31:2 ('deliver me in thy righteousness', KJV) – which he had lectured on in the monastery – gets glossed in the light of Romans 1:17, *iustus ex fide vivit*, translated as 'the justified live by faith' rather than the more obvious 'the just shall live by faith.'²⁹ Bainton argues tellingly how the medieval (and Renaissance, one should add) artistic depiction of Christ was as the judge at Doomsday, separating the sheep from the goats. This tradition of exegesis Luther challenged by seeing that the Greek of the epistles permitted a reading of "justification" rather than "justice", so that the justice of God is that righteousness by which God justifies us through faith, the work having been done by the suffering Christ, not Christ the judge.³⁰ This transforming insight called in question for Luther the whole monastic tradition of ascetic discipline, and explains, with regard to the Galatians Commentary, the emphasis in the early pages on 'passive righteousness' and the startling sense of release that the *Galatians Commentary* gives, although it is much later than the 'tower experience' and has behind it, quite apart from the break with Rome, the turbulent history of the rift with Karlstadt, Münzer and the Peasant War, and latterly the Anabaptists.

There is a moment described in *Grace Abounding* (paragraphs 229–34) which bears a distinct resemblance to Luther's 'tower experience', although it appears to have happened without any conscious influence from the *Galatians Commentary* or mention of the translators' preface.³¹ Bunyan was walking 'in the field' in an unhappy state of mind when the words 'Thy righteousness is in Heaven', as he puts it, 'fell upon my Soul'. The words were accompanied with the flash of understanding that 'my Righteousness was Jesus Christ himself'. This

writer. The Watson edition of the "Middleton" edition of the 1575 translation does not have the translators' Preface, which I have consulted in the facsimile of Vautroullier's 1580 edition, cited in the previous note.

²⁹ Heinrich Boehmer, *Martin Luther: Road to Reformation* (first published in German, 1946), trans. John W. Doberstein and Theodore G. Tappert (New York, 1957), pp. 109–10.

³⁰ Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York, 1955), pp. 40–50.

³¹ This passage has been remarked on before: see Vera J. Camden, "'Most fit for a wounded conscience': The Place of Luther's Commentary on Galatians in *Grace Abounding*", *Renaissance Quarterly* 50 (1997): 819–49.

is the essence of Luther's solution to the question of God's justice. Bunyan records some kind of vision of Christ at the right hand of God: 'Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed, I was loosed from my affliction and irons, my temptations also flew away . . .' Bishop Sandys's word was an 'afflicted conscience'; another use by Bunyan will be noted later. The 'chains' and 'irons' are images of release from imprisonment; Giant Despair has a dungeon. Bunyan, writing himself in the Bedford goal, has a pattern of correspondences forming in his mind. His 'temptations flew away'. Apollyon 'spread forth his dragon wings and sped him away'. The word 'temptations' takes us back to Luther's use of the word for the fiery darts and to Bunyan's as cited earlier, to the whole battle with Apollyon, the inward struggle with depressing thoughts from which the pilgrim is saved by texts popping into his mind. One of the texts is Romans 8:37: 'Nay in all these things we are more than Conquerors, through him that loved us', which fits the general 'tower experience' fairly well. However, the "text" that popped into Bunyan's mind at this moment 'thy righteousness is in Heaven', although theologically and emotionally on the mark, could not, to Bunyan's dismay, be found in Scripture! (He did eventually find an unconvincing approximation.) As a result of the experience, Bunyan formulated a concept of Christ as a 'public person' standing before God for the 'elect'. It should be remarked that this episode in the autobiography is anticipated, and in fact treated more fully, in *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded* of 1659, which shows how *Grace Abounding* was written with the wisdom of hindsight, and not, as it sometimes seems, in the midst of the turbulence it describes.³²

We must return to that detail above, the specific use of the term 'elect' with the invocation of all its doctrinal implications, backed up as it is throughout the autobiography and in *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded* (not to mention in its condensed form in Bunyan's *Mapp Shewing the Order and Causes of Salvation and Damnation*³³) by

³² Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, 146–47, 222. See note 7 above.

³³ Bunyan, *A Mapp Shewing the Order and Causes of Salvation and Damnation*, in *Miscellaneous Works*, XII, ed. W.R. Owens (1994). First published posthumously in 1692, it was perhaps composed in 1664, which would put it contemporaneous to the autobiography. In an elaborate diagram it sets out the pattern of experience of the elect and the reprobate from the divine decrees of election to salvation or damnation. Perkins and Beza had devised similar diagrammes. See P.J.H. Titlestad, 'From Beza to

exposition of election and reprobation and the related fears. All this separates Bunyan from the Luther of the *Galatians Commentary*. Luther did not hold with the freedom of the will in matters soteriological, as witness his debate with Erasmus. It is unlikely that Bunyan knew of this. But in the *Galatians Commentary*, which is roughly ten years later, there are only two very brief remarks rejecting the power of the will, though much on the futility of pious endeavour on the part of the ironically dubbed 'justiciaries', a term that Bunyan borrows now and then.³⁴

As Bishop Sandys and Bunyan both testify, the impact of the *Galatians Commentary* is to ease the 'afflicted' or 'wounded' conscience; in Bunyan's case in particular the very consequence of the doctrine of election applied to an acutely imaginative psyche. This doctrine he would have learned from Dent, from Gifford, his pastor in Bedford, and the congregation in general. The message he got from Luther's *Galatians Commentary* was how to face Satan's accusations, of the Abrahamic promise, of justification through Christ and, even if he never used the term, of 'passive' righteousness. The message was absorbed gradually. In the escape from Giant Despair's dungeon in Part One of *The Pilgrim's Progress* by the 'Key Promise', the lock goes 'damnable hard'. When we get to Part Two, the castle is demolished and the pilgrims make music and dance in the road. Bunyan never ceased to hold the doctrine of election, but the note of happiness that begins to intrude into his work should not go unnoticed. Part One ends with the wretched Ignorance's being hurled down the pit from the very gates of the Holy City. Faced with Jack Lindsay's contorted attempt to adapt the ending of Part Two of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the final crossing of the river, one by one, by the pilgrim band, to the this-worldly demands of Marxist 'fellowship', the normally astringent F. R. Leavis (though no friend of Bunyan's theology) can write: 'incomparable, for where else in prose can a like sustained exaltation be found?'³⁵

To return, however, to earlier struggles: Bunyan's combat with Apollyon is a representation of an episode of the radical temptation

Bunyan: The Pilgrim Road Mapped', *Bunyan Studies* 13 (2008): 64–81.

³⁴ For example, 'our glorious justiciaries': *The Pharisee and the Publicane* (1685), in *Miscellaneous Works*, X, ed. Owen C. Watkins (1988), p. 166.

³⁵ F. R. Leavis, 'Bunyan Through Modern Eyes', in *The Common Pursuit* (Harmondsworth, 1962), p. 210.

that Luther called *Anfechtung*, of which more will be said later. The combat comes after the Cross and the scroll and the white raiment, signs of assurance, and after the further assurance of acceptance into the House Beautiful. It is all the more dreadful and humiliating for this, even if it is a victory. But it is a victory not in the pilgrim's own strength, or doing. The shield of faith fails. When Bunyan discusses some of the useless help offered by those around him, he concludes that they had not been into the depths. He felt Luther knew what he was talking about. Is the conclusion of the combat with Apollyon in fact an imaginative interpretation of Luther's idea of 'passive righteousness', that the hard-won victory is not one's own, even if the word so prominent in the opening pages of the *Galatians Commentary*, is not used by Bunyan, and even if Bunyan never refers to the story told by the English translators of Luther's wrestling for days on his bed with the problem of justification?

At the conclusion of *Grace Abounding*, Bunyan writes the following passage (the gloss on Apollyon's darts as 'temptations' is particularly telling):

Of all the temptations I ever met with in my life, to question the being of God and the truth of His Gospel is the worst and worst to be borne. When this temptation comes it takes my girdle from me and removes the foundation from under me . . .

I have wondered much at this one thing, that though God doth visit my Soul with never so blessed a discovery of himself, yet I have found again, that such hours have attended me afterwards, that I have been in my Spirit so filled with darkness, that I could not so much as once conceive what that God and that comfort was with which I have been refreshed.

It is a passage which in its simple strength shows how Bunyan can do things which other writers are not capable of. It is the writing which led Macaulay, that most elegant stylist, to praise as the purest of English.³⁶ But there is something beyond the question of what makes Bunyan a great classic. Earlier it was mentioned that Luther might have disapproved of Bunyan's separatist affiliations, which could have been reminiscent of Karlstadt or the milder kind of separatist

³⁶ Thomas Babington, Lord Macaulay, 'Southey's Edition of the *Pilgrim's Progress*', in *Literary Essays* (Oxford, 1913), 191–204 (p. 203).

righteousness, membership of a small independent congregation depending on assessment by the congregation of an account of one's spiritual experience, starting with the requisite conviction of sin and ending with a spirit-filled sense of election. Luther used to refer to the spirit-filled enthusiasms of the anabaptists and apocalyptics as *schwermerei*. Would Bunyan's repeated agonies and joys, his ups and downs, have also been those of a *schwerner*? The sober dignity of the above passage raises him above such accusations.

After the Cross, the scroll, the white raiment, the House Beautiful, there is still Apollyon, and then the groping through the darkness of the Valley. In this Valley, the pilgrim occasionally hears the sound of a voice of one going before him: it is, of course, the voice of the Psalmist: 'though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death', but surely it is also the voice of Martin Luther, as heard by Bunyan in the English translation of the *Galatians Commentary*?

Lutheran and Calvinist Elements and Bunyan's 'wounded conscience'

Was Bunyan basically "Lutheran" rather than Calvinist? The question is taken up by Richard Greaves in his much admired 1969 study of Bunyan's theology. The praise Bunyan gives to Luther's *Galatians Commentary* in his autobiography is very warm, while the mention of Dent is brief and passing. However, when Bunyan acquired *The Plaine Mans Pathway* he was very young, newly released from garrison service at Newport Pagnell (doubtless not without its shaping religious influences) and just married, Dent's book being part of the meagre dowry. The influence of the bride (and of the bride's father who provided the dowry) would have been reinforced by that of Gifford, the pastor, and the Bedford congregation, starting with those women he first encountered sitting in the sun who 'spoke as if joy did make them speak', and who provoked the dream or vision he records at length of a striving rebirth into sunshine.³⁷ The effect of all this on Bunyan was to raise the key question: how did he know whether he was elect? Bunyan does indeed use Bishop Sandys's term 'afflicted' conscience in paragraph 39 of the autobiography, but the key election question is framed in paragraph 59 and the mention of Luther's *Galatians Commentary* as 'most fit for a wounded conscience'

³⁷ Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, paras 37–38, 53.

is only in paragraph 130. A lot of Calvinist water had flowed under the bridge before he records encountering Luther, who perhaps was the salve for the wound given by Dent and exacerbated by further Bedford acquaintance.

Greaves, in his conclusion, says: 'His foundation principles were basically Lutheran, but much of his theology was in full accord with the orthodox Calvinism of his period.' Again: 'On this Lutheran foundation Bunyan built an essentially Calvinist superstructure with the ideas he assimilated from the writings of Bayley and Dent, the teachings of Gifford and Burton . . .' One wonders if chronology is not against Greaves, if the most basic constituent was not in fact the youthful Calvinistic fear of reprobation. Earlier in his study Greaves does acknowledge Bunyan's Calvinist scholasticism, pointing out Bunyan's argument that God, foreseeing the Fall, and prior to the creation of man, and hence prior to the Fall, decreed election to some. He quotes from Bunyan's *A Confession of My Faith* saying that Bunyan was 'thoroughly Calvinist' in making the contention that 'this Decree, Choice or Election was before the Foundation of the World, and so before the Elect themselves had being in themselves . . .'³⁸

In a much later book, Greaves studies Bunyan's relation to the whole dissenter movement, returning to the Bunyan/Luther relationship, slightly modifying his earlier position: 'Notwithstanding the indisputable Calvinist influence on Bunyan's exposition of the covenants, the spirit of Luther looms large, as reflected in Bunyan's pronounced contrast between the law as "a ministration of death and damnation" and the gospel as "the ministration of life and salvation"' Interestingly, he points out how Bunyan 'stopped short of affirming Luther's bald assertion that "except thou be ignorant of the law, and be assuredly persuaded in thine heart that there is now no law or wrath of God but altogether grace and mercy for Christ's sake, thou canst not be saved"', one of Luther's ebulliently expansive statements.³⁹ The

³⁸ Richard L. Greaves, *John Bunyan* (Abingdon, 1969), pp. 159, 156, 52. Greaves claims Bunyan was an infralapsarian (p. 52). May one respectfully demur? In *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, 990-91, Bunyan says that the decree is before time, before man is in being and so before any transgression. Greaves cites the necessary passage from *A Confession of My Faith* himself. Infralapsarian logic has election after the Fall, to attempt theodicy. It does not help the wounded conscience.

³⁹ Richard L. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Stanford, CA, 2002), pp. 108-09.

question of 'wrath' in Luther, and of how far Bunyan could follow him on this matter, will be expanded on later.

Grace Abounding, the autobiography, is riddled with the fear of not being elect, seen in retrospect. The doctrine of election with its pastoral consequences dominates, but in a different way, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*. From the title one might indeed think that this was a "Lutheran" document owing its genesis to Luther's commentary on Galatians, and there are certainly passages which are imitative, about how to outwit the devil, which have been discussed earlier, but large portions are given, in ever increasing insistence, to arguments that are intended to encourage those wanting to answer the key question of their election. Luther's *Galatians Commentary* does not pursue the matter of pastoral encouragement in these terms at all. He does twice briefly state that there is no freedom of will in matters soteriological, but the full Calvinist panoply is not there. On a couple of occasions, in his enthusiasm, he even seems to suggest universalism: 'Christ is the son of God and of the Virgin, delivered and put to death for our sins . . . no cruel exactor . . . but a forgiver of the sins of the whole world . . . Set not Christ down upon the rainbow as a judge . . . with one oblation he hath put away the sins of the whole world'.⁴⁰ It is worth noting the inclusiveness of the 'our' and how the image of Christ on the rainbow is a rejection of the whole medieval and Renaissance artistic tradition of Christ the judge at Doomsday. The statement is a rejection too of the monastic tradition that Christ the judge could be approached only through the mediation of the Virgin Mary:⁴¹ 'Christ the son of God was given, not for the righteous and holy, but for the unrighteous and sinners.' Wrath and remorse of conscience were of the Kingdom of Satan, but Luther's proclamation is that 'wrath ceaseth'.⁴² We are faced here with the dual conundrum of how different is the Luther of the *Galatians Commentary* from the polemicist of *The Bondage of the Will* (*De servo arbitrio*), and of how certain scholars, in their enthusiasm for the ebullient polemicist, have

⁴⁰ *A Commentarie of M. Doctor Martin Luther upon the Epistle of S. Paule to the Galathians* (1580), fol. 21v.

⁴¹ See Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet* (London and New York, 2017), p. 58.

⁴² *A Commentarie of M. Doctor Martin Luther upon the Epistle of S. Paule to the Galathians* (1580), fols 20v, 19, 24.

neglected the equally ebullient pastor of the *Galatians Commentary*.

However, Luther's charity certainly had its limits. There were the 'justiciaries', 'they that would be counted more holy', and his pet hates: 'Papists, Monks, Nunnes, Priests, Mahommetans, Anabaptists': 'Let us acknowledge with Paul that all our works and righteous . . . are but loss and dung . . . Also let us cast under our feet and utterly abhor all the power of free will.'⁴³ James Atkinson says that Luther's *De servo arbitrio*, the refutation of Erasmus on the freedom of the will, is 'widely considered his greatest theological work.'⁴⁴ Lyndal Roper, in her recent biography, states that Luther himself classed his attack on Erasmus as one of his best works, fleeing the terror of having some small corner of responsibility for one's own salvation.⁴⁵ James Atkinson gives very little space to the *Galatians Commentary*, Roper none at all. *De servo arbitrio* is 1525; the lectures on Galatians were delivered in 1531 and published in 1535. There has been the enduring threat of Rome, and then on the other side the clash with Münzer, the Peasant War, the rift with Karlstadt, the Anabaptists, but also married life with Katie von Bora. But if Luther had a proclamation for the world, would it not be 'wrath ceaseth', rather than the attack on Erasmus? One can always trade off authority against authority. If some pass the *Galatians Commentary* by, Philip S. Watson's *Let God be God* fails to mention *De servo arbitrio* at all. Watson quotes tellingly from Luther's *Galatians Commentary* to abolish the God of the decrees and the wounded conscience: 'that devilish opinion . . . that a man ought to be uncertain and to stand in doubt of the favour of God to him . . . there can be no greater blasphemy against God than to deny his promises, to deny God himself, to deny Christ . . .'⁴⁶ This stinging rebuke to the pastoral consequences of the logic of the doctrine of election takes us to the heart of what Luther wants to say.

Earlier it was pointed out how the word 'passive' occurs very

⁴³ *A Commentarie of M. Doctor Martin Luther upon the Epistle of S. Paule to the Galathians* (1580), fol. 23v.

⁴⁴ James Atkinson, *Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism* (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 233.

⁴⁵ Roper, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet*, 288.

⁴⁶ Philip S. Watson, *Let God Be God* (first published 1947; London, 1960), p. 148. Watson is the editor of the modern edition of the Elizabethan translation of Luther's *Galatians Commentary*.

frequently in the opening pages of Luther's *Galatians Commentary*. It emphasizes the idea that in matters of salvation our works are vain, that all is done by grace alone, that we have to do nothing. This casts an interesting gloss on Bunyan's Pilgrim in that taut bit of narrative at the opening of *The Pilgrim's Progress* when, book in hand and burden on back, he bursts out, 'What shall I do?' One should notice the surreptitious bits of succour from time to time when his own efforts seem unavailing, although pilgrimage does indeed seem greatly a matter of effort, to him and also to the reader. He is pulled to safety out of the Slough by the mysterious Help, and when dithering at the Gate is jerked inside the Way to safety by the gatekeeper.

To return to Luther, it should be mentioned that 'passive' occurs for the first time briefly in Luther's writings in his *De servo arbitrio*.⁴⁷ However, it is here used only as part of the polemic to steamroller Erasmus and not as in the heartening arguments of the *Galatians Commentary*. For example:

It is irreligious idle and superfluous (you say) to want to know whether our will effects anything in matters pertaining to eternal salvation, or whether it is wholly passive under the work of grace.⁴⁸

This follows shortly after Erasmus's comforting assertion, following an exhortation to works and endeavour, that 'Nobody should despair of pardon from a God who by nature is kindness itself', quoted by Luther, who comments that these are 'Christ-less words . . . chillier than ice'.⁴⁹ One could hardly imagine Bishop Sandys and Bunyan prescribing *De servo arbitrio* as 'most fit for a wounded [or afflicted] conscience' although, as Calvinists, they might have approved of the logic. Luther of *De servo arbitrio* and Luther of the *Galatians Commentary*, as said before, is an interesting subject of meditation. The comfort of *De servo arbitrio* was that one dare not leave one's salvation to one's will, but one had to be sure of election! The comfort of the *Galatians Commentary* was to banish the wounded conscience that flows from the logic of election. Part of this logic of election, later to be enshrined

⁴⁷ Cargill Thompson, 'The Problem of Luther's "Tower Experience"', 225 n.47.

⁴⁸ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J.E. Packer and O.R. Johnston (London, 1957), p. 76.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

in the five points of Dort, is that grace is irresistible. Bunyan's 'man of a very stout countenance' in the Interpreter's House, who cuts his way through enemies, would appear to be an example for pilgrims to emulate. Is this grace or will? We are faced here with a kind of puritan paradox.

One should, however, mention how Luther in the *Galatians Commentary* calls Paul the 'elect vessel of God'. There is also that most fascinating passage in which it becomes plain that Luther has a strong sense of identification with Paul. His conversion from strict monasticism is a parallel to Paul's conversion from Jewish orthodoxy. He laments, for example, that he would have persecuted Huss, and how the ecclesiastics with their 'will worshippings' were worse than the 'publicans and harlots'. He points out how Paul rages against his legal past but how he says that God had appointed all things while he was still in his mother's womb. Then follows: 'Therefore this gift also came to me by the mere predestination and free mercy of God before I was yet borne.'⁵⁰ Not long afterwards, however, he talks of 'an oblation for the sins of the whole world', a universalist sentiment that takes the edge off the severer possibilities of a limited atonement.⁵¹ Nevertheless one cannot say that the logic of *De servo arbitrio* is completely expunged from his mind.

As has been pointed out earlier, there is a section in Bunyan's *Law and Grace Unfolded* which is a clear imitation of a passage in which Luther coaches his readers on how to get the better of Satan. Furthermore, Bunyan's vehement rejection of works chimes in with what Luther preaches, except that Bunyan talks of a covenant of works and covenant of grace, terms that Luther does not use, although they are in Paul's Galatians, but which are indeed part of the Calvinist vocabulary. Bunyan learned from Luther about the Abrahamic promise and that Mount Sinai had to be avoided, and he learned about allegory as a literary form from Luther's long discussion

⁵⁰ *A Commentarie of M. Doctor Martin Luther upon the Epistle of S. Paule to the Galathians* (1580), fols 41v, 38v, 39.

⁵¹ Cf. Cranmer's prayer of consecration: 'who made there by hys one oblacion of him selfe once offered, a full, perfecte, and sufficient sacrifice, oblacion, and satisfaction, for the synnes of the whole worlde' (*The Booke of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacramentes and Other Rites and Ceremonies in the Church of England*, London, 1562, sig. Q5v).

of Paul's brief comment in Galatians that the Abraham story was an allegory. He learned to watch out for the 'justiciaries', the pretenders to virtue. Bunyan's *Law and Grace Unfolded*, like Luther's *Galatians Commentary*, is peppered with savage warnings in this regard, which bore fruit in the legendary satiric characters in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and the idea keeps cropping up in Bunyan's other pastoral writings as well.

Friend you must not understand that none but profane persons are under the law; no but you must understand that a man may be turned from a vain, loose, open, profane conversation and sinning against the Law, to a holy, righteous, religious life, and yet be in the same state, under the same law, and as sure to be damned as the others that are more profane and loose.⁵²

This is because he is not 'brought out' from the covenant of works into the covenant of grace. *The Holy City* has an extensive exposition of how the visible church may lack grace while having all the outward signs, and the statement does not necessarily seem to exclude the gathered congregations.⁵³ *The Barren Fig-Tree*, with its terrifying image of the axe at the root, is a warning of the precariousness of a 'profession' and an inducement to constant fear.⁵⁴

Conclusion: Which Luther?

It was from Dent that Bunyan learnt the art of uncomfortable cross-questioning to expose the false pilgrim. And it was from Dent, and doubtless other sources, that he learned to function within the doctrine of election. Unlike in Luther's *Galatians Commentary*, all the lengthy encouragements in *Law and Grace Unfolded* to help those of the wounded conscience take place under the shadow of reprobation. There is no such shadow in Luther's *Galatians Commentary*. Dent taught Bunyan Calvinist scholasticism. *Law and Grace Unfolded* has a passage expounding supralapsarianism, the decrees of election

⁵² Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, 54.

⁵³ John Bunyan, *The Holy City* (1665), in *Miscellaneous Works*, III, ed. J. Sears McGee (1987), pp. 176–77.

⁵⁴ John Bunyan, *The Barren Fig-Tree* (1688), in *Miscellaneous Works*, V, ed. Graham Midgely (1986), *passim*.

between the Father and Son before time and creation and hence before the Fall.⁵⁵ Bunyan drew a *Mapp Shewing the Order and Causes of Salvation and Damnation*, mentioned earlier, part of a small Calvinist tradition. He may have got the idea from Perkins's *Golden Chain*, which may owe its origin to a diagram by Beza.⁵⁶ In his *Mapp* the lines of election and reprobation flow from Christ who is put at the centre of the Godhead. What would Luther have made of this? One wonders what Luther would have thought of the Synod of Dort, called to destroy the Arminians, and the five points of Calvinism that resulted from it, especially limited atonement? He might indeed have dealt with the Arminians as he dealt with Erasmus. But would he have liked Calvinism? And was Bunyan's foundation Luther or Calvinism?

Greaves's question, put earlier, could be rephrased. If we ask whether Bunyan was "Lutheran" or Calvinist, are we talking of the Luther of *De servo arbitrio* or the Luther of the *Galatians Commentary*? We have, in a sense, two Luthers. But this formulation of two Luthers is too crass: there is no dualism – the hope of the *Galatians Commentary* is already to be discovered in the asperity of *De servo arbitrio*. As Gordon Rupp asserts in his most illuminating analysis of the latter, 'the doctrine of Predestination is subordinate to the doctrine of Justification.'⁵⁷ Rupp points out how aware Luther is of the devastating effects of the *Anfechtung*, Luther's word, the 'temptation' (though this is hardly an adequate translation), the terrifying awareness that the implications of the doctrine of predestination have to be accepted – hence Bunyan's 'bruised conscience', so-called. But this, Rupp points out, in Luther's *De servo arbitrio*, has to be balanced with the fact that the revealed truth of Christ's mercy is to be preached. Rupp argues that the body of the elect does not play the part in Luther's ecclesiology which it does in the doctrine of Wycliffe and Huss.⁵⁸ It can possibly be argued further, despite the English translation of Luther's *Galatians Commentary*, that the tradition of Wycliffe and Huss rather than Luther lives on, or perhaps the tradition of Geneva, and then Dort, takes over, and so goes

⁵⁵ Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, 90.

⁵⁶ William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine: or, The Description of Theologie* (London, 1600); see Titlestad, 'From Beza to Bunyan: The Pilgrim Road Mapped'.

⁵⁷ Gordon Rupp, *The Righteousness of God*, The Birbeck Lectures 1946 (London, 1953), p. 283. It is a pity that no mention is made here of the *Galatians Commentary*.

⁵⁸ Rupp, *The Righteousness of God*, 282–83.

through to Bunyan, with a tattered copy of the English translation of Luther's *Galatians Commentary* as a saving grace on the pilgrim way.

Despite his praise of Luther's efficacy in the *Galatians Commentary* for a 'wounded conscience', does Bunyan in fact not belong as much with the Luther of *De servo arbitrio* as with the Luther of the *Galatians Commentary*? Or rather, the influence of Dent lingers on. Despite the tattered copy, how well did Bunyan learn Luther's lesson that 'wrath ceaseth'? *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded* is relatively early, before the long-drawn-out imprisonment. It was clearly written after reading Luther, containing imitative passages and long sections labouring to encourage (and sometimes threatening) those waiting for the moment of assurance. This is precisely the trouble. The treatise exists under the heavy cloud of Calvinist scholasticism; Dent is still alive in his mind. There are passages of exposition of theoretical supralapsarian election.⁵⁹ *Law and Grace Unfolded* is foreign to the spirit of Luther's *Galatians Commentary*, despite the clear debt. What we do observe in Bunyan is a maturing, or perhaps 'mellowing' is the choicer word, so that we have not the earnest insistence of *Law and Grace Unfolded* but the genial good humour of *Good News for the Vilest of Men*, that God wants sinners 'of a lusty size', not 'pious professors', or the joy and delight when 'Ready-to-Halt would dance' and Much-Afraid, the Daughter of Despondencie, 'answered the Musick handsomely'.

To conclude, let us return to Apollyon: 'In this Combat no man can imagine, unless he had seen and heard as I did, what yelling, and hideous roaring Apollyon made; all the time of the fight, he spake like a Dragon: and on the other side, what sighs and groans brast from Christian's heart.' The key words are, 'as I did'. They have a double significance. The dreamer of the allegory sees the events of his dream, but the events are what the dreamer has experienced. The dreadful yelling of Apollyon is the living reality of the wounded conscience, no mere detail to give verisimilitude to a fight with a monster. But that yelling has been stilled, thanks largely to, 'this book of Mr Luther upon *Galathians*', which is 'as if written out of my own heart', and which 'I do prefer (excepting the Holy Bible) before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience'. Bunyan recognized that Luther had been down in the depths. After Apollyon there is the

⁵⁹ See note 38 above.

Valley of the Shadow, where the pilgrim is aware of someone going before him. It is, to be sure, the Psalmist but, as suggested earlier, it is surely also the Luther of the English translation of the *Galatians Commentary*.

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