

SPIRITUAL GOALS IN PILGRIM PROGRESS BY JOHN BUNYAN

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ABSTRACT

The Pilgrim's Progress is one of the great books of the world. Not only is it a classic of English fiction but also a classic of religious literature in English. It is a book which teaches unobtrusively yet persuasively, the lesson of piety and purity in life. The spiritual goals visualized in this book are hard to attain, in fact impossible to attain; but these goals are beacons of light to show the way to all human beings. The elevating moral lessons, which this story teacher, are the urgent need of the time in our world in which money, the pleasure of sex, and religious fanaticism hold a sway over the minds of the people.

The Pilgrim's progress is one of the classic of English Literature. It is a book which takes hold of the mature reader's mind as much as of the juvenile mind. The young reader enjoys this book as a story of adventure while the mature reader finds it morally and spiritually uplifting. It thrills the young reader with its exciting episodes, and it urges the mature reader to deed of piety in the service of God. And its simple, un-adorned style appeals greatly to all levels of intelligence. John Bunyan was the son of a travelling thinker.

KEYWORDS: *Spiritual, literature, adventures, travel*

SOME IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

Critics have toiled hard to identify and locate the antecedents and sources of The Pilgrim's Progress. However, all attempts to tie Bunyan down to a single source or model have failed. Instead, a number of antecedents and sources have been pointed out by critics chiefly on the basis of their conjectures. The concept of life as pilgrimage goes back far into the Middle Ages. This idea had become common property in fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. The dream framework, the valley of the shadow of death, and the giants who challenge travellers to duels- all these were traditional when Bunyan wrote his book.

The idea of a pilgrimage was of course popular; but it had been more or less accepted by popular puritan preachers in the early seventeenth century.

The idea of forsaking everything for Christ, including one's own family, had special relevance to the changing world of wandering soldier and ex-soldiers of the England of the 1640s and 1650s. The chapbook romances of Bunyan's time and of earlier times were definitely one of Bunyan's sources for his writing of The Pilgrim's Progress. Bunyan seems to have read even the Bible through the spectacles of those romances which he had undoubtedly been reading in his early youth.

Bunyan was initially attracted by the historical books of the Old Testament. His views about Genesis, and his accounts of fights against giants in The Pilgrim's Progress, fit in with this interest. So does the history of Old Testament massacres shown to Christian in the Interpreter's house. The protagonist in the book is confidently depicted as the model Christian chivalric hero. The protagonist is a saint, as well as, a knight. Among the conventional features of romance which Bunyan has utilized in his book are the unshed warning; the resisted temptation to return; the useless sword; dark and dangerous valleys; the distant glimpse of a far-off city or country; the arming of the hero; the hero's imprisonment; the castle on a hill defended by lions against whom innocence is a strong defense; the unintentional breach of loyalty; the magical healing of the wounded hero with leaves from a tree, etc. In Bunyan's book, persecution and despair are all giants.

In short Bunyan owes a lot to the traditional prose romances which had been enjoying a great vogue before Bunyan's

The title of this book is significant. A pilgrimage is the obvious simile for the course of human life from birth to eternity, especially in conjunction with the ideas of original sin, salvation by grace, and eternal bliss or damnation as the final destiny of all men. The bible itself may have given Bunyan the germ of his view of life as a pilgrimage. Bunyan's book depicts the progress of the protagonist from a life of sin to his resolve to attain the eternal life, then to his victories over various kinds of temptation, and to his final triumph marked by his arrival in the celestial city.

CONCLUSION

The Pilgrim's Progress saw the light of the day in the year 1678. However, the book was actually written several years before that. Bunyan served two prison sentences – one from 1660 to 1672, and the other in 1676-77. He wrote The Pilgrim's Progress most probably during the latter part of his first imprisonment. There could be several reasons for the long interval between the date of the composition of the book and the date of its publication. In the first place, Bunyan's prison sentence of 1672-77 made immediate publication of the book difficult. The liberty granted to non-conformists by Charles II's declaration of indulgence in 1672 soon ended, and a period of renewed persecution for the dissenter like Bunyan followed. But by 1678, the government was being pushed on to the defensive by its opponents, so that the publication of such material as Bunyan's book became easier. That the book was written during Bunyan's first prison sentence is supported by the opening words: "As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a den; and I laid me down in that place to sleep." Bunyan's note in the margin of his manuscript says that the word "den" here means the jail.

