

BIBLICAL AESTHETICS AND *THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS*

Alison O'Harae

The term "biblical aesthetics" has a plenitude of potential definitions; it is used here to denote the particular aesthetics that characterised Puritan authors as a result of the specific hermeneutic they applied to the King James Version of 1611 (the English translation of the biblical text most widely available in the seventeenth century). Puritans are frequently vilified for their supposed iconoclasm. However, the relationship between aesthetics and spirituality, or imaginative literature and the Bible, has been conceived as problematic by many in the Christian tradition. John Bunyan offers a unique contribution to this ongoing debate in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Instead of reiterating the conventional dichotomy between fiction and truth, he carefully adapts the embodied hermeneutic of scriptural interpretation developed by Puritan divines, linking the aesthetic features of literature and an engaged imagination to the spiritual and moral transformation of the reader's life.¹ Bunyan argues, on the model of the biblical text, that metaphor, types and figurative language may be necessary to the revelation of truth.² His adaptation of Puritan hermeneutics³ enables him to deploy a holistic biblical aesthetic in his understanding of how fictional texts may be read and received.⁴ Right reading thus becomes an experience of aesthetic pleasure and spiritual transformation. This juxtaposition is important, for while Bunyan undoubtedly modifies the general Puritan distrust of literature, his biblical aesthetic can only be used to justify a very specialised selection of fiction. His willingness to use Scripture as a heuristic model for the creative genesis of texts (both written and experiential) has implicit and revolutionary potential, however. Although he himself does not explore this, his work gestures towards a more comprehensive biblical understanding of aesthetics and imagination.⁵

It scarcely needs to be observed that the Bible was a privileged text for the Puritans, providing sufficient instruction for all aspects of personal and corporate life. Its authority depended not on the validation of the Church, but rather upon its testimony to itself as the "quick and powerful" Word "given by inspiration of God".⁶ Scripture was held to contain its own rules directing how it should be interpreted, and the Puritan hermeneutic drew on biblical statements like that of the apostle Paul: "ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart".⁷ Right reading involved far more than a mere increase in mental understanding, it was affective; transformation of life was a crucial element of proper interpretation.

This ideal of experimental piety, or knowing in the heart, was the tradition in which Bunyan stood: a holistic understanding of hermeneutics that by extension entailed an inclusive aesthetic, linking what is beautiful, appropriate or satisfying, to a true knowledge of God, doing what is good, and a right ordering of life. Didactic understanding did not, however, preclude a deep appreciation of Scripture as literature, as argued by William Ames, one of the most relentlessly logical of Puritan theologians:

In form of expression, Scripture does not explain the will of God by universal and scientific rules, but rather by stories, examples, precepts, exhortations, admonitions, and promises. This style best fits the common usage of all sorts of men and also greatly affects the will, by stirring up pious motives, which is the chief end of theology.⁸

But sensitivity to the aesthetic dimensions of the biblical text was rarely extended to other literature: the Puritan distaste for plays and romances is well known, though they were not the only ones who castigated fictional literature.⁹ In fact, rejection of such time-wasting pursuits figures prominently in the conversion narratives of eminent believers, like the prolific author Richard Baxter, and Bunyan himself.¹⁰

It is within this cultural context that Bunyan wrote and published *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The narrative is preceded by a poetic prologue entitled, "The Author's Apology for His Book", which he structures in the form of a dramatic dialogue, answering the objections of anticipated critics, whose arguments he hopes to forestall. Bunyan knows that it is the form of his text and choice of language that will

be contentious, and thus formulates a defence in aesthetic terms. He begins with disarming modesty, deploying rhetorical questions in order to suggest that metaphor and figurative language are pleasant, capable of communicating truth in their own way:

May I not write in such a style as this ... ?
Some men by feigning words as dark as mine,
Make truth to spangle, and its rays to shine.¹¹

The imagined interrogator responds that metaphors "want solidness", "drown the weak", "make us blind",¹² and presses the author with a patronising heartiness, "speak man thy mind".¹³ Bunyan responds by turning to the Bible, drawing on the literary features of the text in order to justify his fictional narrative: "was not God's laws,/ His Gospel-laws in olden time held forth/ By types, shadows and metaphors?"¹⁴ To Old Testament typology, a central feature of Puritan biblical interpretation, he adds that the "prophets used much by metaphors/ To set forth truth", as did "Christ" and "his Apostles too".¹⁵ The narratorial tone grows increasingly confident and he challenges his critic: "Be not too forward therefore to conclude/ That I want solidness, that I am rude".¹⁶ He valorises the "dark figures, allegories", "style and phrase" of Scripture, as that which "puts down all wit" in a manner entirely consistent with the Puritan tradition, simultaneously authorising the aesthetics of his own text: "there springs/ From that same book that lustre and those rays/ Of light that turns our darkest nights to days".¹⁷

Bunyan is more conscious than most Puritans of the implications that an appreciation of artistry in Scripture has for other literature, but he retains the biblical association of beauty with truth and practical action.¹⁸ The purpose of his elaborated aesthetic is unashamedly evangelical: to bait those fish, who "must be groped for and be tickled too,/ Or they will not be caught, what e'er you do".¹⁹ The allegorical mode he adopts is designed to "let truth be free/ To make her sallies ... Which way it pleases God",²⁰ conveying aspects of truth which cannot be apprehended in the implicitly privileged forms of "solid" discourse that his imagined interrogator is imprisoned within.²¹ His fictional presentation is to be measured alongside Scripture and, in so far as they are consistent, Bunyan pleads for an embodied hermeneutic that parallels practices of biblical interpretation: "Would'st thou read thyself ... know whether thou are blest or not ...?/ O then come hither,/ And lay my book, thy head and heart together".²² His literary aesthetic is designed to "divert", "be

pleasant", full of "fancies" that "will stick like burrs", in order to affect "the minds of listless men" and enable the reader to read themselves aright, to behold beauty and become beautiful.²³

Bunyan's distinctive aesthetic is not only articulated in the "Apology", but also exemplified in the narrative. The entire drama is filtered through the perspective of one who sees biblically. Temporal and eternal existence, individual characters, and spiritual experience are all conceived and presented as known by the Puritan pilgrim *en route* to the Celestial City.²⁴ Thus, the apparently reasonable advice of Christian's wife and neighbours when he decides to flee his home, is diagnosed as dangerous rationalising that will damage his soul and theirs if they remain within the City of Destruction. Or the affable gentility of Mr Worldly-Wiseman, seeking to turn Christian from the narrow path to a legalistic form of moralism, leads to the deadly landscape of Mount Sinai and the threat of righteous judgement. Later, as Christian and Faithful go through Vanity Fair, practices of merchandise, unrestrained pleasure, and even nationalistic pride, are satirised and condemned as fripperies that will enslave the unthinking inhabitants to their own peril. The allegorical mode of the text is thus an aesthetic vehicle at the service of Bunyan's theological purpose, as temporal earthly categories are persistently inverted in favour of biblical principle, enacting at a narrative level the spiritual demand, "to live by faith and not by sight".²⁵

This coercive singleness of vision is reinforced and enriched by Bunyan's creative and tenacious adherence to biblical language, concepts and imagery in the structure and lexicon of his artistic work. His concentrated intertextual relationship with Scripture constitutes and affirms the biblical aesthetic so critical to *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Almost every sentence, circumstance and character alludes to a cluster of scriptural concepts and images that add depth and force to the narrative of Christian and his fellow pilgrims. The central metaphor is, of course, that of "the way", crucial to the structure of biblical narrative, and the experience of the spiritual life as a pilgrimage. This forms a framework around which a constellation of other key images and concepts, with rich cultural associations, gather: the burden of sin, apocalyptic flames, the dragon Apollyon and the figure of Evangelist—to mention just a few.

The aesthetics of the narrative cannot be divorced from the hermeneutic Bunyan articulates in his "Apology" without deconstructing the entire fabric of the text through an alternative interpretive

strategy, or reading it "against the grain".²⁶ Critics who do this often construe central pieces of the narrative, like Faithful's lengthy discussion with Talkative about the experiential dimension of saving faith, or Hopeful's account of his conversion, as didactic flaws.²⁷ But to say that Bunyan unfortunately departed from the artistic simplicity of his allegory, in order to make a sectarian theological point through overt sermonising, is an anachronistic projection of alien literary criteria upon his text. An interesting inversion of this argument construes Bunyan as a solitary and prophetic Puritan apologist for the imagination, suggesting that fictional literature can operate as an effective substitute for theology and doctrine. This retains the same basic dichotomy. It is a long way from Bunyan's fear that critics would fault its fictional nature as an impediment to the presentation of biblical truth, or as affording literary pleasure without fostering spiritual growth. He would have identified attempts to valorise his text in spite of its theological message,²⁸ or deliberately against its theological presuppositions, as the most serious of misreadings.²⁹

This is not to say that Bunyan must be read prescriptively according to his own directions given in the "Apology", but a careful attention to his argument does allow an appreciation of the didactic and expository elements of the text, as integral components in a complex strategy designed to instruct and encourage the reader. Doctrine and theology are not seen as unpalatable discourses that need to be replaced by an allegorical aesthetic, nor is fictional narrative viewed simply as an expendable embellishment of truth. Rather, Bunyan seeks to forge a method of presenting the truth in an aesthetically pleasing manner, designed to effectively motivate the reader.³⁰ The shift from adventure story to sermon-like exhortation can be seen as a deliberate authorial strategy, alerting the reader in a quite contemporary sense to the fictive status of the narrative, and seeking to forestall simple escapism, returning from the world projected by the text to that of the reader's own experience: "Would'st thou be in a dream, and yet not sleep ... /Wouldest thou lose thyself, and catch no harm/ And find thyself again without a charm ...? /This book will make a traveller of thee,/ If by its counsel thou wilt ruled be".³¹ Such an awareness positions Bunyan's literary work firmly within the Puritan culture from which it emerged: it was the purpose of all pastors to so present the beauty of Christ, as to draw the affections and motivate the wills of their congregations;³² Bunyan is determined that the pleasure of the text further, and never subvert, this ethical and experiential dimension.

Bunyan draws heavily upon Old Testament aesthetics in the body of his text. Edmund Clowney has observed:

Beauty is not comprehended as an abstraction. Israel's inspired poets are not delighted with their own delight; their delight is in the Lord. It is this religious centre ... that shapes the understanding of beauty in the Old Testament.³³

This ethos informs Bunyan's depiction of the aesthetic dimensions of biblical spirituality in relation to conversion, sanctification, and eschatological anticipation. The biblical presentation of the works of God in creation and redemption has a clearly aesthetic aspect. After the creation of the world, it is recorded: "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good".³⁴ Satisfaction and rest follow the consummation of his cosmic artistry. Human beings are exhorted to respond to this display of glory and beauty with adoration and delight. Similarly, human redemption has a definite aesthetic element as portrayed in Scripture, resonating in the overarching providential pattern of promise and fulfilment that permeates both Testaments.³⁵ Paul, for example, after providing a brief synopsis of biblical history, declares "when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son".³⁶ He is drawing out the eschatological implications of the single Greek word uttered by Jesus upon the cross, *tetelestai*, "It is finished".³⁷ The paradox of Calvary consists partly in the fact that the ultimate restoration of glory and beauty is achieved through suffering and crucifixion. This divine inversion of human aesthetics is mirrored in Bunyan's narrative strategy, both encapsulating the Pauline formulation, "hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"³⁸ The biblical terms for beauty thus refuse to be simply equated with Greek idealism or modern aesthetics, Yahweh is not conceived in the image of Apollo. To position Israel's praise of Yahweh's glory outside the sphere of aesthetics, because of this paradoxical difference, however, would be to impoverish both worship and art; the infinite transcendence of divine glory and suffering preserves the depth and integrity of the artistic enterprise.³⁹

These dimensions of biblical aesthetics and beauty provide an important context when considering Bunyan's treatment of spiritual experience. Divine satisfaction with a complete and fitting work of redemption is a necessary precondition enabling the response of Christian when he finally comes to the Cross. There is a pause in the narrative as:

he stood still a while, to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the Cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks.⁴⁰

In this scene, as Christian looks in faith upon the Cross, he is cleansed and transformed. "Three Shining Ones" meet him, strip off his rags and give him new clothes, a mark upon his forehead and a roll with a seal.⁴¹ Bunyan explores the biblical paradox of spiritual beauty in its supreme manifestation of self-sacrifice bringing about salvation. The One, who in the words of the Song of Songs is "altogether lovely", as the Suffering Servant had "no beauty that we should desire him"⁴² It is through the disfigurement of the One "full of grace and truth"⁴³ that beauty is granted to those whose "righteousness is as filthy rags";⁴⁴ Christian muses, "He hath given me rest, by his sorrow, and life, by his death",⁴⁵ a personal example of the cosmic restoration celebrated by Paul.⁴⁶ The simplicity of this faithful gaze is categorised aesthetically when the character Hopeful later narrates his conversion,⁴⁷ with a child-like assurance that has deep roots in Bunyan's own experience. As his autobiography *Grace Abounding* demonstrates, he wrestled intensely with doubt, fear and corrosive introspection, before being able to look to Christ and declare him all-sufficient and "altogether lovely".⁴⁸

Conversion, in the biblical schema of salvation, is intimately linked to the process of sanctification, and Bunyan presents this also in distinctively aesthetic terms. In the most obvious set-piece exemplifying this theme, the allegorical Palace Beautiful, Bunyan draws upon traditional medieval moral discourse in the naming of its inhabitants, "a grave and beautiful damsel ... Discretion", and her family, "Prudence, Piety and Charity",⁴⁹ while Christian sleeps in a chamber called Peace.⁵⁰ The theme recurs overtly later in the "Bath of Sanctification", where Christian's wife, children and Mercy wash, before leaving the House of the Interpreter.⁵¹ They bathe at the will of their Master, and holiness is described in tactile and affective terms, which present it as an aesthetic ideal: "they came out of that Bath not only sweet and clean; but also much enlivened ... they looked fairer a deal".⁵² This is followed by the Interpreter placing his seal upon them: "this seal added greatly to their beauty", they are clothed in "fine linen, white and clean".⁵³ The biblical text often associates beauty with glory, a kind of awesome radiance, that finds

expression in this passage: "the women ... thus adorned ... seemed to be a terror one to the other, for they could not see that glory each one on herself which they could see in each other".⁵⁴ This focus on the other induces humility, as each observed the fairness and comeliness of her companion.

For Bunyan, the supreme vision of this beauty in the One whose "visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men",⁵⁵ was the central and necessary dynamic at the heart of all spiritual life, transformation and growth. His spiritual aesthetic is centred on the Person of Christ, and traces its eschatological logic to the final consummation. It is here, above all, that the transcendent depth or "ultimate reality", referred to earlier,⁵⁶ consequent upon the inextricable biblical combination of divine glory and beauty, finds narrative expression. The consciousness of eternity that informs Bunyan's narrative has both a terrifying and ecstatic dimension. Thus, complacent Ignorance at the very gate of the Celestial City, is found to have no certificate, bound hand and foot, and taken away. The narrator comments at the end of Part One: "Then I saw that there was a way to Hell, even from the Gates of Heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction".⁵⁷ Juxtaposed against this is the testimony of Mr Stand-fast, which forms the conclusion of Part Two:

I see myself now at the end of my journey I am going now to see that head that was crowned with thorns, and that face that was spit upon for me. I have formerly lived by hear-say and faith, but now I go where I shall live by sight, and shall be with him, in whose company I delight myself wherever I have seen the print of his shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too. His name has been to me as a civet-box, yea, sweeter than all perfumes. His voice to me has been most sweet, and his countenance I have more desired than they that have most desired the light of the sun.⁵⁸

There are numerous biblical echoes in this passage, as Bunyan draws upon allegorical readings of the Song of Songs, typological interpretations of the Messianic psalms, the apocalyptic declarations of Old Testament prophets, and the eager yearning of the New Testament epistles.⁵⁹ The psalmist cries: "One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD".⁶⁰ Similarly, Isaiah prophesies, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his

beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off".⁶¹ While the ultimate fulfilment of this lies beyond the temporal linearity of his narrative, Bunyan does allow his pilgrims certain moments of aesthetic contemplation, in which the pressing weight of this world is suspended,⁶² and eternity floods in, reconfiguring present experience. This occurs to Christian and Hopeful as they ascend the aptly named Delectable Mountains, and gain a ravishing, imperfect, intoxicating glimpse of the Celestial City:

They had them to the top of an high Hill called Clear, and gave them their glass to look ... they could not look steadily through the glass; yet they thought they saw something like the Gate, and also something of the glory of the place. Then they went away and sang.⁶³

Bunyan's emphasis on the crucified and risen Christ as the supreme embodiment of beauty offers an alternative to the persecutory or anti-theological readings of his theology, where divine paradox is reduced to dualism when read through a naturalistic Freudian or psychological hermeneutic. The unique artistic achievement of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is to suggest, through its own structure and content, that such paradoxes can only be understood and ratified experientially. The consolation and assurance that Christian gains from gazing at the cross, the sanctifying power of this concentrated focus, supplemented by the positive role of companionship and counsel, and the eschatological trajectory of the narrative, all provide an affirmative spiritual context that ameliorates the corrosive uncertainty that characterises Christian at the beginning of his journey, and calls into question an interpretation of his theology which focuses exclusively on a negative reading of predestination. Bunyan does present two distinct eternal destinies in his text. His pilgrims, however, do not live with a perpetual lack of assurance. Such uncertainty, far from being the necessary trademark of Calvinist theology, is in fact a demonstration of immaturity, as he demonstrates through the character of Mr Fearing. The biblical aesthetic that Bunyan espouses is relational, didactic, experiential and transformative: the focused narrative structure of the adventure story, the humorous depiction and gracious tolerance of weakness and diversity in Part Two, and the ecstatic descriptions of Christ and heaven, are ultimately the aesthetic exemplification of an underlying theology that privileges grace and assurance over doubt and retribution.

Whilst Bunyan moves beyond the traditional dichotomies between aesthetic and spiritual, fiction and truth, both at the level of the literary text and in his understanding of the spiritual life, however, he remains unwilling to venture too far on the insight that "some ... by feigning words as dark as mine,/ Make truth to spangle ...".⁶⁴ Neither part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is sent forth without a framing commentary from the author, designed to circumscribe modes of interpretation and pre-emptively disarm criticism. Nevertheless, the hermeneutic that Bunyan deploys in his reading of the biblical text, has generated a narrative of remarkable power, which suggests possibilities for a "rule-governed imagination" exercised along the lines opened by the scriptural text.⁶⁵ Subsequent writers found the precedent set by Bunyan a liberating paradigm that prompted more venturesome works of literature within Puritan and later Dissenting circles.⁶⁶

The implicit theoretical understanding of the imagination, with its fusion of hermeneutics, theology, experience and aesthetics, that characterises Bunyan's text, can be articulated and elaborated more explicitly through the lens offered by Paul Ricoeur. He states:

I would like to consider the act of reading as a dynamic activity that is not confined to repeating significations fixed forever, but which takes place as a prolonging of the itineraries of meaning opened up by the work of interpretation the act of reading accords with the idea of a norm-governed productivity to the extent that it may be said to be guided by a productive imagination at work in the text itself. Beyond this, I would like to see in the reading of a text such as the Bible a creative operation unceasingly employed in decontextualizing its meaning and recontextualizing it in today's *Sitz im Leben*. Through this ... the act of reading realizes the union of fiction and redescription that characterizes the imagination in the most pregnant sense of this term.⁶⁷

This is neither the free, unfettered creativity espoused later by the Romantics, nor quite the imperious "Poesie" lauded by Sir Philip Sidney.⁶⁸ In its mediation between the givenness of the revealed text and a necessary degree of subjectivity when interpreting and appropriating, it provides an apt gloss on Bunyan's cryptic notes concerning the genesis of *The Pilgrim's Progress*: "Before I was aware, I this begun,/ And thus it was: I writing of the way ... /Fell suddenly into an allegory ... /Still as I pulled it came ...".⁶⁹ Ricoeur's emphasis

on the experimental dimension of interpretation not only illuminates Bunyan's description of the creation of this particular literary text, but, more pregnantly, also indicates the latent, even revolutionary potential, which remains implicit in a biblical understanding of aesthetics and imagination.

Notes

- 1 Michael Davies, *Graceful Reading: Theology and Narrative in the Works of John Bunyan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- 2 Barbara A. Johnson, "Falling into Allegory: The 'Apology' to *The Pilgrim's Progress* and Bunyan's Scriptural Methodology" in *Bunyan in Our Time*, R. G. Collmer, ed. (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1989), pp. 113-37.
- 3 John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), pp. 36-7.
- 4 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 206.
- 5 Paul Ricoeur, "The Bible and the Imagination", in *The Bible as a Document of the University*, H. D. Betz, ed. (Chico, CA.: Scholars Press, 1981), pp. 49-75.
- 6 Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16.
- 7 2 Corinthians 3:3.
- 8 In Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), p. 149.
- 9 Leland Ryken, *Triumphs of the Imagination: Literature in Christian Perspective* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), pp. 13-17.
- 10 For an extended commentary on this matter see, Richard Baxter, "Letter to the Reader", in *A Breviate of the Life of Margaret, The Daughter of Francis Charlton of Apply in Shropshire, Esq.; And Wife of Richard Baxter*, (London: Printed for B. Simmons, at the Three Golden Cocks at the West-end of St. Pauls, 1681).
- 11 *Pilgrim's Progress*, pp. 32-4.
- 12 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 34.
- 13 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 34.
- 14 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 34.
- 15 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 34.
- 16 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 34.
- 17 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 34.
- 18 Edmund P. Clowney, "Living Art: Christian Experience and the Arts", *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry*, J. D. Woodbridge, ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 235-53; William A. Dryness, "Aesthetics in the Old Testament: Beauty in Context", *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 28.4 (1985), pp. 421-32.
- 19 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 33.

- 20 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 36.
- 21 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 36.
- 22 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 37.
- 23 *Pilgrim's Progress*, pp. 36-7.
- 24 Johnson, "Falling into Allegory", pp. 122-4, pp. 128-9, pp. 131-2; Thomas H. Luxon, *Literal Figures: Puritan Allegory and the Reformation Crisis in Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 160.
- 25 2 Corinthians 5:7.
- 26 This essay follows the interpretation of Bunyan's theology, offered by Michael Davies, as one in which grace eventually triumphs over the paradoxes, anxieties and persecutory elements in the experience of the individual seeking salvation (*Graceful Reading*, pp. 1-16). While Strachniewski's analysis of the functional role that allegory plays in the context of Bunyan's theological purpose supports the union of "Parnassus" and "Conventicle" in Coleridge's terms. The predominant hermeneutic employed is that of a Freudian suspicion of religion as merely self-gratifying wish-fulfilment. Stachniewski's basic attribution of an almost Manichean teleology to Bunyan fails to take into account Part Two of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, privileging the acute tension of Bunyan's early anxiety in *Grace Abounding* over the confidence he later testifies to when looking to the objective presence of Christ in heaven at the right hand of God as the basis of his assurance, rather than the fluctuating state of his own feelings. This complements the pastoral and communal emphases of Part Two of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which recognises a wide range of conversion experiences and degrees of spiritual maturity (John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 169-216). Similarly, Stuart Sim argues that "the only certainty that the Calvinist can countenance as regards the individual consciousness of salvation is the certainty of its uncertainty". He elides the careful distinction Puritans made between a once-for-all act of justification and the ongoing process of sanctification (particularly when dealing with the "open-ended" conclusion to *The Holy War*) (Stuart Sim, *Negotiations With Paradox: Narrative Practice and Narrative Form in Bunyan and Defoe* (Savage: Barnes & Noble, 1990), pp. 1-11, 44-70). Galen Johnson suggests how Bunyan's theology can be integrated with an historical understanding of his spiritual development as a Christian and pastor (Galen K. Johnson, "Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent", in *Christianity and Literature* 52.4 (2003), pp. 577-61). See also *Gaius Davies, Genius, Grief and Grace* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2001), pp. 51-90.
- 27 Clive S. Lewis, "The Vision of John Bunyan", in *Selected Literary Essays*, W. Hooper, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 146-153 (pp. 146,152).

- 28 See for example Vincent Newey, *The Pilgrim's Progress: Critical and Historical Views* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1980); Roger Sharrock, *John Bunyan: The Pilgrim's Progress* (London: Edward Arnold, 1966), pp. 25-6.
- 29 As in the most famous of deconstructive readings: Stanley Fish, "Progress in the Pilgrim's Progress", *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 224-64.
- 30 M. Davies, *Graceful Reading*, pp. 194-203.
- 31 *Pilgrim's Progress*, pp. 36,37.
- 32 This tradition reached its culmination in the writings and practice of Jonathan Edwards: see Patrick Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty: An Introduction to Theological Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 15-16.
- 33 Clowney, "Living Art", pp. 239-40.
- 34 Genesis 1:31, 2:1,2,9.
- 35 Clowney, "Living Art", pp. 235-53; F. W. Boreham, "Hudson Taylor's Text", *Developing a Christian Imagination: An Interpretive Anthology*, W. W. Wiersbe, ed. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1995), pp. 199-206.
- 36 Galatians 4:4.
- 37 John 19:30; Boreham, "Hudson Taylor's Text", p. 201.
- 38 1 Corinthians 1:20.
- 39 Clowney, "Living Art", p. 242. Paul Tillich terms this transcendence "ultimate reality". See Jeremy S. Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), pp. 256-7).
- 40 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 70.
- 41 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 70.
- 42 Isaiah 53:2.
- 43 John 1:14.
- 44 Isaiah 64:6.
- 45 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 70.
- 46 Clowney, "Living Art", pp. 235-53; Boreham, "Hudson Taylor's Text", pp. 199-206.
- 47 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 183.
- 48 G. Davies, *Genius, Grief and Grace*, pp. 52-90.
- 49 *Pilgrim's Progress*, pp. 79, 80.
- 50 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 86.
- 51 *Pilgrim's Progress*, pp. 255-7.
- 52 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 256.
- 53 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 256.
- 54 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 256.
- 55 Isaiah 52:14.
- 56 Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise*, pp. 256-7.

- 57 *Pilgrim's Progress*, pp. 204-5.
58 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 372.
59 2 Corinthians 3:18.
60 Psalm 27:4.
61 Isaiah 33:17.
62 H. E. Duitman, "Practical Aesthetics", part of on line Christian Music Educators Forum, c/o Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa, <http://home-pages.dordt.edu/~hduitman/musiced/practicalaesthetics.htm>.
63 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 161.
64 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 34.
65 Ricoeur, "The Bible and the Imagination", p. 50.
66 This literary line can be traced ultimately to works like *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, for example; see Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination*, pp. 209-11. It is the affinity between the texts, not the conclusions that Stachniewski draws from this, that is pertinent here.
67 Ricoeur, "The Bible and the Imagination", p. 50.
68 Philip Sidney, *Defense of Poesie* (1579).
69 *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 31.