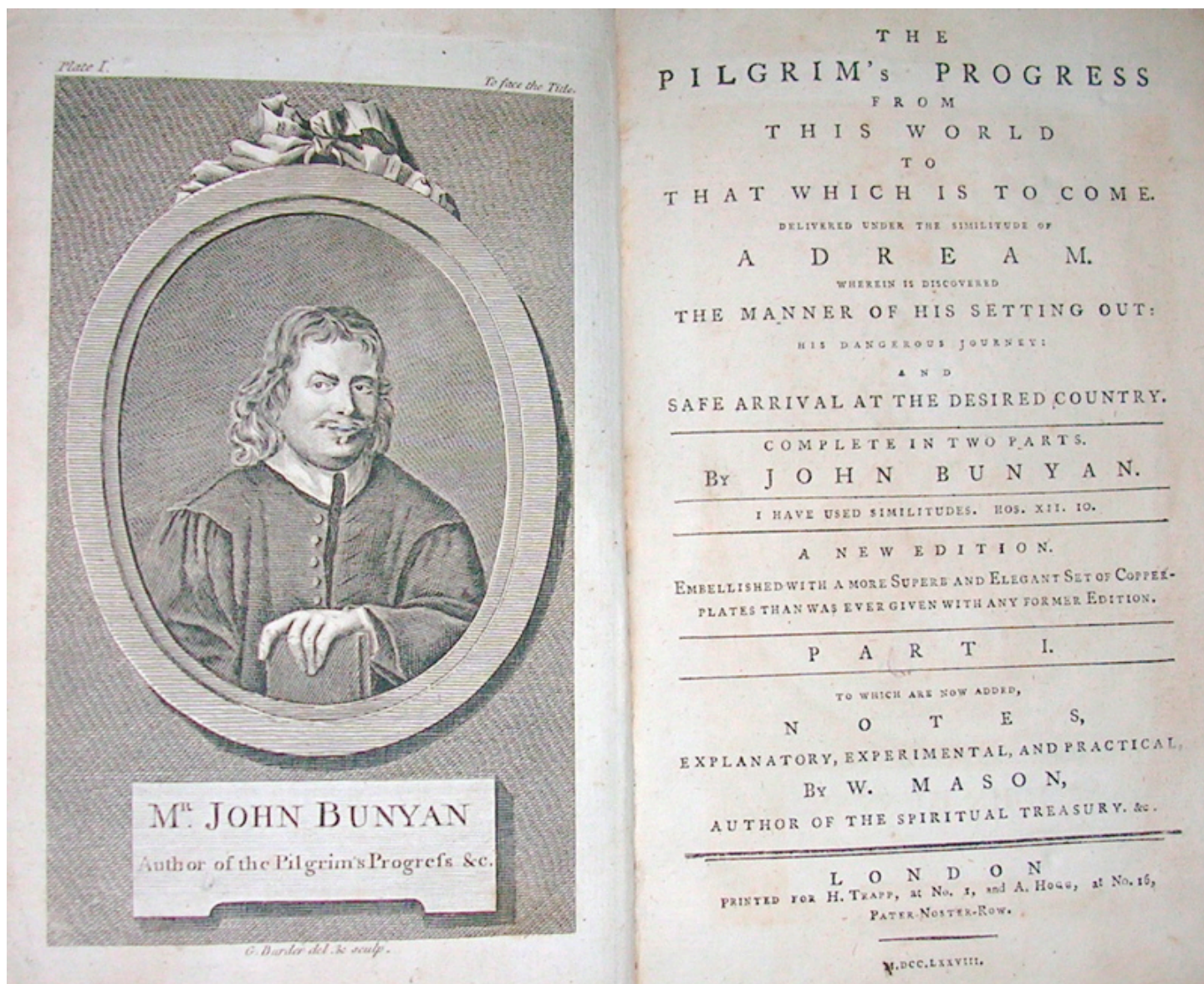


Saint of the Week: John Bunyan (1628-1688)

Observed 29 August



John Bunyan is best known to us as the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, (properly *The Pilgrim's Progress From This World To That Which Is To Come*). He began life as a tinker (maker and mender of metal pots), entering into his father's trade at a very young age, after minimal education. Then at 16 he became a soldier in the English Civil War. After two years, the armies were disbanded and Bunyan had an extended religious crisis, after which he began to preach in Non-conformist congregations. His description of his religious journey is vividly described in his first book, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. At the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, laws against holding any religious services not authorized by the Church of England were reinstated, and Bunyan, as a very successful preacher, was jailed. He spent most of the next 12 years in jail, where he wrote an extraordinary number of books (including the ones already mentioned.) The Puritan faith,

that found violent expression in the protracted Civil War and in the excesses of Oliver Cromwell's parliamentary rule, finds an eloquent and reasonable proponent in John Bunyan. In *Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan has created a vivid story, an allegory of the human life of faith, In his introduction he says that he set out to write about the saints (all people of faith) and, to his own surprise, "fell suddenly into an allegory about their journey, and the way to glory." This wonderful work has given us countless vivid common terms (like 'the Slough of Despond' and 'Vanity Fair'). This allegory has proven so popular, inspiring and encouraging so many people to faith, that it has been translated into some 200 languages and has remained continuously in print since its first publication in 1675.

In the late 19th century Percy Dearmer put a section of the famous work, now popular as much among Anglicans as among non-conformists, into verse for use as a hymn of the Church of England. It is found in our hymnal at #564

He who would valiant be 'gainst all disaster,
let him in constancy follow the Master.
There's no discouragement shall make him once relent
his first avowed intent to be a pilgrim.

Since, Lord, thou dost defend us with thy Spirit,
We know we at the end, shall life inherit.
Then fancies flee away! I'll fear not what men say,
I'll labor night and day to be a pilgrim.

Lessons Job 33: 14-19,26-28; Psalm 49:4-15; Hebrews 4:12-15; Matthew 7:12-14

Collect God of peace, you called John Bunyan to be valiant for truth: Grant that as strangers and pilgrims we may at the last rejoice with all the faithful in your heavenly city; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



"They stood looking and looking upon it, but could not tell what they should make thereof!"