

Weaver of Allegory:

John Bunyan's Use of the Medieval Theme of Vice and Virtue as Devotional Writer and Social

Critic in *The Holy War*

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For Dad

May I always love Christ the way you did. Miss you.

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Introduction

John Bunyan is best-known as the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678). However, Jack Lindsay has rightly pointed out that the English tinker was a “maker of *myths*,”¹ not solely a *myth*. Four years after Bunyan published his first allegory, he published *The Holy War* (1682). Although this work has never attained the popularity or critical acclaim of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, it is perhaps a better example of Bunyan's literary prowess than its predecessor due to its high level of complexity and demonstration of Bunyan's skill as allegorist, devotionalist, and social critic.

However, many critics fail to recognize the unique artistic contribution of *The Holy War*. This work is not commonly anthologized and rarely even referenced in literature textbooks. Little analysis has been written about it in comparison to *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Despite this fact, Bunyan biographer George B. Harrison stated that “The Holy War, as a work of art, is the greatest English allegory.” This is a surprising claim considering that *The Pilgrim's Progress* has been the most widely published of all English allegories. Britain's Lord Macaulay echoed this sentiment when he stated that *The Holy War* would be considered the world's greatest allegory had *The Pilgrim's Progress* never been written. In addition, the English Association, a literary association in early twentieth-century Britain, included *The Holy War* on its list of recommended books—a list that did not include *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Bunyan wrote this work between 1680 and 1681 in the midst of England's Succession Crisis. Religious and political tensions had been strained since the restoration of the monarchy, and Bunyan took the opportunity to address both the spiritual and political climate of his

¹ The title of Jack Lindsay's biography of Bunyan is entitled *John Bunyan, Maker of Myths*.

homeland.² Bunyan, a Non-conformist preacher, had already published scores of theological works in the decades leading up to the Succession Crisis. As persecution of Non-conformists intensified, however, Bunyan began to integrate criticisms of the main instigators of the persecution—the Anglican-Torreys and King Charles II—into his theological writings. More than any other book, *The Holy War* describes the struggle of Dissenting Christians under a hostile government.

Although clearly embarking upon social commentary in the text, Bunyan considered his primary duty pastoral. Hence, no work of Bunyan's lacks devotional content. Along with soteriological concerns, a chief theme of Bunyan's works is the spiritual struggle of the individual soul. Bunyan not only wanted to evangelize the unconverted but also wanted to encourage, strengthen, and challenge believers. In *The Holy War*, he clarifies that attacks on the Non-conformists' faith arise not only from government oppression but also from Satanic deception and temptation. George Offor notes both the devotional nature of the work and the fact that its primary target audience was believers when he states that "[*The Holy War*] is more profound, more deeply spiritual than the pilgrimage from Destruction to the Celestial City; and to understand its hidden meaning, requires the close and mature application of the renewed mind" (246).

Bunyan's artistry, though, is most clearly seen in his role as allegorist. With the publication of *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, he had shown increasing versatility using allegorical symbols. C.S. Lewis states, "When allegory is at its best, it approaches myth, which must be grasped with the imagination, not with the intellect."³ This is certainly true of *The Holy War*, which Offor notes "is written by one who possessed almost

² As Forrest and Sharrock note, "The intense political divisiveness of the time and the treatment of religion as an instrument of state policy have a direct bearing on Bunyan's story in *The Holy War*" (xxii).

³ Preface to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 3rd ed. (London: Bles, 1943), p. 13.

boundless resources of imagination” (246). Bunyan would use the skills he had honed in his previous allegorical writings to work theological and political elements into the narrative of *The Holy War*.

Bunyan’s literary artistry in *The Holy War* as allegorist is often underrated, perhaps because he downplayed any formal education he had received or perhaps because his romantic reputation as the inspired tinker who wrote *The Pilgrim’s Progress* in the Bedford “gaol” belies his true ability. However, Bunyan clearly understood the popular literary culture of his day and was evidently familiar enough with English literary history to produce contemporary writings that reflected many of the literary elements of the past. Although numerous critics, such as Beth Lynch, have noted the likelihood that Bunyan imitated works of the past, such literary imitation was considered a highly-respected artistic device in the seventeenth century. Lynch notes that Bunyan’s writings “engage with their contexts in a more active and transforming way than many scholars have allowed” and further suggests that “these interactions themselves govern the evolution of his writing from pastoral exposition into something anticipating narrative fiction” (2). Significantly, and perhaps arguably, *The Holy War* best demonstrates Bunyan’s relationship with the historical literary context of England with its emphasis on the virtue and vice theme of The Middle Ages. Bunyan extends this thematic thread from the Medieval *Psychomachia* and morality plays to the allegory of seventeenth-century England.

Bunyan was also keenly aware of his audience. Each of the introductions to his allegories is an invitation to his readers to be an active participant in the narrative, to accompany the narrator on the journey, listen to the conversations of the characters, cheer for the right side during battle, and—most importantly—end the experience transformed. In this regard, *The Holy War* is “a work of that master intelligence, which was privileged to arouse kindred spirits from

torpor and inactivity, to zeal, diligence, and success.”⁴ Bunyan’s desire was not to achieve fame or even to champion his cause: it was individual transformation of the participant. Northrop Frye notes that “the artist demonstrates a certain way of life: his aim is not to be appreciated or admired but to transfer to others the imaginative habit and energy of his mind” (*Symbol* 4).

Perhaps Bunyan’s crowning literary achievement was his ability to universalize his own experiences and thereby show they are in great measure his readers’ experiences as well. Roger Sharrock notes the following:

Clearly, *The Holy War* was intended primarily as yet another exploration of his own personal experience. But its keynote is the detached, almost scholastic re-interpretation of the experience in terms of military and political allegory. It is an ambitious book which tries to do much more than to allegorize his conversion and subsequent temptations. The First Part of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* had aimed at a more modest goal and achieved an unexpected universality. Now Bunyan was attempting to make his symbols apply to all mankind. Though he shows no signs of being spoilt by fame, he has become the self-conscious writer. (120)

Bunyan explains in vivid detail his spiritual and political⁵ struggles in *Grace Abounding*, but there is critical consensus that each of his three major allegories contains autobiographical elements. Deborah C. Poff states, “[I]ndividuals constantly create, test, and live through their own stories. It is through such stories that people seek to make sense of events, personal and social, to turn inchoate, senseless experiences into experiences infused with meaning and significance” (n. pag.).

⁴ J. Montgomery, quoted by George Offor.

⁵ “Political,” in this sense, means the conflict he had with the authorities concerning his unlicensed preaching and subsequent imprisonment.

The following analysis will begin with chapter one's exploration of allegory as story with emphasis on Bunyan as storyteller in general and allegorist in particular. Chapter two will proceed to describe Bunyan as devotional writer with a focus on the individual soul. Chapter three will continue with a discussion of Bunyan as social critic in his historical context. Included in each chapter will be an exposition of *The Holy War* in relation to the Medieval theme of virtue and vice so evident in the text. The following lines from Bunyan's "To the Reader" give an appropriate invitation to the work:

*Well, now go forward, step within the dore,
 And there behold five hundred times much more
 Of all sorts of such inward Rarities
 As please the mind will, and will feed the eyes
 With those, which if a Christian, thou wilt see
 Not small, but things of greatest moment be. (17-22)⁶*

⁶ During Bunyan's era and before, spelling and punctuation were non-standard and inconsistent. Quoted material will retain the original spelling and punctuation—including non-standard italics—in order to preserve the integrity of the quotations.

Chapter one: Allegory as Story and the Virtue and Vice Paradigm in Bunyan's *The Holy War*

H. Porter Abbot has stated that every human being is both a narrator and the recipient of narration (xii). Human experience as well as academic research indicates that storytelling is a universal medium of communication, one that can be both informative and entertaining. However, narrative⁷ appears to be much more than one medium of communication among many—it appears to be characteristic of the way humans relate to the world.⁸ Theodore Sarbin says, “[H]uman beings think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures” (8). Not only is every human life a story in itself, but experiences in life are interpreted and understood narratively.

The average person is told (or read) stories from earliest childhood, is introduced to and builds relationships with other persons based on and through narrative experiences, and is educated with stories in language arts, history, and even math “story problems.” In fact, one can hardly escape the narrative structure upon which life appears to be built. Carl Jung states, “[T]he man who thinks he can live without myth, or outside it, is an exception. He is like one uprooted, having no true link either with the past, or with the ancestral life which continues within him, or yet with contemporary human society” (5). People best understand human existence through story. They relate their own narratives to those of others and assimilate new experiences to the master-plots of their lives. Poff states, “[I]ndividuals constantly create, test, and live through their own stories. It is through such stories that people seek to make sense of events, personal and social, to turn inchoate, senseless experiences into experiences infused with meaning and

⁷ For this thesis, *story* and *narrative* will be used interchangeably.

⁸ *Essential Jung* states, “Jung’s extensive knowledge of comparative religion and of mythology led him to detect parallels with psychotic material which argued a common source: a myth-producing level of mind which was common to all men” (16).

significance” (n. pag.). Poff rightly acknowledges the meaning that stories give humanity. People not only live stories of their own, but relate to human existence through them.

What is more, the line of storytelling can be followed back throughout history. Wolfgang Iser says, “[L]iterature as a medium has been with us more or less since the beginning of recorded time” (263-264). Rather than a phenomenon, narrative appears to have always been a defining characteristic of humanity historically, particularly in the form of myth.⁹ Story, as found in myth, can be traced to nearly every time and culture. Frye states, “It is mythology that we find in primitive societies, and mythology that we find at the historical beginnings of our own, and it is again mythology that underlies our present ideologies, when we examine them closely enough” (*Metaphor* 198). Frye’s observation suggests that storytelling is an intrinsic part of the human experience.

Even though narrative has long been characteristic of humanity, other forms of communication have been developed but have often been found wanting. Poff states

It has long been recognized that stories can be effective and memorable devices in the management of meaning and motivation for the sake of action. Educators, philosophers, and religious leaders in the past have relied on them to drive home their message and promote the moral education of their followers, due to their memorable and emotional qualities. Good stories “resonate” in ways that bullet lists, opinions, exhortations, and even theories rarely do. (n. pag.)

Despite the many options of communication available, none has been found well suited to humanity’s penchant for story-telling. Stories are not only universal but versatile as well.

⁹ Northrop Frye, in *Myth and Metaphor*, views myth as synonymous with story: “To me myth always means, first and primarily, *mythos*, story, plot, narrative” (3).

In addition to the importance of the narrative itself, additional significance is found in using allegory as story. Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck state that allegory can be defined as “explaining a work, or a figure in myth, or any created entity, as if there were another sense to which it referred” (2). When allegory is used as story, additional meaning lies below the surface narrative. Angus Fletcher states, “Allegorical stories exist, as it were, to put secondary meanings into orbit around them; the primary meaning is then valued for its satellites” (221). Allegory presumes to engage the reader with at least two narratives: the surface narrative and the underlying one below the surface that most often contains the work’s theme.

The reader works in conjunction with the text in order to uncover a deeper meaning within the narrative. Hence, allegory, by definition, is predicated upon the work’s interaction with the reader (Iser 31.). Iser states, “Central to the reading of every literary work is the interaction between its structure and its recipient. This is why the phenomenological theory of art has emphatically drawn attention to the fact that the study of a literary work should concern not only the actual text but also, and in equal measure, the actions involved in responding to the text” (20-21). Readers of allegory uniquely participate with the text due to the nature of an underlying layer of meaning beyond the literal action. Frye echoes this idea: “Participation in the continuity of narrative leads to the discovery or recognition of the theme, which *is* the narrative seen as total design” (*Symbol* 8). Although allegory *is* story, Fletcher notes the distinct characteristic of allegory: “Whereas a simple story may remain inscrutable to the sophisticated reader, and a myth inscrutable to any reader at all, the correspondences of allegory are open to any who have a decoder’s skill.”¹⁰ A unique characteristic of allegory is the relationship of the

¹⁰ Fletcher goes on to say that “[i]n these ways allegory departs from mimesis and myth, and its intention in either case seems to be a matter of clearly rationalized ‘allegorical levels of meaning.’ These levels are the double aim of the aesthetic surface; they are its intention, and its ritualized form is intended to elicit from the reader some sort of exegetical response” (323).

author, text, and audience. The author embeds the text with an underlying meaning and the audience attempts to interpret that meaning—an encoding and decoding of the work. The following chapter will explore the historical context of English allegory with special attention to the Medieval concept of vice and virtue, Bunyan’s use of this concept in *The Holy War*, critical appraisals of Bunyan’s text, and an exposition of the text with emphasis on Bunyan’s portrayal of the nature of vice and virtue.

I.

The participation between reader and text in interpretation that Frye speaks of was especially evident in Europe, particularly in England, from the Middle Ages to John Bunyan’s era. Roger Pooley notes that

The question of correct interpretation is as important to the continuing impetus of the pilgrim’s journey as their reaction to clear and present danger. This is not unique to allegorical narrative, but it is a common feature. Dante’s pilgrim and Spenser’s questing knights are often tested most in their ability to recognize the vision and expect the reader to do all the work; rather, the work of interpretation is shared between readers and characters. (281)

Thus, allegory presents a unique forum for readers and texts to work together. Bunyan understood the mutual cooperation needed to interpret allegory. In his preface to *Pilgrim’s Progress*, he lays out the responsibility of the reader, stating that the meanings of the narrative “must be groped for, and be tickled too, / Or they will not be catch’d, whate’er you do” (86).

Perhaps most importantly, allegory is story that is uniquely suited for communicating universal truths. As Iser says, “Communication in literature, then, is a process set in motion and regulated not by a given code but by a mutually restrictive and magnifying interaction between

the explicit and the implicit, between revelation and concealment” (34). What is concealed needs to be unlocked so that readers find truth for themselves.¹¹ That is not to say that the text lacks inherent meaning or that readers create their own meaning from the text. Jung notes the intention of the author when he states “An allegory is a paraphrase of a conscious content” (289). Indeed, in modern times allegory has been often been seen as unpalatably didactic.¹² From the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century, however, allegory was a popular venue for communicating ideas, often universal truths, in an engaging way.

C.S. Lewis remarks, “Allegory, in some sense, belongs not to medieval man but to man, or even to mind, in general” (44). Yet although use of allegory is indeed universal and can be traced back to ancient times, it was in the Medieval period where use of this literary device truly blossomed. Lewis states, “The twilight of classical antiquity and the Dark Ages, then, had prepared in diverse ways for the great age of allegory. Antiquity had first created the demand and partly supplied it” (87). Medieval Europe would supply the rest.¹³ Louis Macneice notes that Bunyan’s works contain elements from this time period, traceable to “the old-fashioned sermon in the village church still continuing the allegorical tradition of the medieval pulpit” (43). Such extensive use of allegory created an environment well-suited for Bunyan’s literary work.

Allegory, which in ancient times could mean irony as well as metaphor, grew during this era to mean a strict personification in which abstract ideals such as “Love” and “Hate” became characters in the narrative.¹⁴ Copeland and Struck point to the allegory *Psychomachia* (ca. 1170) as “the archetype” of personification allegory that developed during the Middle Ages (6). In the

¹¹ Van Dyke states that although people have understood allegory as deciphering meanings in texts, Maureen Quilligan differentiates allegory from allegoresis. She says that true allegories “are the one kind of text that does not allow the discovery of implicit ulterior meanings” (44).

¹² MacQueen states, “Our term for the most clearly allegorical plays records a conviction that they are essentially abstract, fundamentally didactic, and probably dull” (106).

¹³ More attention as to the development of allegory during the Medieval era will be given in the following chapters.

¹⁴ That is, *literary* allegory. Theological allegory remained distinct.

narrative, virtues such as Faith, Chastity, and Patience war against vices such as Idolatry, Lust, and Anger. Thus traditional human character qualities, both good and bad, replace humans themselves as actors in the narrative, the personifications acting and reacting as real people (Van Dyke 131). Like *Psychomachia*, Bunyan's *The Holy War* relies entirely on personification. "Mansoul," in the country of "Universe," is the principal place of action in the narrative. "Ear-gate," "Eye-gate," "Mouth-gate," "Nose-gate," and "Feel-gate" surround the city and give it protection. Bunyan's naming is not only appropriate but, at times, humorous. Pooley states, "Clever, apposite and witty naming is essential to successful allegory, but it goes beyond that. It links Bunyan with a great English comic tradition" (85).¹⁵ In *The Holy War*, for instance, Lord Covetous calls himself Prudent Thrifty, and Lasciviousness calls himself Harmless-mirth.¹⁶ Bunyan's humorous naming belies the stereotypical perception of the Puritan writing as simplistically grave and stoic.

The time period from the Middle Ages to Bunyan saw allegory for the communication universal truths exemplified by personifications grow in popularity, beginning with the advent of the morality plays. Van Dyke argues, "If universals are to act, they can most naturally do so in ways that resemble the predicates normally used with abstract nouns" (66). The clearest way, in other words, to communicate an idea is to use personification to do it. If main characters of a narrative are "Love" and "Hate," the reader will most easily grasp the universal meaning. In fact, Van Dyke calls allegory "the narrative of universals" (66). In contrast to realism, allegory places a literary work's highest priority on meaning. In seemingly radical terms, Fletcher states that

¹⁵ Although the context of Pooley's comment *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Holy War* certainly reflect s Bunyan's humorous naming as well.

¹⁶ Bunyan's humorous naming is reminiscent of William Shakespeare's clever use of the names, such as his humor in the name of the villain Borachio (the Spanish *borracho* means "drunkard") in *Much Ado about Nothing* and his irony in the name of the hypocritical Angelo (variant of "angel") in *Measure for Measure*. Dogberry, Snout, and Snug are other humorous names of characters in Shakespeare's plays.

“allegory does not accept the world of experience and the senses; it thrives on their overthrow, replacing them with ideas (323). In allegory, however, personified virtues and vices are still placed in a real world. First in the moralities and later in Bunyan, allegory was the intersection where material reality and universal ideals met (Van Dyke 111). When abstractions are placed in realistic settings, the meaning is communicated much more effectively. The battle metaphor of *The Holy War*, for instance, presents abstractions in the very realistic setting of battle: “So the night was come, and all things by the Tyrant made ready for the work, he suddenly makes his assault upon *Feelgate*, and after he had a while struggled there, he throws the Gates wide open” (203). These type of abstractions proved very effective in Bunyan’s presentation of his ideas. Edwin Honig makes the case that the allegorical work of Bunyan, as well as those of his predecessors Dante and Spenser, was the perfect venue to relate universal truths to the contemporary society (110).

The universal ideas were first transmitted through the moralities’ themes. Lewis describes the major theme of the period as “the battle of the virtues and the vices, the *Psychomachia*, the *bellum intestinum*, the *Holy War*” (55).¹⁷ After *Psychomachia* came a plethora of allegorical works, written and dramatic, with this same theme of “virtue vs. vice.”¹⁸ Such works include *The Castle of Perseverance* (ca. 15th century), and *The Vision of Piers Plowman* (ca. 1360-1387), which may well have influenced Bunyan’s writing of *The Holy War*.¹⁹ Bunyan’s work contains, in Beth Lynch’s words, “a lengthy catalogue of virtues and vices” as well.²⁰

Despite Bunyan’s fierce opposition to the Roman Catholic Church, he was the recipient—perhaps begrudgingly—of its pedagogical use of allegory found in the morality plays.

¹⁷ See MacQueen, p. 55. Also, MacQueen states, “The title [...] originally meant something like ‘desperate fighting, a fight to the finish’, but Prudentius clearly intended it to mean ‘the battle in, and for, the soul’” (59).

¹⁸ Morality plays and the influence of the Roman Catholic Church on their themes will be explored in chapter 2.

¹⁹ These will be treated more extensively in the next chapter.

²⁰ This topic will be addressed further later in the chapter; see Lynch, *Conviction* 139.

During the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church found that allegory was well-suited to teaching universal truths. Morality plays, such as *Everyman* (15th century), reinforced church teachings through allegorical representation. The moralities were uniquely able to instruct and entertain using the personification of vices and virtues such as Death, Good-Deeds, and Knowledge (Leeming and Drowne 178). Macneice states, “The medieval morality play called *Everyman* provides in fact an obvious prototype for Bunyan...Its virtues are the prose virtues of Bunyan, and its characters, though personifications of the simplest type, speak with the same tone of voice as characters in Bunyan” (30). Catholics, like later Protestants, put the moralities to use. John MacQueen states, “The morality was in fact open to exploitation in a multitude of ways: it was a weapon for anyone who felt able to identify himself or his own cause with the side of God and the virtues” (71). Allegory was uniquely suited for instructive purposes. Pooley acknowledges this in stating that “allegory, whether engaged in as reading or writing, is about making meaning—a meaning which is ideological, ethical or theological” (82). But allegory was specifically suited for *religious* instruction. Ideals were given personalities.²¹ Bunyan understood the allegorical mode could be effective in promoting his ideals. Macneice states, “Bunyan...was essentially an evangelical writer, whose interests, unlike Spenser’s, were entirely bound up with his creed” (20). Bunyan’s goals never appeared to include achieving literary fame or reward. He wrote as a means of expressing his faith.

Besides instructive purposes, the medieval Roman Catholic Church realized the need to delight (Mitchell 63), something Bunyan understood as well in the seventeenth century (Greaves 221). The moralities had been wildly popular (MacQueen 71), and the Reformation gave birth to

²¹ Fletcher states, “As far as imagery is concerned then, the art of allegory will be the manipulation of a texture of ‘ornaments’ so as to engage the reader in an interpretive activity [...] Christianity, however, makes this technique much easier than would be the case in a purely mechanistic universe, because Christianity sees the creation of the world as an establishment of a universal symbolic vocabulary” (130).

numerous allegorical works by Protestants. In fact, MacQueen traces the line of allegory from medieval Catholicism to Elizabethan Protestantism shortly before Bunyan:

Moralities in fact, were the staple dramatic fare of Marlowe, Shakespeare and Jonson in their youth. In addition, much of their general reading must have fostered a natural tendency towards allegory of many different kinds. The morality structure, with its frequent satiric and realistic overtones, and the general allegorical ambience of so many among their plays...is perhaps the greatest single contribution of allegory to the literature of England. (73)

Allegory was not simply one literary genre among many in England, but it was rather the dominant mode of this time period. In consideration of allegory's popularity, which continued unabated through the seventeenth century, Bunyan's use of allegory is easy to understand.

The popularity of the morality plays persuaded Catholics—and Protestants after the Reformation—to use allegory to address a person's spiritual needs.²² This focus on the individual soul differed from the use of allegory by the ancient Greeks and Romans.²³ MacQueen states

Myth and ritual in mystery religions, the philosophic allegory of Plato or Apuleius, the tropological level of scriptural interpretation—all those have one thing in common. This primary relevance is for the individual, whether as initiate, student, or Christian. The proper conduct of life and the final destination of the soul may depend on a full understanding of text or ritual. It is not then surprising that in the Middle Ages when allegorical ways of writing came to dominate, the emphasis tended to move from the external to the internal world, a development

²² According to Copeland and Struck, Greek allegory normally focused on the "interpretation" of allegory (searching for hidden, ambiguous meanings) rather than "composition" of allegory, the practice of writing a narrative with the intention of encoding meaning in the work, such as the English allegories from *Psychomachia* onward (3-4).

²³ Again, this common use of allegory did not include allegorical interpretations of scripture, of which Protestants and Catholics held very divergent views.

evident in the very title of the relatively brief but enormously influential epic of the Christian Latin poet Prudentius...the *Psychomachia*. (59)

This emphasis on the internal was very much consistent with Bunyan's theology. For him, internal transformation certainly overshadowed external ceremony. Notably, Van Dyke states that the works of Prudentius and Bunyan use many of the same allegorical techniques (212). An emphasis on the individual soul is one of Bunyan's chief focuses in *The Holy War* (Hill 240).

II.

The reasons for Bunyan's use of allegory in writing *The Holy War* have already been broached: it was a popular form of entertainment, an effective way to communicate a message of universal truth, particularly a religious one. The years prior to *The Holy War's* publication had been turbulent, and Dissents in particular had been "squeezed" by the fall of the Commonwealth and the Restoration. Bunyan wanted to do more than simply entertain or write about an objective truth. He also wanted to encourage believers facing oppressive laws, relate his own experience of spiritual struggle, and make a social critique of governmental corruption while writing a captivating narrative. For his purpose, Bunyan needed to use a literary form that allowed him to incorporate all these elements. In allegory, he had such a form. Fletcher states, "Since allegory implies a dominance of theme over action and image, and therefore, as Frye has observed, 'explicitly indicates the relationship of his [the poet's] images to examples and precepts,' the mode necessarily exerts a high degree of control over the way any reader must approach any given work" (304). Through allegory, Bunyan's themes could be presented with rich imagery. MacQueen adds, "The importance of thematic content to allegory goes without saying. If one combines the narrative form and thematic content of allegory with the detailed richness and stylized point of view found in good satire, one discovers literary forms of great potential" (70).

This emphasis of theme over action does not imply divorcing the two or even subjugating one to the other. Instead, theme and action must complement each other. Indeed, as Van Dyke states, “[d]octrine and fiction cannot be separated in allegory” (158). Humans, as discussed above, are characteristically narrative. However, despite the importance of a rich narrative in allegory thematic concerns are, by nature of the literary device, somewhat bolder in allegorical works than in simply narrative ones. In his introduction to the reader, Bunyan notes the importance of narrative but places an even greater importance of the ideas within it:

*Of stories I well know there's divers sorts,
Some foreign, some domestick; and reports...
But, Readers, I have somewhat else to do,
Than with vain stories to trouble you...
Nor do thou go to work without my Key,
(In mysteries men soon do lose their way)
And also turn it right if thou wouldst know
My riddle, and wouldst know
My riddle, and wouldst with my heifer plow.
It lies there in the window...(11-12, 23-24, 167-72)*

The riddle here is doubtless the allegory. Bunyan's charge that the reader “go to work” is a reference to the unlocking work of the reader. Stories are good, says Bunyan, but the meaning behind them is the real treasure. In *The Holy War*, readers indeed find a treasure trove of allegorical representations.

Although it is true that, in the eighteenth century and then later during the modern period, critics often had an aversion to allegory in general and distaste for Bunyan in particular,²⁴ Bunyan's success in using allegory to promote his ideas is evident. One reason is his adoption and skillful use of personae in his allegories. Rather than simply using the abstraction of "Patience," as a character, Bunyan introduces "Captain Patience," a trusted member of Emanuel's army (68). Captain Patience is describe as "truly Loyal" and "well-beloved," with the unique standard (a flag of three arrows through a gold heart), had his own standard-bearer (Mr. Suffer Long), and his own color—black. In so doing, Bunyan gives the abstraction human qualities without diminishing the ideal in the abstraction. Van Dyke states that

[P]ersonification allegories with personae have appealed to more readers since the Middle Ages than their more straightforward cousins...One strength of the innovation is, obviously, that we can easily and continuously project ourselves into the narrative of an allegory that uses a persona or personae [e.g., "Mr. Conscience, the Recorder" vs. the generic "Conscience"]...the allegories of mixed agency act out not only truth's intersections with time but also the gaps and oppositions. (67)

Although perhaps not original with Bunyan, his use of personae is unique.²⁵ Mr. Conscience, for instance, is quite a well-rounded character. He not only represents the universal conscience but consistently acts and reacts to events unfolding in the narrative accordingly. Honig states, "Bunyan's enthusiastic gift for thinking metaphorically makes use of a pictorial device which gives his allegory a further dimension" (100). Bunyan excelled in using metaphors creatively that

²⁴ Nigel Smith notes that in the eighteenth century both Pope and Addison saw "literary virtue as a more elevated matter" (36). Isabel Hofmeyer records Alfred Noyes's blistering twentieth-century attack on Bunyan's work, stating it is at "the lowest and most squalid levels of the primitive races of Africa" (165).

²⁵ Bunyan likely borrowed ideas from *Piers Plowman*, an earlier example of using personae as personification.

emphasized, not diminished, his theme. Speaking of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Van Dyke states, “Bunyan’s integration of allegorical vision and empirical realism is, to my knowledge, a unique achievement” (197). This same integration is present in *The Holy War*. Characters such as Lord Lustings and Mrs. Holdfastbad, although they are abstractions, have human-like qualities.

Macneice notes that Bunyan’s characters exhibit “the features and voices of the solid townsfolk of the seventeenth-century” (6). This realistic presentation of abstractions, despite its apparent contradiction of terms, is what Macneice says is the great reason for Bunyan’s success. She notes the distinction between Spenser and Bunyan:

Some of Spenser’s figures, such as the shepherds in book VI, are not allegorical at all. Bunyan has none of this variety. His material is all sermon material. Why then does his story so haunt us in an age when sermons are considered unreadable?... Bunyan starts with his overt theme—which is the orthodox Puritan gospel—but, thanks to his own intense experience and also his acute observation, the pulpit abstractions become concrete and speak with the voice of human beings. This is his great achievement. (45)

Bunyan’s gift with metaphors is certainly one of the reasons for his great success as a writer.²⁶

Bunyan also excels at allegorical technique. His works has singular consistency. Macneice compares allegorists Spenser, Kafka, Beckett, Harold Pinter, and William Golding to Bunyan and states that Bunyan’s use of allegory is the most consistent of all (6).²⁷ This unity for such a complex work as *The Holy War* is admirable. James Forrest and Sharrock note the “separateness

²⁶ John Brown adds the following caveat: “One of the foremost causes of its success is that with such singular felicity it [*Pilgrim's Progress*] meets a pre-existing love of metaphor, fable, parable, and allegory, which is deeply rooted in human nature” (271).

²⁷ Macneice makes this statement based on her view that Bunyan’s characters most closely resemble contemporary Bedford citizens. She suggests that the other authors, in contrast, create characters that are caricatured, contrived, or distant, or that vary from literary work to literary work.

of *The Holy War* which in its devotion to a single allegorical system, complex references for that system, and a realism restricted merely to tone of presentation” (xx). Bunyan’s narrative contains not only unity of the redemptive theme but also a complex allegorical structure which contains a variety of layers of meaning. His work is also naturally-written. Macneice states, “Bunyan is equally unostentatious—and equally effective. If Herbert’s verse, like much of Spenser’s, has the virtues of prose, Bunyan’s prose has the virtues of good conversation. And I do not mean only in his excellent dialogue. Like a crafty talker, or actor, Bunyan is a master of the quiet aside and the conspicuous throw-away” (47). Compelling use of language is very characteristic of Bunyan’s writing. One need only remember the flattering words of Diabolus in this regard. John Gulliver states that “[Bunyan’s] language possess some of the highest qualities known to rhetoric; his thought, even in his most abstract treatises, where it is cumbered with the system of minute subdivision then in vogue, is precise, discriminating, comprehensive, and at times profound” (3). In addition, Bunyan was keenly aware of human nature and was able to use this awareness to connect with his readers. As Iser would later argue, the interaction between text and reader is an integral part of the literary experience. Gulliver notes, “Bunyan’s *humanity*, by which we mean, as before, a broad and deep sympathy with all that belongs to men, is another of the chief elements of his power. He comes into contact with his readers at every point. He is so guileless, so frank, so fearless, so kindly, so keen, so witty, so intensely in earnest, that, before you are aware of it, he has thrown over you the spell of an enchanter” (11). As Gulliver states, Bunyan’s skill in crafting a unity out of disparate parts is one reason his works are so memorable.

III.

Indeed Bunyan is a master writer. But what of *The Holy War* in particular? How successful was it as a work of literature? This question is important because Bunyan’s success as

a storyteller in *The Holy War* reinforces the importance of story in the human experience.

However, there is a tremendously wide range of opinions to that question, with some critics hailing the allegory as a masterpiece and others rejecting it as a failure. What is remarkable about those opinions is the intensity of feeling people have about *The Holy War*'s value as literature. In England's greatest allegory, James Anthony Froude stated that the text "failed as a work of art." William York Tindall concurred, stating that he considered the work "a comparative failure." George Offor states, "Bunyan's account of the Holy War is indeed an extraordinary book, manifesting a degree of genius, research, and spiritual knowledge, exceeding even that displayed in the 'Pilgrim's Progress,'" but C.S. Lewis calls the book "unsuccessful." E.M.W. Tillyard gave it one thumb up by calling it a "partial success." Henri Talon, meanwhile, gave it one thumb down by calling it a "partial failure." Sharrock shows even more ambivalence by pronouncing the work "a magnificent failure." Lynch attempts to work through this incongruity of opinion by stating that the "failures associated with *The Holy War* are on the part not of the text, but of its readers" (*Conviction* 140). Lynch argues that an aversion to Bunyan's theology has resulted in what she believes are unjustly negative opinions of the work:

Indeed, much of the critical resistance to, and dismissal of *The Holy War* lies in the enlightened modern reader's refusal to accept Bunyan's Reformed soteriology as the very stuff of his narrative art. For *The Holy War* does not simply expound the doctrine on which it is predicated: evolving out of a specific historical context, the narrative is shaped, as we have seen, by the sheer subjective and ontological experience of cultivating and maintaining such a faith. (*Conviction* 141)

As an example, she draws upon the incredulity of Froude at Bunyan's conclusions in *The Holy War* –namely that after Mansoul is originally redeemed it is subjugated again to temptation and

captivity. Froude states that “the reader whose desire it is that good shall triumph and evil be put to shame and overthrown remains but partially satisfied” (142). Froude is correct in assessing the incompleteness of the book’s end; however, he fails to take into consideration Bunyan’s theological frame of reference: a Reformed worldview which, eschatologically, sees such incompleteness on the present earth as a reality until the coming of Christ. From that perspective, Bunyan’s narrative is in perfect harmony with his beliefs that there is no ultimate resolution until Christ returns. As the citizens of Mansoul waiting in expectation for the return of Emanuel, Bunyan understood that believers in this world must wait for Christ’s return for complete satisfaction. Lynch notes this in saying, “The subjective vehemence of so many readings of *The Holy War* is thus an index of the text’s experimental honesty: evolving out of the language and conceptual frameworks of Bunyan’s beliefs, this late allegory transcribes a spiritual and ontological experience which offers no closure or certainty beyond the sheer fact, or otherwise, of faith” (*Conviction* 143). Froude is not alone in judging the work on the basis of Bunyan’s theology. Christopher Hill comments that Bunyan took “great pains in writing it...[b]ut the theology got in the way” (249). But, as Lynch notes, simply disliking or disagreeing with the ideology is a questionable basis for passing judgment on the literary merits of a work. In comparing Bunyan with medieval allegorist Dante, Macneice states that one reason many modern readers have an aversion to reading Bunyan’s works despite the high quality of his writing is that they cannot endure the Bedford Tinker’s Puritan faith. She notes that readers can overlook Dante’s Catholicism to enjoy his *Inferno*, but are not far enough removed from the “Puritan Revolution” of the seventeenth century to overlook Bunyan’s religious overtones and read Bunyan’s works for their literary qualities (20). Many people may well avoid Bunyan’s work in general—and *The Holy War* in particular—due to the strongly religious views espoused

in the work and in spite of its high literary quality. Indeed, no other work of Bunyan's had elicited such a mixed reaction.

What is clear among critics is *The Holy War's* allegorical complexity. Hill, despite voicing disapproval of the book, notes that *The Holy War* is a complex work combining four allegories: a history of the universe (also known as God's economy), the conversion of the individual soul, the history of the English Revolution, and the "remodeling" or restructuring of the Bedford Corporation's local government by Charles II's government (240). Hill leaves open the possibility for even more strains of allegorical meaning. An additional one that Richard Greaves notes is the biographical element in the narrative: "*The Holy War* is a technically sophisticated allegory that explores multiple levels of meaning, the most fundamental and consistent of which is soteriological, particularly with reference to Bunyan's own religious experience" (419).²⁸ A biographical element in *The Holy War* would be consistent with its use in Bunyan's other allegories.

In contrast to the divided opinions people have about the quality of *The Holy War*, no one seems to question the skill and effort required to produce this work. Hill conjectures, "He may have pulled harder than in writing the earlier allegory" (254). Sharrock notes that "Bunyan published nothing between *Badman* in 1680 and *The Holy War* in 1682. The interval is unusual for him and suggest that he was giving his whole attention to the new allegory; there is internal evidence, too, that it was more deeply meditated than any previous work" (118). This is far different from the "inspiration" that Bunyan supposedly received when writing *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan's effort appears very labor-intensive. Forrest and Sharrock call *The Holy War* "a long and carefully constructed work which could not have been carpentered together from

²⁸ Forrest and Sharrock echo this sentiment: "*The Holy War* is an elaborate construction with several layers of allegory, unlike any other book that Bunyan wrote" (xx).

sermon notes” (xix). The “careful construction” is evident in Bunyan’s combination of complex allegory and skillful writing. In referencing *The Holy War* as well as *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Rev. J.C. Carlile states²⁹ “John Bunyan remains one of the few supreme master craftsmen of English speech. He took the common clay of our language and shaped it into a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. His sentences were as clear as crystals, beautiful as pearls, and vital as blood” (Brown 383). This crafting is the result of not only genius, but labor. As Forrest and Sharrock note, “*The Holy War* shows how far Bunyan had advanced, not in genius or total imaginative achievement, but in the construction of a bold, firm, and ambitious narrative. To borrow the language of the romantics, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* is a Gothic, its successor a classical work” (xviii). Bunyan certainly aspired to write a different type of allegory with *The Holy War* than he did with his previous works.

IV.

Bunyan’s work appears to be a continuation of the great literary theme of the Middle Ages—the virtues vs. the vices. Like *Psychomachia*, *The Holy War* is replete with references to how the virtues and vices spar as they battle for Mansoul. The contrasting forces include the following characters:

²⁹ Carlile shared these words at the re-dedication of Bunyan’s tomb on Nov. 10, 1922.

Mr. Belief	Mr. Incredulity
Mr. Humble	Captain Boasting
Mr. Repentance	Mr. Carnal Security
Captain Self-denial	Lord Covetousness
Mr. Hate Lies	Lord Deceit
Captain Innocent	Lord Lusting
Mr. Good-work	Mr. Destructive
Mr. Hate-bad	Mr. Love-no-good
Captain Charity	Lord Anger
Mr. Love God	Mr. Atheism

These opposite abstractions make clear Bunyan's view of virtue and vice. Thus, Bunyan displays what Greaves calls, "the ongoing battle between opposing forces, each of which claims the banner of freedom" (430). There is very little room for nuance. Each virtue is clearly good, and each vice is clearly bad.

Bunyan not only wants to demonstrate the distinction between virtue and vice but also their mutual hostility toward each other. Each side in the conflict is active in trying to eradicate the presence of the other in the town. When Diabolus first conquers Mansoul, "there was nothing of the remains of good in *Mansoul* which he...sought not to destroy" (24). Upon entering the town, he immediately attacks the memory of Shaddai in the town by defacing his image (23-24). He destroys Shaddai's law books and replaces his laws with his own which promote lasciviousness: "Yea much more did *Diabolus* to encourage wickedness in the Town of *Mansoul*" (24). He deposes the town officials who would not consort with him and filled their posts with

those who consented to his acts (27). Not only was virtue displaced, but vice was actually promoted. Lord Willbewill and Mr. Mind were given the task of instructing “the wicked ones their ways” (27). In addition, the idea of “resistance” came to mean opposing Shaddai rather than Diabolus (28). Guards were set up at the gates to deny entrance to any opponents of the Diabolonian government (31) and spies were sent to walk the streets of Mansoul “to suppress, and destroy, any that they shall perceive to be plotting against [them], or that shall prate of what by *Shaddai* and *Emanuel* is intended” (31). In fact, Diabolus introduces his own reverse “Armor of God” made up of vices rather than virtues (34) to “protect” the citizens from the influence of Shaddai. This is shown, too, when Shaddai’s captains approach Mansoul’s gates and Diabolus orders them to distance themselves from the captains’ location (39). Further, he also vilifies Shaddai by claiming he flatters himself: “Shall we be flattered out of our lives?” (33) when he himself had entered Mansoul through flattering himself (14); he claims, as well, that Mansoul will face death if Shaddai is victorious (33-34). The motivation for such acts is unbridled animosity. Diabolus is described as “having in himself the fountain of iniquity, rage, and malice against both *Shaddai* and his Son, and the beloved Town of *Mansoul*” (85-86). Bunyan paints a picture of vice actively removing any presence of virtue. Vice is threatened by virtue’s potential influence. Bunyan’s point is to warn of the dangers not only of the presence of vice but also of its aggressiveness in fighting what is virtuous. In his book *Grace Abounding*, Bunyan describes his own ignorance of the antagonistic nature of sin: “I was not sensible of the danger and evil of sin: I was kept from considering that sin would damn me” (31). In the second part of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, the character Joseph notes the aggressive nature of vice: “[S]in is so great and mighty a tyrant, that none can pull us out of its clutches but God” (202).

Similarly, Shaddai seeks to eradicate the presence of vice from Mansoul by seeking to discredit vice, calling Diabolus' rule a "yoke of tyranny" (37-38). Upon conquering the town, he tears down the strongholds of Diabolus (118). Emanuel instructs the Mansoulians to unequivocally destroy any remnant of the Diabolonians: "Why, be you diligent, and quit you like men, observe their holds, find out their haunts, assault them, and make no peace with them. Where ever they haunt, lurk, or abide, and what terms of peace soever they offer you abhor" (144). Diabolonians like Lord Lustings, Atheism, No-truth, and Mr. Haughty, among others, were quickly put on trial and executed (135). Emanuel also gives Mansoul's citizens the "*full power and authority to see out, take, inslave, and destroy all, and all manner of Diabolonians*" (137-38). In order to please Shaddai, Lord Willbewill personally executes Jolley and Grigish, sons of Lasciviousness. Bunyan at this point includes the gloss "Mortification of sin is a sign of hope of life" (196). After Emanuel's second conquering of the town, Evil-questioning was executed, along with his Diabolonian colleagues (242). Soon after, a "strict command" was given that any Diabolians left, such as Carnal Sense, Mr. Letgoodslip, Mr. Flesh, and Mr. Sloth, were to be executed. Bunyan's demonstrates that virtue will necessarily remove vice; indeed, it will work to remove every vestige of vice from its presence. Bunyan's overall point here is not only that virtue and vice are mutually exclusive, but also that they are hostile to each other. They cannot peacefully co-exist.

An example of virtue vs. vice that might be easily overlooked in the narrative is the battle of councils— that of Shaddai and Emanuel and that of Diabolus and his minions. Shortly after Diabolus took Mansoul captive, Shaddai and Emanuel met in their own private council to plan Mansoul's liberation: "[W]hen the King and his Son were retired into the Privy-Chamber, there they again consulted about what they had designed before, to wit, *That as Mansoul should in*

time be suffered to be lost; so as certainly it should be recovered again” (28). Diabolus, furious that he has been cast out of Shaddai’s presence, plots with Apollyon, Beelzebub, Lucifer, and Legion to take revenge on Shaddai in the only way he can—by taking his wrath out on Shaddai’s people in Mansoul: “[A]nd considering that that Town was one of the chief works, and delights of King *Shaddai*: what do they, but after Counsel taken, make an assault upon that” (10). This depiction of virtue vs. vice represents the war that is raging not only between the forces of God and Satan, good and evil, but between God and Satan themselves. Further, Bunyan demonstrates that there is a continual strategizing in this cosmic conflict.

This use of virtue vs. vice also manifests itself in Bunyan’s treatment of the issue of liberty. Diabolus describes himself as the great liberator of Mansoul as he discredits Shaddai by proclaiming, “[A]ll that he hath said to you, is neither true, nor to your advantage” (14), he (a) describes the laws of Shaddai as “both unreasonable and intolerable” (15), (b) attempts to convince them that they are captives to Shaddai, “Ah ye inhabitants of the famous Town of Mansoul, to speak more particularly to your selves, you are not a free people. You are kept in bondage and slavery” (15), and (c) promises to free them from their captivity, “[I]t is better to have eyes than to be without them; and so to be at liberty, to be better than to be shut up in a dark and stinking cave” (15). This flattery was not Diabolus’s only strategy, however. While yet speaking, he had one of his men, Tisiphane, shoot an arrow and kill Captain Resistance, the guardian of the wall (16). With Resistance gone, Ill-pause begins to speak, cloaking Diabolus’s intentions with affectionate words: “[M]y Master has a very great love for you, and although, as he very well knows, that he runs the hazard of the anger of King *Shaddai*, yet love to you will make him do *more than that*” (16). Once the town has been entered, Diabolus again promotes the idea that he is liberating them: “I have done thee indeed this service, as to promote thee to

honour, and to greaten thy liberty” (17), and later he boasts, “Your liberty also, as your selves do very well know, has been greatly widened, and enlarged by me; whereas I found you a pn’d up people” (20). When Diabolus hears that Emanuel is coming to re-take the town, he reminds them of the moral freedom he has given them: “[Y]ou know how from the first day that I have been with you until now, I have behaved my self among you, and what liberty, and great priviledges you have injoyed under my Government” (32) and warns them of their return to “bondage” if they allow Mansoul to be won by the forces of Shaddai: “[B]e sure he will bring you into that bondage under which you were captivated before, or a worse” (33). After his subsequent expulsion and attempt to again take the town under his control, he promises a restoration of their freedom: “I will grant, yea inlarge your old Charter with abundance of priviledges; so that your licence and liberty shall come to hand” (193). Not only does Diabolus consider freedom to be the absence of moral law and the imposition of restrictions on the proclamation of moral law: “*Diabolus* made havock of all remains of the Laws and Statutes of *Shaddai*,” ultimately destroying it (24). He also intentionally eliminates the presence of good in the town: “[T]here was nothing of the remains of good in *Mansoul* which he...sought not to destroy” (24). He also removes Mr. Conscience from office and imprisons Lord Understanding (18-19). Diabolus holds that freedom is freedom not only from the inhibition to act however one desires but also from anything good. Bunyan’s point here is that Satan entices humanity with the promise of freedom to sin while repressing the influence of good and bringing people into the bondage of ungodliness. Thus, people believing themselves to be “liberated” are ignorant of their own bondage to sin and self-imposed limitations of conscience and spiritual understanding.³⁰

³⁰ Jack Lindsay, apparently taking sides with the force of Diabolus, states that Bunyan’s work here is “absolutism against the liberties of the people” (429).

Emanuel also describes himself as the great liberator of Mansoul. The initial proclamation that Emanuel will attempt to re-take Mansoul is seen as an act of liberation: “*That at a certain time...the Kings Son should take a journey into the Countrey of Universe and there in a way of Justice and equity, by making of amends for the follies of Mansoul, he should lay a foundation of her perfect deliverance from Diabolus and from his Tyranny*” (29). When Shaddai’s forces face stiff resistance from Mansoul, Emanuel states, “I will go, and will deliver from *Diabolus*, and from his power thy perishing town of *Mansoul*” (66) and calls himself “the Captain of their Salvation” who “will deliver it from their hand” (66-67). After conquering Mansoul, Emanuel describes to the town the freedoms he is giving them: “[*F*]ree, full, and everlasting forgiveness,” “*freely the world, and what is therein for their good,*” and “*free access to me in my Palace at all seasons*” (137). After expelling Diabolus the second time, Emanuel reminds Mansoul, “*I have taken thee out of the hands of thine enemies...by whom thou wast content to be possessed*” (245). Emanuel views Freedom as Freedom from bondage to carnality. Mansoul can be truly free only when it is free from the influence of lawlessness and debauchery. Emanuel’s Freedom includes access to the Prince and his laws, not exclusion from them. Bunyan’s point is that true Freedom is Freedom from sin. It is not the absence of restrictions but the absence of the power and presence of ungodliness.

Thematically, *The Holy War* deals with traditional ideas of societal decay and restoration—the Christian ideas of corruption and redemption. The text states that at the beginning Mansoul was “*a fair and delicate Town, a Corporation...a Town for its Building so curious, for its Situation so commodious, for its Priviledges so advantageous; (I mean with reference to its Original) that I may say of it, as was said before, of the Continent in which it is placed, There is not its equal under the whole Heaven*” (7-8). Its “Original” condition was

pristine, obviously unmarred by vice: “It had always a sufficiency of provision within its Walls; it had the best, most wholesome, and excellent Law that then was extant in the world. There was not a Rascal, Rogue, or Traitorous person then within its Walls: They were all true men, and fast joined together” (9). It would not be long, however, before the town’s Edenic mettle would be tarnished. This societal decay began with an outward source of temptation. After much plotting with his colleagues, Diabolus approaches the town with his orator, Ill-pause, and begins his attack subtly, not with a force of arms but with flattery. “At this, the town of *Mansoul* began to prick up its ears” (14). While the people’s attention was diverted, a subtle attack was made on Captain Resistance and Lord Innocency, and both men were slain. With its first line of defense down, Mansoul was easy prey for Diabolus, and he entered the town. Once he gains entrance, he immediately possesses the castle (17), remodels the town by removing those who would oppose him (18), destroys all vestige of Shaddai, including his statue and books of law, and puts his own supporters into positions of authority (25). The names of those placed in authority are particularly striking—Spite-God, Love-no-light, and Love-flesh. Those in authority, then, were those that most appealed to carnality rather than virtue. Diabolus’s rule effectively resulted in the corrupting of the people. They panic when told that Shaddai’s soldiers have come to reclaim the town (40) and resist them (49). Such is Bunyan’s view of society and of the individual Christian. Corruption begins with the removal of any virtue that might oppose vice. When a society gives ear to temptation and no longer resists vice, it will soon lose its innocence as well. Vice then quickly possesses the hearts of the people and results in a rejection of traditional beliefs. Old codes of conduct are discredited and eliminated, and those who stand for virtue are marginalized while those who champion vice are put in places of authority. As such it is the antithesis of the

Utopian story. Humanity's removal of God truth results in the regression rather than the progression of society.

Shaddai's restoration of Mansoul results from nothing more than his own will to recover the town. Shaddai feels great sorrow over the town being under Diabolus's hand: "The King said plainly *That it grieved him at the heart*" (28). His heart was also a motivation in reclaiming the town "*through the power of his matchless love, into a far better, and more happy condition*" (29). Not only does Emanuel restore the town to his control, but he restores the town and its people to its place of virtue. He pardons the citizens (104-107), restores righteous leadership to the town government (a "new modeling" of his own) (117-18), re-establishes the town charter of Mansoul, (137-138), appoints virtuous men to leadership positions (138-142), provides the citizens with clean, white clothing (146-47), and personally restores his relationship with individual citizens (148-49). Bunyan is depicting God as the initiator of salvation. According to Bunyan's Reformed theology, God's grace is irresistible but it is always for the believer's good. God pardons the believer, re-establishes His covenant with him or her, and restores the believer's relationship with Himself. Greaves notes the importance of interpreting the allegory in light of Bunyan's Calvinistic beliefs (420).

In his sermon *A Holy Life*, Bunyan notes the imminent judgment of God for society's wrongs and its remedy:

We are every one looking for something; even for something that carrieth terror and dread in the sound of its Wings as it comes, though we know not the form nor visage thereof. One cries out, another has his Hands upon his Loyns, and a third is made mad with the sight of his Eyes, and with what his Ears do hear...Yet

where is the Church, the House, the Man that stands in the gap for the Land to turn away this Wrath by Repentance, and amendment of Life? (477)

Bunyan proposed that only a return to biblical righteousness would restore a society to greatness. After Emanuel had taken control of Mansoul, he states his intention of destroying the works of Diabolous: “Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (137).

As Hill mentions, this theme of virtue vs. vice in *The Holy War* is often presented in allegory, and Bunyan makes use of this paradigm in order to investigate fully the context and at least some of the implications of both devotional truth and a social critique of the Restoration period in his contemporary England. Bunyan was a minister, and his chief duty was shepherding his congregation and edifying believers in general. He also faced persecution as did many Dissenters following the end of the Commonwealth. The next two chapters explore the historical background of allegory for devotional and critical use, thereby probing more carefully Bunyan’s literary contribution as a Dissenting Protestant devotional writer during a time of great persecution and a vibrant social critic of a self-gratifying monarchy none too sympathetic to its political opponents.

Chapter Two: The Devotional Thread of Vice and Virtue in Bunyan's *Holy War*

Bunyan's use of allegory for devotional means is by no means original. He was the beneficiary of such writings from both the Catholic and Protestant traditions and lived during a time when such writing was both prominent and popular. Bunyan's incorporation of numerous layers of devotional meaning in the same work, however, appears original. Yet despite Bunyan's originality, he, like any writer, was sensitive to the literary expectations of the audience. Therefore, a consideration of allegorical works that he was either familiar with or that at least were present in the larger literary history of England provides background to Bunyan's work, particularly *The Holy War*. This background not only gives better points of reference for Bunyan's allegory but also demonstrates the relationship between previously published allegories and the expectations of Bunyan's readers. Notwithstanding, Greaves notes the unique complexity of the work when he states, "*The Holy War* is a technically sophisticated allegory that explores multiple levels of meaning, the most fundamental and consistent of which is soteriological" (419). Such sophistication has, unfortunately, often gone unnoticed, perhaps lost under the shadow of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Forest and Sharrock are correct in stating, however, that "Tribute must be paid to the skill with which every detail of a huge theological structure is translated into some allegorical incident or character" (xxxvi).

This chapter will trace the use of devotional allegory from Medieval times to the *Holy War*. A review of its development from early English Catholicism to seventeenth-century Puritanism provides necessary context for a proper understanding of the popularization of allegory for devotional purposes and Bunyan's decision to use allegory as devotion in *The Holy War*. Bunyan's familiarity with the devotional allegorical tradition imparted to his generation and his conventional imitation and adaptation of previous works will set up, later in the chapter,

an exposition of *The Holy War*, demonstrating his use of the Medieval conflict of virtues and vices to illustrate the spiritual conflict within the individual soul.³¹

England had a rich history of using allegory devotionally prior to the seventeenth century which doubtless influenced Bunyan, albeit indirectly. Roman Catholicism during the Middle Ages had initially relied heavily upon allegory for its interpretation of Scripture. Although allegory originated in ancient times, W. Fris. Mitchell describes the origin of Catholic allegory in Europe as beginning with Isidore of Seville's 5th century work on allegorical meaning in scripture and Hrabanus Maurus's 8th century compilation of allegories entitled *Allegoriae in universam sacram scripturam*. Hrabanus noted in his work, "In the house of our soul history lays the foundation, allegory erects the walls, anagogy puts on the roof, while tropology provides ornament" (qtd. in Mitchell 147). The place of allegory in Catholic devotional works soon became standard fare.³²

As this practice of the allegorization of scripture spread from the Continent to England, it became not only a popular practice but a fascination with the clergy. In fact, during the Medieval Period Catholic preachers and writers were focused more on pursuing allegories of Scripture than on exegeting the central texts of their messages (Mitchell 63). Attention became centered on looking beyond the literal meaning of the Scriptural text to the underlying, cryptic meaning supposedly contained within it. Mitchell states that the Middle Ages proved fertile ground for the allegorical interpretation of Scripture: "[W]hat the Jewish exegetes initiated, and Origen, the Greek Fathers, and Ambrose so extensively promoted, the mediaeval preachers carried to

³¹ The discussion of Bunyan's emphasis on virtue and vice in no way implies that he believed in a supernatural dualism. As an orthodox Christian, he believed that vice (sin) originated from Satan and was transferred to mankind during the fall in Eden and believed that virtue was the reflection of the divine nature of God as explained in the scriptures. This chapter will treat virtue and vice with this underlying assumption. Although Bunyan's use of devotional allegory in this thesis will primarily be demonstrated in *The Holy War*, his other works will, on occasion, be referenced to better show Bunyan's use of the Medieval allegorical tradition.

³² Augustine of Hippo had endorsed allegory long before: "For a sign is a thing which of itself makes some other thing come to mind" (30).

excess” (3). Allegory had been used as a literary mode since ancient times but had never been used so extensively as during this period.

In addition, English Catholic leaders increasingly used allegorical illustrations in their works to explain Scriptural truths.³³ The purpose of using allegory was not always solely to find theological meaning. Medieval clergy clearly understood the power a story had on parishioners that mere didacticism would not. Mitchell notes, “Not even a close acquaintance with dialectic could give a preacher what was required. Dialectic could *prove*, but was unable to *move* and unlikely to *delight*” (63). Use of story in the pulpit and religious writings was extremely effective in drawing the interest of listeners and could help them not only understand scriptural truths but enjoy them as well. Such a practice helped to foster a general appreciation of story for devotional use throughout England and enhances the interaction between writer or speaker and the recipient.

English Catholic allegory³⁴ also began to blossom in devotional poetry. An early example of this is the anonymous fourteenth-century *The Pearl*. The poem describes a jeweler distraught because a precious pearl has slipped through his greasy fingers and become lost. The jeweler then dreams he is taken to a land of jewels where he beholds but is separated from the “perle maiden,” bedecked with pearls and wearing a crown on her head. The allegory is understood to represent a disconsolate man’s grieving for his young daughter, the precious pearl herself, who has died and gone to Paradise. The poem was written both as a means of “a spiritual consolation and a theological treatise—not just on the salvation of those who die young, but also on the mystery of saving grace itself (Zeeman 158). Such works helped lay the foundation for future allegorical devotional works, including Bunyan’s.

³³ Hugh Latimer, the Catholic-turned-Protestant clergyman and martyr, is an example of a late Medieval theologian who used anecdotes in his writings. See his “Sermon of the Plough.”

³⁴ Anglicanism would eventually emerge from this Roman Catholic context and build on Catholic use of allegory.

An example of Catholic devotional poetry in allegorical form that most likely did influence Bunyan is *The Vision of Piers Plowman* (written ca. 1330-1387 but first printed in 1550) by William Langland. The narrative is composed of several dreams that allegorize humanity's relationship to God. One dream significant to Bunyan's use of allegory in *The Holy War* describes a "fair feeld ful of folk" on a plain between a castle and a dungeon. A lovely woman comes from the castle to instruct the "folk" as to the nature of the castle and dungeon and, upon hearing the people's request for help, urges them to flee to the castle. Here the castle represents truth, the dungeon falsehood, and the woman the church (Leeming and Drowne 215). The people are left to pursue truth or falsehood. This choice reflects the one the Mansoulians face in their struggle between loyalty to Shaddai or to Diabolus. Another dream depicts Reason admonishing the common people to be virtuous and, although the people are repentant for their sins and desire to journey toward the castle of truth, they have no guide until Piers, a plowman of great virtue, volunteers to lead the people if they will work together to help him plow his land first. Although the people begin willingly, they soon find they cannot "live up to their vows of repentance" and the endeavor implodes. In similar fashion, Mansoul, despite a valiant attempt to ward off Diabolus as he makes his second attack on the town, falls prey to the attacks of Diabolus. A following dream describes Piers leading the people to the castle of Truth. Patience, Thought, and Study appear on the way to the castle, representing the virtues that are a part of the quest. Piers continues to lead the people to the castle in the rest of the narrative and is described as a teacher, helper, church builder, and warrior against Satan. Leeming and Drowne understand Piers as a Christ-figure, and the theme of the narrative the decision of following God or Satan (217). This same battle between wickedness and righteousness is, of course, the central focus of *Holy War*.³⁵

³⁵ The similarities between *Piers Plowman* and Bunyan's allegory *Pilgrim's Progress* are also striking, especially

Despite the Catholic origin of *Piers Plowman*, Protestants—Puritans in particular—eventually laid claim to the poem as their own. Hill notes a Puritan pamphlet from the late sixteenth century written by Martin Marprelate that claimed a “kinship” with *Piers Plowman*, a kinship that Hill says resulted in Puritan allegory entering “the market-place” (34). *Piers Plowman*, then, is a noteworthy point of reference in the discussion of devotional allegory and Bunyan’s *The Holy War*. In addition, the similarities between Bunyan’s work and Langland’s evidence Bunyan’s familiarity with historical tradition of devotional allegory and his continuation of the allegorical thread that developed in England during the Middle Ages. This thread would be most clearly demonstrated in *The Holy War*.

Another venue for devotional allegory that developed during the Medieval Era—and the one that may have most significantly influenced Bunyan’s *Holy War*—was drama. These dramas, the Morality plays, were presented to the generally illiterate public in order to reinforce church teachings through allegorical representation. Leeming and Drowne argue that “Medieval morality plays made use of allegorical personifications of vices, virtues, and other aspects of the human condition. Their purpose was clearly to teach the values and dogmas,” themes that Bunyan would later take up in his major allegories (178). Indeed, the battle of virtue and vice would be played out most clearly in *The Holy War*, where Bunyan describes the intense warfare for the human soul.

the element of journey to a type of celestial end (Truth in the case of *Piers*, the Celestial City in the case of Christian), and more than one critic has conjectured that Bunyan must have read or at least known of Langland’s story. Hill, although skeptical that Bunyan read *Piers Plowman* himself, agrees that Langland’s work may well have influenced the tinker due to its having been later “co-opted” by Protestants. [F]rom Edward VI’s reign onwards Langland—like Chaucer—had been misinterpreted as a Wycliffite, and had been co-opted into the heretic tradition. Not only his works but others relating to *Piers Plowman* had been widely disseminated. One feature of the *Piers Plowman* inheritance was its strong bias in favour of the poor, who were far more likely to be saved than the rich—a point which [Hugh] Latimer echoed and Foxe seemed to express, and which is central to Bunyan’s thinking. (*Tinker* 204). Hill’s conjecture that Foxe in his *Book of Martyrs* echoes themes from *Piers Plowman* is pertinent because Foxe’s book is one that Bunyan himself acknowledges that he read (*Turbulent* 64).

An example of such a morality play with a striking likeness to Bunyan is *The Castle of Perseverance* of the early fifteenth century. A brief summary of this work will demonstrate the many parallels that exist between this work and *The Holy War* and will also lend credence to Bunyan's skill in adapting the larger literary and religious tradition of *The Castle* to his own work. This drama begins with a Bad Angel leading Mankind into the presence of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. Confession and Penance, however, take Mankind to a castle where seven Christian virtues guard him. When the castle is besieged by the Seven Deadly Sins, Mankind is killed and carried by the Bad Angel to Hell. Justice and Truth, however, are overcome by Mercy and Peace, and Mankind is released from Hell and taken to Heaven. The plot represents humanity's fall from sin and eventual restoration to God. Satan has lured humanity away from God and sin's power can only be broken by confession and penance. Converted souls can flee to the refuge of the church where they are protected by Christian virtues. Although individual sins attack and destroy these souls and they justly deserve Hell, God's mercy overrules through Christ's atonement and the souls are taken to Heaven. The castle is besieged by Satan, just as Mansoul is besieged by Diabolus (203). Just as the seven virtues guard "the castle" from Satan, virtuous captains Resistance, Innocency, Credence, Goodhope, and Experience defend Mansoul from Diabolus (16, 200). The castle is eventually liberated by God's mercy through Christ just as Mansoul is liberated by Shaddai sending his son Emmanuel (232). In addition, a central castle is featured predominantly in *The Holy War*, one in which the godly flee when besieged by the enemy (204). J. B. Wharey asserts that a connection exists between the moralities and *The Holy War*. He specifically notes that *The Holy War* contains the same seven-stage sequence as the old moralities: innocence, temptation, life-in-sin, repentance, temptation, life-in-sin, repentance and that the absence of a central character in Bunyan's allegory is reminiscent of the Medieval

dramas (68-70).³⁶ The following chapter will include the historical context of allegorical devotional literature in England (both Catholic and Protestant), Bunyan's development as a devotional allegorist, and an exposition of *The Holy War* with emphasis on Bunyan's treatment of the battle for the individual soul using the Medieval concept of vice and virtue.

I.

After the Reformation, Protestants, despite their insistence on a literal interpretation of Scripture, adopted allegory for devotional purposes from Catholicism. Luther, whose commentary on Galatians was praised by Bunyan (Bunyan, *Complete* 45) for helping him during his conversion and was re-read by him in 1679 in the midst of the publication of his major allegories, endorsed the use of allegorical interpretation for Protestants but made a clear distinction between it and what he considered heretical interpretations of scripture produced from Catholic allegory.³⁷ Like Catholics, however, Luther also made clear the importance of delighting the reader, stating, "As painting is an ornament to set forth and garnish an house already builded, so is an allegory the light of a matter which is already otherwise proved and confirmed."³⁸

³⁶ He lists several other similar works associated with *The Holy War*, including Henry Medwall's *Nature* (1486-1500). In this drama, like *The Castle of Perseverance*, a human life is compared to a castle besieged by the World, the Flesh, and the Devil (73) as well as John Alcock's *Abbey of the Holy Ghost* (15th century), a drama about a nunnery which Wharey claims pre-figures *The Holy War*. Wharey suggests that even if Bunyan did not read the plays themselves, they may well have influenced him indirectly: "Whatever influence the Moralities may have exercised upon Bunyan was in all probability transmitted through some of the pre-Bunyan allegories" (72). He notes one example as the anonymous *The Soul's Warfare, Comically digested into Scenes Acted between the Soul and her Enemies Wherein She Cometh off Victrix* (1672). In this drama, Empirea, representative of the Soul, faces temptation by the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. With the help of Faith, Hope, and Charity, however, she is successful in resisting them. Wharey again suggests an association between the morality plays and *The Holy War* (72).

³⁷ Copeland and Struck succinctly describe Luther's view:

Luther makes an important distinction in the meaning of allegory here, one which becomes a commonplace in later protestant usage. The scholastics, he says (later protestants would say "catholic method" here) apply allegory extrinsically. They change the meaning by means of allegory to suit the position they wish to uphold. Luther's interpretation (later protestants would generalize to call this "protestant method") accepts allegory only when it can be shown to work intrinsically: when scripture itself intends allegory. (179)

³⁸ Greaves states, "Because allegories can be dangerous if mishandled, Luther insisted they must be used only by those with a 'perfect knowledge of Christian doctrine,' such as Paul, who was 'a marvelously cunning workman in

In the years leading up to the publication of *The Holy War*, Protestant sermons, like Catholic ones, also made use of allegory, both illustratively and typologically. While rejecting the scriptural allegorizing of Catholicism, Protestants found themselves “disturbed by allegory yet also drawn towards it” (Cummings 184-185). Thomas Luxon states that Puritans did not believe in “dispensing with allegorical modes of thought, but of installing a denial of Christianity’s allegorical structures” (32). Scripture itself contains allegory, and Protestants who held to *Sola Scriptura* would be loath to dismiss its presence.³⁹ However, Protestants believed that Catholic allegorization had often distorted scriptural meaning beyond its original intention and had to be reigned in (38).⁴⁰

handling of allegories.’ In contrast, Origen and Jerome inappropriately employed them to interpret plainly understood Scripture. Luther’s idea of allegory was Galatians 4:22-26, but Bunyan went beyond the use of this device in the Bible to develop his own scripturally grounded, creative allegory” (221).

³⁹ Luther noted Paul’s use of allegory in Galatians in his commentary of the book.

⁴⁰ Two Puritan ministers, Thomas Adams (1583-1653), called “the prose Shakespeare of Puritan theologians” (89) and Henry Smith (1560-1591) are two examples of ministers who added allegorical elements to their homiletics. Mitchell describes their literary tendencies:

[The preaching of Smith and Adams] was so far divorced from the prudery which has come to be associated with later Puritanism, that the outspokenness of the Puritan preachers, and their vivid—one might almost say lurid—imagery renders them curiously distasteful to many modern palates. Moreover, Smith and Adams were both City preachers, accustomed to appeal to citizens of the type depicted in the plays of Jonson and Dekker. (197-198)

An example of this type of preaching is Adams’s Trinity Sunday sermon at St. Giles Without Cripplegate, entitled “The Spirituall Navigator Bound for the Holy Land. “He first discussed the allegorical interpretations of his scripture text and then proceeded to use allegory illustratively: “There runne honour and pride aquis ceruicibus. There walks fraud cheeke by iowle with a Trades-man. There stalkes pride, with the face of a Souldier, but habit of a Courtier; striuing to adde to her owne stature: fetherd on the crowne, cork’d at the heeles, light all ouer: stretching her legges, and spreading her wings like the Ostrich, with ostentation of great flight” (216-217)

Mitchell states that Adams used “the age-old rhetorical devices—being called upon to perform their old service and support a fresh message” (221). Allegory, the “age-old device,” would be Catholic in origin, but Protestant in practice. Mitchell states that Adams’ sermons made a “transition back from the purely entertaining to the definitely edifying” and that “His sermons, in consequence, are a kind of literary workmanship of the early seventeenth century, where we may see English prose in the making” (221). Puritan Anthony Tuckney (1599-1670) used allegorical imagery as well, exemplified in a sermon preached at Great St. Mary’s in 1651, where he stated, “He is a foolish Passenger, that when the Master of the Ship puts him ashore for his refreshment, or to take in something for his accommodation, stayeth so long gathering Shels [sic] on the Sand, or Flowers in the Meadow, that he loseth his Voyage” (Tuckney 622). Likewise the Scottish nonconformist Samuel Rutherford, was known to use allegory in his sermons: “When the saints throught through the press and crowd of the creatures (For the world is a bushy and rank wood), thorns take hold of their garments, and retard them in their way. Faith looseth their garments, and riddeth them of such thorny friends as are too kind to them in their journey” (Tuckney 622).

Bunyan himself made great use of allegory in his sermons both typologically and illustratively, all of which in many ways pre-figured his prose allegories and treatment of virtue and vice. In his sermon “The Barren Fig-Tree” (1673), Bunyan uses Luke 13:6-9—Christ’s cursing of the fig tree—as an allegorical treatment of hypocrisy and backsliding. Fig-trees, both those that are fruitless and those that bear bad fruit, are illustrative of church members that either produce no fruit or bad fruit in their lives and are soon “hewn down” by God. Bunyan personifies death in a way that Greaves argues (305) would appear later in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

Death come, smite me *this* Fig-tree, and withal the Lord shakes this Sinner, and whirles him upon a Sick-bed, saying, *Take him Death...Death, fetch away this Fig-tree to the fire*, fetch this barren Professor to Hell. At this, Death comes with *grim* looks into the Chamber, yea and Hell follows with him to the Bed-side, and both stare this Professor in the face, yea, begin to lay hands upon him; one smiting him with pains in his Body, with Head-ach, Heart-ach, Back-ach, Shortness of Breath, Fainting, Qualms, Trembling of Joints, Stopping at the Chest, and almost all the *Symptomes* of a man past all recovery. Now while *Death* is thus tormenting the Body, *Hell* is doing with the Mind and Conscience. (Bunyan, *Complete* 647)

Bunyan’s sermon is intended to be a devotional challenge to those who professed Christ but do not show evidence of that commitment in their lives. Records from Bunyan’s Bedford church list numerous cases of wrongdoing by parishioners and the church’s response in rebuking or excommunicating them (Greaves 304). Bunyan made application of the allegory to professing Christians’ lives: “But where is the fruit of this repentance? Where is thy watching, thy fasting, thy praying against the remainders of corruption? Where is thy self-abhorrence, thy blushing before God, for the sin that is yet behind!” (635). Greaves suggests that congregations in

Bunyan's day often had to "police" their members to prevent criticism from adversaries looking for an opportunity to find fault and that *The Barren Fig Tree* exemplifies a sermon preached to prevent waywardness (301-02). It also reveals Bunyan's penchant for describing the importance of virtue and the danger of vice. Bunyan sought to delight his readers, but not *only* to delight. His use of allegory included a didactic purpose at heart, not like "Fables, *or such worthless things, / That to the Reader no advantage brings*" (1). Bunyan ultimately desired to use allegory to impart biblical truth to his readers and warn against the dangers of theological and moral error.

Another such example is *The Heavenly Footman*, written around 1672 as he was writing *The Pilgrim's Progress*.⁴¹ The metaphor Bunyan uses is that of a runner struggling to progress in the Christian life. Using I Cor. 9:24 as a text, the sermon treats the soul's battle of will: "Because *the way is long*, (I speak metaphorically,) and there is many a dirty step, many a high hill, much work to do; a wicked heart, world, and devil to overcome. I say there are many steps to be taken by those that intend to be saved, by running, or walking, in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham" (745).⁴² The result of this struggle of will is dependent on the choices of the runner. He must choose to run. He must choose to overcome. Bunyan's call is to flee the carnality of the world and pursue the righteousness of God.⁴³ This battle against sin is similar to Mansoul's

⁴¹ Greaves notes that although this sermon was not published until 1698, he most likely was working on it between December 1667 and February 1668, the same time he was working on *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In fact, the preface to *The Pilgrim's Progress* suggests he was writing *The Heavenly Footman* when he had the idea to write his most well-known allegory: "I writing of the Way / And Race of Saints in this our Gospel-Day / Fell suddenly into an Allegory / About their Journey, and the way to Glory" (Bunyan, *Complete* 12).

⁴² Bunyan's use of allegory in his sermons is not without precedent, of course. As shown above, allegory was a common literary device used by Protestants in the seventeenth century, in particular by Dissenters, and there is good reason to believe that Bunyan was to at least some measure influenced by other allegorical works. However, Greaves suggests that Bunyan's use of allegory for devotional use originally stems from his reading of Luther's commentary on Galatians, which "endorsed allegories and similitudes as devices employed by Jesus because they delight people" (221)

⁴³ This call to flee is also reminiscent of Christian's call to flee the City of Destruction in *Pilgrim's Progress*.

battling of Diabolus (197) and echoes Bunyan's plea for sinners to renounce the world-system and embrace a life guided by biblical principles.⁴⁴

II.

With the advent of the printing press and the furtherance of Protestantism in England, Protestants quickly multiplied the number of publications, including prose allegories for devotional purposes. An early example of this type of work—and another that Bunyan most likely imitated—is Philip Stubbes's *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583). The narrative of this allegory describes two travelers, Theodurus and Amphilogus, conversing about societal excesses in England, including the debauchery of the theatre. This allegory, which contains a Reformed bent and sold moderately well during the end of the sixteenth century, has many parallels to *The Holy War*. Stubbes's town of Ailgna is described as “A pleasant & famous land” and has a margin gloss of “a goodly country” and Bunyan's town of Mansoul is likewise “a famous Town” and described as “goodly to behold.” Ailgna is further described as a walled city that is self-contained but soon corrupted by the “Devill,” just as Mansoul is surrounded by walls but is quickly corrupted by the devilish Diabolus. In addition, the idea of “otherworldliness” pervades both narratives, with the narrators coming to their respective towns from elsewhere. Beth Lynch convincingly argues that Bunyan may not only have been aware of *The Anatomie*, but may have been influenced by it: “Stubbes's *Anatomie* and Bunyan's *Holy War* also overlap rhetorically in ways that stretch the possibility of coincidence” (*Dark* n. pag.). Although *The Anatomie* was out of print by the end of the sixteenth century, his *Christall Glasse for Christian Women* continued

⁴⁴ Greaves notes Bunyan's allegorical approach would later be employed more topically in his future writing: Assuming his readers were familiar with the use of types and antitypes, Bunyan found many of them in the passage he was interpreting as well as in related verses. Of these prefigurations the most important for his purposes was Jerusalem as a type of the church. In *The Holy City* he painstakingly decoded an allegory of church history and its culmination in the building of the new Jerusalem during the millennium. It was a useful lesson in the value of similitudes [...] He would later put this lesson to good use in writing *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy War* (180).

in print throughout the seventeenth century and was widely known and read.⁴⁵ As Stubbes's name was well-known among seventeenth-century Protestants, Bunyan may well have been familiar with *Anatomie*. Lynch concludes that "it seems plausible that Bunyan owed an authorial debt to Philip Stubbes" (*Dark* n. pag.). To whatever extent that Bunyan was familiar with and received ideas from *The Anatomie* for *The Holy War*, he understood popular devotional literature and assimilated it into his writing for his contemporary readers.

Curiously, as the sixteenth century closed, Puritan-oriented Protestants—those who became known for their literal interpretation of scripture and simple lives—became the most prominent users of devotional allegory. Robert South, an Anglican, criticized the Non-conformist practice of using "vain, luxurious allegories, rhyming cadencies of similar words."⁴⁶

Yet another Puritan devotional allegory that Bunyan probably drew from is Puritan George Bernard's *The Isle of Man* (1627). Again, many parallels exist between this work and Bunyan's *The Holy War* (Sharrock 96). The narrative of this allegory is a trial taking place in "Soul's town in Manshire" in the "Isle of Man" compared to "Mansoul." The main action in Bernard's work takes place in an inn named Heart and Mansoul is glossed in the margin of Bunyan's work as Heart. Bernard's inn contains five doors called Hearing, Seeing, Tasting, Smelling, and Feeling, and Bunyan's town has five gates named Ear-gate, Eye-gate, Mouth-gate, Nose-gate, and Feel-gate. Names of characters are similar as well: Bernard's Wilful Will, New-man the jailer, chief constable Illuminated Understanding are curiously similar to Bunyan's Lord Will-be-Will, Mr. True-man, the jailer, mayor Lord Understanding. Both narratives contain

⁴⁵ *The Christall Glasse for Christian Women* ran at least thirty-four different editions from 1591 to c. 1695 (Lynch n. pag.).

⁴⁶ South was specifically protesting use of allegory in pulpits, but no doubt would have felt the same about other devotional use of allegory (South 46).

characters named Conscience, Self-love, and Self-conceit.⁴⁷ Wharey notes a device common to both narratives: addressing a vice with the name of a virtue, such as calling Drunkenness Good-Fellowship, which Bunyan uses as well (Wharey 91). Considering the fact that *The Isle of Man* had reached sixteen editions before publication of *The Holy War*, including a 1681 edition when Bunyan was working on his allegory (Talon 240-41), Wharey notes that “it would be strange if Bunyan had not known a book which attained such popularity. When to this fact are added the many likenesses between the *Isle of Man* and the *Holy War*, the indebtedness of Bunyan to Bernard becomes almost a certainty” (91).⁴⁸ In contrast to Beth Lynch’s implication that Bunyan plagiarized, Bunyan simply was familiar with the devotional literature of his day, understood its effectiveness in reaching people, and was skillful in assimilating contemporary story ideas as a vehicle to propagate his beliefs.

Another Puritan allegory of the seventeenth century that had unquestionable influence on Bunyan was Arthur Dent’s *A Plain Man’s Pathway to Heaven*. This was one of the two books, beside the Holy Bible, that Bunyan reveals that he owned early in his life (Bunyan, *Complete* 30). Lynch states that Dent’s book, published first in 1601, “became a household book for seventeenth-century Reformed believers” (*Dark* n. pag.). In Dent’s allegory, the wise Theologus teaches the honest Philagathus and the ignorant Asunetos and fends off the atheist Antilegon (see Sharrock 97). The work clearly addresses the spiritual and moral corruption of the early seventeenth century. Dent’s use of dialogue is very close to Bunyan’s in *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, where Mr. Wiseman and Mr. Attentive instruct each other concerning the deceased Badman’s wicked life. Sharwharerock goes so far as to state that “*The Life and Death of Mr.*

⁴⁷ In addition, the jurors in Bernard’s work are Faith, Love-of-God, and Fear-of-God while Bunyan’s jurors are Mr. Belief, Mr. Love-God, and Mr. Zeal-for-God.

⁴⁸ Talon calls Bernard’s influence on Bunyan “obvious” (240-41). In addition, noted theologian and hymn-writer Augustus Toplady noted the probability that Bunyan had received his ideas from *The Isle of Man*.

Badman would have been impossible without Dent” (98).⁴⁹ Regardless of Dent’s influence on Bunyan, the sheer popularity of *A Plain Man* is evidence that devotional allegory was effective in the seventeenth century. Sharrock states, “Dent’s claim that it is ‘written dialogue-wise for the better understanding of the simple’ emphasizes the evangelical purpose to which all Puritan literary techniques were subordinated” (97). Puritans had found a voice using allegory to illustrate biblical truths, one on which Bunyan capitalized.

What is most noteworthy about these works is their evidently wide circulation, or at least their oral transmission. The culture, especially among literate Protestants, must have extended to a much wider circle than perhaps is generally assumed. Lynch describes the link between Stubbes, Dent, and Bunyan, for instance, despite their coming from three generations of Englishmen:

What is apparent...is that Dent drew to some extent on Stubbes, and that Bunyan, on the evidence of his writings and by his explicit admission, drew on Dent. It thus seems reasonable to infer, for the time being, that any connections between Bunyan and Stubbes are mediated by Dent - and by other authors, such as the judgement-story collector Samuel Clarke, who worked within genres that Stubbes temporarily made his own. Upon closer consideration, though, these texts tell another, more complex story: while Bunyan's debt to Dent is not in question, his writings perhaps reflect a more direct experience of Stubbes's work. (*Dark n. pag.*)

Bunyan’s work was certainly not written in a vacuum. Lynch dismisses the idea of the ignorant and barely literate Tinker who produced his allegories based solely on inspiration: “As his own writings and numerous secondary studies have demonstrated, Bunyan drew on a range of literary

⁴⁹ Greaves also suggests that Bunyan’s writings may have been influenced by Dent.

traditions which became closely associated with puritanism in the later-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (*Dark n. pag*). This is not to reduce the quality of Bunyan’s work. Imitation was considered artistry and therefore part of common practice during Bunyan’s time and the endurance of his works is a testimony to his ability to craft superior stories.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Popular audiences were not alone in their attraction to devotional allegory. Such usage is also found in the high literature of England prior to publication of *The Holy War*. Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queen* is a clear example of Protestant devotional literature, with a specifically Anglican bent. Spenser’s Red Cross Knight goes on a quest to defeat the dragon and bring honor to his Queen, Gloriana. The allegory, at least on one level, represents Anglican England’s ongoing war with Catholicism. As such, it is a nationally devotional rather than individually so. Bunyan’s literary tastes were popular rather than the literary type, and it may be unlikely that he read *The Faerie Queen*. Samuel Johnson suggests, however, that *The Faerie Queen* was the basis for Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (Golder 216). Harold Golder, noting the uncanny parallels between both the plot events and their sequence, insists that some sort of relationship between the two works seems evident, although it may have been slight or not existed at all (216, 237). Golder does note that both Bunyan and Spenser had read the same popular romances, providing a plausible explanation to the similarities of the two men’s works. Forrest and Sharrock echo Golder’s observation, stating that there is a “separateness of *The Holy War* which in its devotion to a single allegorical system, complex references for that system, and a realism restricted merely to tone of presentation, looks back in chronological isolation to the high genre of allegory, to the folk and morality elements in *The Faerie Queene*” (xx). The common elements in the works indicate either that Bunyan was familiar with Spenser’s work or that he was keenly familiar with the allegorical literature that had been passed down from Medieval times to the present. Another example of Protestant devotional allegory is found in the poems of preacher and writer George Herbert. Claimed by both Anglicans and Non-conformists, Herbert’s conceits from his book *The Temple*, such as “Love,” “Redemption,” and “The British Church,” have strong allegorical elements. In “Love,” Love is personified as a host inviting the narrator to dine: “You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat: / So I did sit and eat” (Herbert 69). In “Redemption,” God is the Landlord and the narrator is the tenant, requesting new terms [the New Covenant] which are granted with the Landlord’s death: “[T]here I him espied / Who straight, Your suit is granted, said, and died” (15). In “The British Church,” the narrator refers to the Church of England as “Mother” and contrasts her with the Roman Catholic Church and the Geneva Church: “I joy dear Mother, when I view / Thy perfect lineaments and hue [...] While she avoids her neighbour’s pride, / She wholly goes on th’ other side” (45). Herbert, like his predecessors and contemporaries, understood the importance of delighting readers. Margaret Bottrall notes that “[t]here are about a dozen instances in *The Temple* of poetic parables, and they are surely connected with Herbert the preacher’s insistence on making his thoughts intelligible to people who, as he says, prefer stories to ‘exhortations which though earnest, yet often dy with the Sermon’” (233). Herbert’s use of allegory also reflects influence from the old moralities, especially his personification of abstract ideas such as “Love.” Bottrall states, “There is a medieval quality about George Herbert’s faith that is reflected in his poetry. His wholehearted acceptance of the Church’s teaching about God’s providence, Man’s sin and Christ’s redemptive action give him a steady vantage-point from which to contemplate both the world around him and his own inner conflicts” (83). Sharon Achinstein makes clear the widespread influence Herbert, an Anglican, had on dissenters during the seventeenth century: “In the hands of able interpreters, Herbert was to become the shape of a sturdy and chastened Anglicanism; but he was also to become the paragon of Dissenting poetics” (434). The works of John Milton, a contemporary of Bunyan, also contain some occasional allegory, although Milton used this device sparingly. *Paradise Lost* (1667) contains one such example when Satan converses with Sin and Death:

Then shining Heav’nly fair, a Goddess arm’d
 Out of thy head I sprung; amazement seisd
 All th’ Host of Heav’n back they recoild affraid
 At first, and call’d me Sin, and for a Sign [...]
 Before mine eyes in opposition sits
 Grim Death my Son and foe, who sets them on,
 And me his Parent would full soon devour. (II.757-60, 803-05)

III.

Bunyan's most significant use of allegory for devotional purposes, however, came in his major works: *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, and *The Holy War*.⁵¹ Bunyan's first two major allegories offer a preview of the virtue and vice battle that will unfold in *Holy War*. Therefore, a review of these earlier works provides the needed context for examination of *Holy War*. In addition, the works' emphasis on the warfare between sin and righteousness further reinforces Bunyan's tie to England's literary and devotional history. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, written while he was in the Bedford gaol, Bunyan uses the metaphor of a journey to describe the Christian life. As Christian flees his reprobate town for the Celestial City, he faces confrontations with Giant Despair and Apollyon and temptations by Mr. Worldy-Wiseman and the citizens of Vanity Fair. Such warfare, outward through attack and inward with temptation, mirrors the warfare Mansoul experiences in the outward attacks by Diabolus and

Here Milton uses allegory to describe the workings of sin and death in the fall of humanity at the hand of Satan. Kenneth Borris states, "The primal human relationship, properly an expression of the Church in Milton's view, fatally conforms instead to the satanic trio [Satan, Sin, and Death] that allegorizes the inner operations of evil and its social manifestations" (Borris 207). Although Milton used this device sparingly, his use of it at all demonstrates its common presence in the literature of his—and Bunyan's—time. Similarities exist between *The Holy War* and Milton's work, especially in their depictions of Satan. Edmund Knox suggests that Bunyan borrowed the ideas of Diabolus's council with his followers and his flight to the earth from Milton's Satan and his council in book two of *Paradise Lost* (1667). Talon asserts that Bunyan was retelling Milton's tale in *The Holy War*:

"Between 1680 and 1682 Bunyan published nothing, but worked at his most deeply meditated book, *The Holy War*. But the very ambitiousness of his design was responsible for its partial failure; he was going against the spontaneity of his genius. He, who was never happier than when his pen was running away with him, when he was being carried away by the passion of his overmastering vitality, actually spent two whole years re-hashing for the populace, and in prose, the epic that Milton had told to an élite in the most majestic poetry [*Paradise Lost*]. (240)

Talon was not alone in suggesting that *The Holy War* is a popular rendition of *Paradise Lost*. James Anthony Froude has called Bunyan's allegory "a people's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* in one," suggesting that the epic Milton wrote for readers of high literature Bunyan wrote for common people (Wharey 65).

Although Bunyan leaves no record of having read Milton, there is plausible reason to believe that he was at least familiar with him. In 1682, the same year that he published *The Holy War*, Bunyan visited a Non-conformist school where the students read Milton, an indication that Bunyan, a Non-conformist himself, may well have read him as well (Greaves 442).

⁵¹ Although *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* is normally grouped along with these, *Grace Abounding* is less of an allegory than a spiritual biography.

temptations corrupting the city from within.⁵² Despite *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* containing less action than its predecessor, the work maintains a strong running commentary on the origin and consequence of sin. The dialogue between Mr. Attentive and Mr. Wiseman concerns the late Mr. Badman, a person of reprobate life. As each type of debauchery from Mr. Badman's life is discussed, one of the two offer a long explication of the working of vice and its fruit. Mr. Badman represents the unrepentant sinner set forth as an example to those who are still alive who need to make amends for their evil lives (Leeming and Drowne 157).⁵³ In both works, as in *Holy War*, the soul is pitted between debauchery and righteousness, between sin and salvation, with the characters choosing their destiny.

Although Bunyan's use of allegory devotionally is imitative, the complexity of *The Holy War* is unique. Bunyan's militaristic allegory seems to include several layers of spiritual meaning, including his own personal spiritual warfare, the warfare for any individual's soul, the warfare for the true church, and an exposé of God's economy of church history.

IV.

Of all of Bunyan's allegories, none depicts the clash of the virtues and vices more than *The Holy War*. Bunyan's primary use of the war metaphor is to describe the state of the individual soul.⁵⁴ In *Christian Behavior* (ca.1672), Bunyan had addressed this idea and laid out

⁵² Bunyan uses the allegorical depiction of a journey in hopes that his readers would be drawn into the narrative and eventually join him on a true spiritual journey as well. Greaves states, "Although Bunyan may have intended only to divert himself when he first began composing the allegory [*Pilgrim's Progress*], he soon determined that the book would have a much wider purposed, partly to entice people to embrace the gospel. Likening himself to the angler and the fowler in their use of creative means to catch their prey, he harnessed allegory in the hope that his [work would enchant its readers]" (221).

⁵³ As in *The Barren Fig-Tree*, Bunyan realized the need to rebuke sin in light of the waywardness of his own congregation. Numerous books had been published describing sinful acts prior to his writing of *Badman*. Again, as in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan realizes the importance of writing a captivating story that his readers will enjoy, noting in his preface to *Badman*, "I have [...] put it into the form of a Dialogue, that I might with more ease to my self, and pleasure to the Reader, perform the work" (481).

⁵⁴ In addition, Greaves notes how *The Holy War* relates to Bunyan's own life: "Bunyan was there because this is his story, the account of the fearful combat waged within his soul and the ensuing battles with scheming, skulking Diabolonians" (421).

what would become the theme of his later allegory: “Now then, seeing grace is stronger than sin, and virtue than vice, be not overcome with his vileness, but overcome that with thy virtues” (260). As Mansoul’s very name implies, Bunyan believed that the mass of human souls collectively referenced in “Man” was indeed a battleground. That the warfare of the soul was a main theme of the work is evidenced by the fact that nearly all of the narrative takes place around Mansoul, with one side and then another taking possession of it, resulting in its ownership changing hands several times. Here Bunyan makes clear that salvation of the individual soul was not the only conflict the individual faces. In his sermon *A Few Sighs* (1658),⁵⁵ Bunyan affirms his belief that the Christian struggles with vice throughout life: “Take notice that the afflictions or evils that accompany the saints may continue with them their lifetime, so long as they live in this vale of tears; yea, and they may be divers—that is, of several sorts—some outward, some inward” (779). Mansoul’s conflicts were indeed continual. They were also “outward and inward,” as the narrative portrays.

Central to the town and the narrative of Mansoul is the castle. Glossed as “The heart” by Bunyan, the Castle is described early in the story as a place that “King Shaddai intended but for himself *alone*, and not another with him” (8). The heart had been considered the seat of the emotions since ancient times, and Scripture as well as Christian writings since the church fathers had regarded the heart as the place of regeneration in the soul. In Bunyan’s society, however, many considered adherence to the tenets of the state church as adequate for one’s spiritual needs. In contrast, *The Holy War* emphasizes the historical Christian belief that personal salvation results from the divine regeneration in an individual’s heart.⁵⁶ In light of this theological view of

⁵⁵ Although originally published in 1658, six editions of *A Few Sighs* were published between 1676 and 1685.

⁵⁶ Greaves notes that in his sermon *Come and Welcome* that “Bunyan combated the growing secularization of his age by contributing to the spiritualizing of faith—an emphasis on the sinner’s coming, not to the institutionalized church, with its liturgy and sacramental theology, but to Christ through spiritual rebirth”

Bunyan,⁵⁷ then, it is no accident that the Castle becomes a major focus of Mansoul's plight between the forces of vice and virtue. After entering Mansoul, Diabolus' first act is to take possession of the Castle, where he "strengthens and fortifies it with all sorts of provision against the King *Shaddai*, or those that should endeavor the regaining of it" (17). It is the last bastion of safety for Diabolus after Emanuel's forces enter (87) and the first place Emanuel goes to claim within Mansoul's walls to demand Diabolus' expulsion (92). It is the place where the town offers Emanuel permanent residence (112) which, when appropriately prepared, he accepts (114).⁵⁸ There also did Shaddai's Captains retreat when Diabolus retakes the town, the narrator noting "this they did partly for their own security, partly for the security of the Town, and partly, or rather chiefly to preserve to *Emanuel* the Prerogative-royal of *Mansoul*, for so was the Castle of *Mansoul*" (204). After Diabolus re-enters Mansoul, he attempts to repeatedly break down the Castle's gates but is unsuccessful (206). Unable to gain access to the stronghold, Diabolus decides to "spoil" and "demolish" the Castle. At this point, Bunyan again puts the gloss of "Heart" (206). Greaves notes Bunyan's intentionality:

Bunyan carefully distinguished between Emanuel's first conquest, which included town and castle, and the second, when only the town had to be recaptured, the castle (heart) having remained in the possession of Emanuel's allies.

Theologically, Mansoul's fate is never in doubt, but Bunyan infused tension into his epic by dramatizing the believer's struggles with Diabolonian temptations. (420)

The importance of the Castle is shown in Diabolus' realization that he cannot truly be lord of Mansoul without conquering the Castle (214) and he seeks to lure Mansoul into sinning in hopes that Shaddai's Captains will abandon the Castle. This does not happen, however, and only when

⁵⁷ In his *Instructions for the Ignorant* (1675), Bunyan responded to the question of who is a Christian by answering, "[O]ne that hath his heart purified and sanctified by faith which is in Christ" (926).

⁵⁸ Here Bunyan glosses Eph. 3:17: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith [...]"

Emanuel has re-entered the town in triumph do the Castle doors open to immediately receive the Prince (223). Bunyan's great attention to the Castle evidences *The Holy War's* contention that the heart is where virtue and vice both seek to enter. Bunyan is explicating that, from a scriptural viewpoint, the human heart has been designed as a dwelling place for God. However, Satan desires to be enthroned there and, once he has gained entrance, fortifies the heart against the advances of Christ, for whom the heart was created.

Throughout the narrative, Bunyan intricately describes numerous over-arching clashes between vice and virtue in the individual soul. One of the most significant of these is his description of deception as vice and of truth as virtue. Rather than using deception and truth as simply specific examples of vice and virtue, however, Bunyan seems to be indicating the very nature of vice as deceptive and of virtue as truthful.

Diabolus exemplifies such deception in his conquest, rule, and plotting to recover Mansoul. In their council before approaching Mansoul the first time, Diabolus and his colleagues decide that deception would be most advantageous to gaining control of the town. They decide to hide the extent and grotesqueness of their sinful intentions for Mansoul (11-12). In his first address to Mansoul, Diabolus states that he is "bound" by King Shaddai to offer the people his "service," insinuating that he is under the authority of the King whereas he has just attempted a rebellion and was expelled from the royal palace (14, 10). He also deceives by stating that he has only the town's best interests in mind in attempting to enter and take charge: "I will assure you, it is not my self but you; not mine, but your advantage that I seek by what I now do" (14). Even as he is speaking, however, he has Captain Resistance murdered. Later, when Emanuel's army threatens his reign, he thinks only of the town's destruction by ordering his minions to rend and tear the men, women, and children of the town if his forces cannot hold Emanuel back and adds,

“[W]e had better quite demolish the place, and leave it like a ruinous heap, than so leave it that it may be an habitation for *Emanuel*” (86). He lies in stating that Shaddai does not care for the people’s welfare (15) and is set on the town’s destruction (33) yet when hearing of Shaddai’s coming army, Diabolus attempts to keep the town from hearing the news because he wants them ignorant that “*Shaddai their former King, and Emanuel his Son, are contriving of good for the Town of Mansoul*” (30). When outside the gates, he also claims that Shaddai would not come to reclaim the town (15). Once granted entrance, however, he contradicts himself by prophesying that the King would indeed come to attack the town and persuades the town that he will be their defender (17). When he can no longer keep the news of Shaddai’s army marching toward them a secret, he promises, “*[M]y heart is so firmly united to you, and so unwilling am I to leave you; that I am willing to stand and fall with you, to the utmost hazard that shall befall me*” (33). However, in Emanuel’s second campaign against the town, Diabolus sees he will again be defeated and “what does he and the Lords of the Pit that were with him, but make their escape, and forsake their Army, and leave them to fall” (222). In addition, the very names of characters such as Lord Deceit, Mr. False Peace, Mr. No-truth, Scorn-Truth, Mr. Stand-to-lies, and Self-deceiver point to Bunyan’s purpose. If the point were not clear enough, as Diabolus is attempting to rally Mansoul in light of Emanuel’s coming, Bunyan makes absolutely clear of his intention with the gloss “Very deceivable language” (33). The point here is not only that vice is evil and harmful, but also that it gains access to the soul by means of deception. Vice seldom is portrayed alongside its future dire consequences. Those who welcome vice into their lives do so because the temptation appears advantageous or enjoyable.⁵⁹ Once access has been gained, the vice will not live up to its promises.

⁵⁹ Bunyan would state of his own temptations that “[N]either did I understand what Satan’s temptations were, nor how they were to be withstood and resisted” (Bunyan, *Complete*33).

In contrast, Emanuel and his forces exemplify the virtue of truth in their dealings with Mansoul. The names of the first four captains sent to confront Mansoul are significant: Boanerges, Conviction, Judgment, and Execution (36). Each approaches the town for a hearing as Diabolus had previously done. Unlike Diabolus, however, each captain is brutally honest in Shaddai's expectations. Boanerges, whose standard is "*three burning-thunder-bolts*," begins his speech by calling the town "unhappy and rebellious," telling them that Shaddai sent him "to reduce you to his obedience" (44). He adds that the captains had been commissioned to speak to them amiably but that "if after Summons to submit, you still stand out and rebel, we should indeavour to take you by force" (44). Next, Conviction, whose standard is an open book of the law, addresses the town with the words, "Thou, O *Mansoul*, wast once famous for innocency, but now thou art degenerated into lies and deceit." He proceeds to accuse them of rebellion, calls Diabolus "the Tyrant," and notes that Shaddai "hath the power to tear thee in pieces." He insists they cannot say they have not sinned but also adds that mercy is to be found in submission to Shaddai (44). Afterwards, Judgment, with the standard of a fiery furnace, called Mansoul's rebellion "Treason" and warns "[N]or yet suffer the Tyrant *Diabolus* to perswade you to think, that our King by his power is not able to bring you down, and to lay you under his feet." However, he also offers them mercy, noting that Shaddai "still holdeth out his golden Scepter to thee" (45). Finally, Execution steps forward and calls the town "fruitless," bearing nothing but "Thorns," "Bryers," and "evil fruit." Demanding repentance, he also offers mercy for those willing to accept the conditions of peace (46). When Emanuel arrives, he likewise confronts the town with truth. He describes Diabolus' leadership as bringing the town to "destruction" and calls him their "enemy" that he will cast out. Like his captains, he demands that Mansoul yield to him unconditionally, telling them he could "grind them to powder." However, Emanuel also

expresses his desire “not to hurt thee, but to deliver thee from thy bondage” and adds “I am merciful, *Mansoul*, and thou shalt find me so” (76). True to his word, Emanuel attacks and breaks through the walls of the town (87), expels Diabolus (92), and fully pardons the citizens upon seeing their unconditional repentance (105). Bunyan’s characters Mr. Hate-lies, Mr. Search-truth, Mr. See-truth, Mr. Tell-true, Mr. True-man, and Mr. Vouch-truth express his view that virtue is by nature truthful. Whereas vice gains access to the soul through deception, virtue presents an honest picture of its expectations. Emanuel and his captains clearly lay out to Mansoul their state (decadent), their crime (rebellion), their prerequisite to restoration (unconditional submission to Shaddai and rejection of evil), and their reward (mercy). The result was consistent with what was promised. Bunyan wants individuals to know that what God offers—judgment, an indictment of sin, a requirement of repentance, and mercy—may not initially seem appealing, but what is given is consistent with what is offered.

Another significant clash of vice and virtue is represented in the conflict between destruction and restoration. Again, Bunyan appears to be describing the nature of vice as destructive and virtue as restorative to the individual soul. Such destruction is shown by Diabolus’ rebellion and included “an attempt upon the Kings Son to destroy him” (10). The principal motivation for the Diabolonain assault on Mansoul was “revenge, by spoiling of that” (10). After Diabolus’ taking of Mansoul, he placed as recorder Forget-good, who “was naturally prone to do things that were hurtful; even hurtful to the Town of *Mansoul*” and as mayor Lord Lustings who with Forget-good desired to “settle the common people in hurtful ways” (25). Diabolus himself designed mischief for the town: “For alas it was not the happiness of the silly Town of *Mansoul* that was designed by *Diabolus*, but the utter ruin and overthrow thereof” (86). After their expulsion, the Diabolonians met to “plot the ruin of the Town of *Mansoul*” (162) and,

seeing the backslidden state of the town, “rejoiced that *Mansoul* was like to come ruin” (164). In a letter, Diabolus referred to those loyal to him as “*such as sought our honour and revenge in the ruin of the Town of Mansoul*” (165). In another letter, Diabolus commands the Diabolonians still in the town “*to draw the Town of Mansoul into more sin and wickedness, even that sin may be finished and bring forth death*” (177). Once again, Bunyan’s characters Captain Damnation, Captain Much-hurt, Mr. No-life, Captain Past-hope, Captain Sepulcher, Mr. Terror, and Captain Treacherous demonstrate that he believes vice to be devastating. Bunyan is stressing the destructive nature of vice in an individual’s life. Sin has a corrupting influence. As it infiltrates one’s soul it brings ruin and tragedy. This can be the eternal destruction of Hell or the temporal destruction of one’s life, body, or reputation. There is no ultimate satisfaction. In *A Few Sighs*, Bunyan notes, “While men live here, oh how doth the guilt of one sin sometimes crush the soul! It makes a man in such plight that he is weary of his life, so that he can neither rest at home nor abroad” (770).

In contrast, Shaddai, Emanuel, and their army exemplify the restorative nature of virtue in the individual soul. As Emanuel prepares to attack the town, he states that his purpose is not ultimately in destruction but restoration: “Yea, I will pull down this Town, and build it again, and it shall then be the glory of the whole Universe.” He further states that his goal is to reconcile the people to their rightful king and to make the town “the glory of the whole Universe” (85). Upon winning control of the town, Emanuel unconditionally pardons the citizens for their rebellion, restoring the relationship between Shaddai and Mansoul. He also restores the traitorous Lord Willbewill and the ambivalent Mr. Recorder as well as Lord Understanding to their positions of authority and transforms their apparel: “[T]hey went down to the Camp in Black, but they came back to the Town in *White*; they went down to the Camp in *ropes*, they

came back in chains of *Gold*; they went down to the Camp with their feet in *fetters*, but came back with their *steps enlarged under them*; they went also to the Camp, *looking* for death, but they came back from thence with *assurance* of life” (107-08). Although the people looked for “the *Axe* and the *Block*” of judgment, Emanuel offers them the “pipe” and “tabour” of mirth (108, 106). He restores the image of Shaddai within the town and tears down the image and strongholds of Diabolus (118). He also gives the people license to “drink freely of the blood of my Grape” from a conduit that “doth always run Wine” that would drive out “all foul, gross, and hurtful humours” (141). Notably, Emanuel also restores the town’s joy: “But what joy! what comfort! what consolation think you, did now possess the hearts of the men of *Mansoul*.” At this point in the narrative, Bunyan includes the gloss, “Joy renewed in *Mansoul*” (138). Unlike vice, virtue, according to Bunyan, is restorative—redemptive, in the Christian tradition. The result is beneficial and wholesome. The soul is strengthened and fulfilled. Those who receive divine forgiveness are restored in their relationship with God through Christ, restored to spiritual health, and adorned with spiritual blessings.

Bunyan also emphasizes that the greatest struggle in the battle of virtue and vice is found in the individual’s will. Another example of virtue vs. vice is the battle in the life of Lord Willbewill, a chief leader of Mansoul. When Diabolus first attacks the town, Willbewill challenges Diabolus’s actions (14). Soon after, however, he changes loyalties. Succumbing to pride, he accepts Diabolus’s flattering offer of appointment as deputy (22). When the forces of Shaddai later confront the occupied town, Willbewill seconds Lord Incredulity’s open rebuke of the army (49). Willbewill appears to be in turmoil upon Shaddai’s forces besieging of Mansoul as he is said to experience “*fickleness*” (54). After being imprisoned and pardoned (94, 106), Willbewill experiences a short-lived change of heart and renews his loyalty to Shaddai (109). He

after offers congratulations to Emanuel (136), is put in charge of destroying Diabolonian presence in Mansoul, and is set under the authority of Mr. God's Peace (145). He again begins to compromise, though, when he allows his daughter to marry Mr. Self-conceit (150), grows fond of Mr. Carnal Security (151-152), and fails to carry out his duty to destroy the Diabolonians (161-62). After it is discovered that Willbewill is housing Diabolonians, though, he is made to observe penance (185) and is restored to his position (192). Penance produces a true turn-around this time, and Willbewill after exhibits an incredible zeal in ridding Mansoul of Diabolonians: He personally hangs two (195-197), imprisons an additional two (199), confronts Diabolus and his renewed attack on the town (201-02), allows his house to be used as a jail for the Diabolonians (204), makes a strike at Election doubters (220), is later noted as a "terrou" to the Diabolonians (225), guards Diabolonians (231), arrests more Diabolonians (236-37), offers court testimony against a Diabolonian (238), and continues hunting for hiding Diabolonians (242-44). Here Bunyan is describing the battle of the will that is present in the believer's life: the believer attempts to resist sin but is overcome by temptation. He or she becomes defiant until brought low in bondage resulting from sin. After receiving pardon through Christ, the believer has fellowship with God restored. However, temptation slowly creeps back in to the believer's life, bringing eventual censure and conviction. Upon truly repenting, the believer reveals a great zeal for God's work and righteousness.

Bunyan also explores how virtue and vice work in the soul. According to Bunyan, vice is produced by a slow and stealthy process rather than a sudden and explicit one. Carnal Security, a Diabolonian, was able to undermine the town from within by his steady beguiling of the townspeople into trusting their present might rather than continuing to walk in the statutes of Emmanuel. In addition, other Diabolonians such as "Fornication," "Adultery," and "Murder"

were allowed to lurk around the town (161). Eventually Emmanuel withdrew from Mansoul, leaving the town at the mercy of Diabolus's next attack. Bunyan here seems to be describing the slow working of sin in the individual's soul that brings destruction. Bunyan's gloss to the narrative states, "'Tis not Grace received, but Grace improved, that preserves the soul from temporal dangers" (152). Bunyan was warning that even allowing for a trace of sin in an individual's life could bring destruction. In *A Few Sighs*, he criticizes those who allow for "following their whores, robbing their neighbours, telling of lies, following of playes, and sports to pass away the time (773)." Greaves notes that Bunyan's admonition to readers comes out of his own experience: "Relatively fresh from his own triumph over these temptations, he pressed others not to succumb, even to such apparently harmless pursuits as sports, hunting, and dancing. Time is a valuable commodity, to waste only at the peril of everlasting damnation" (Greaves 102). Bunyan warns such "harmless pursuits" can lead to ruin. Sin begins small but eventually can destroy an individual's spiritual life.

Likewise, the breach in Mansoul's relationship with Emmanuel is a result of their slowly turning their backs on Emmanuel. They neglect visiting the Prince, they take no notice of his presence, they ignored his invitations to love-feasts, and they lose their trust in him and confide in themselves (152-53). During his conversion experience, Bunyan had noticed those who had seemingly grown cold to scriptural truths:

I had seen some who, though they were under the wounds of conscience, would cry and pray; yet feeling rather present ease for their trouble, than pardon for their sin, cared not how they lost their guilt, so they got it out of their mind: now having got it off the wrong way, it was not sanctified unto them; but they grew harder and blinder, and more wicked after their trouble. (39)

Renewed faith must be rekindled in order that such apathy be mortified. Bunyan had admonished his parishioners in *The Heavenly Footman* to awake out of their slumber and seek Christ.

Greaves notes, “Bunyan consequently urges the competitors to beseech God to inflame their wills for heaven, knowing from his own experience that deterrents and dismay can otherwise persuade a racer to quit. The strength to compete and finish can only come from God, but the runner must also act” (214).

Bunyan also promoted the notion that virtue is a slow-working process. Mansoul’s remorse, shown by their numerous petitions to Shaddai, remains unanswered for a long period of time. Despite a repeated and seemingly noble effort to petition the King to have Emmanuel return, the requests go unanswered (159). Mansoul had sinned against Shaddai and Emmanuel in their negligence of their Prince and the consequence was a response that would take more than time to answer—it would take repentance on the part of the town. Emanuel waits until he sees the zeal of Mansoul in ridding themselves of the Diabolonians and the intensity of its resistance to Diabolus before he is willing to return and deliver them. Mansoul’s agony over unanswered petitions to Emmanuel are similar to Bunyan’s view that God is unlikely to answer the prayer of the backslider until contrition results in repentance. Michael McDonald notes “the Puritans produced a literature of anxious gloom in which despair normally preceded conversion” (qtd. in Greaves 232).⁶⁰ Such gloom is palpable as Mansoul’s petitions are sent again and again but receive no answer for a long time, just as prayers of the agonizing backslidden seemingly go unanswered almost endlessly. In the gloss, Bunyan notes the reason for the lack of an answer from God despite Mansoul’s pleas: “They apply themselves to the Holy Ghost, but he is grieved” (157). In *Profitable Meditations* Bunyan discusses the danger of grieving God by presumption.

⁶⁰ It is unfortunate that Puritans have been often mischaracterized as miserable creatures whose sole purpose is to enjoin others to their misery. Their supposed sobriety is characteristically mistaken for their belief that true joy of salvation only comes as a result of repentance.

In the poem, Christ says to the sinner, “If now thou slight me in my love so mild / And wilt not have me in my mercy sweet, / To sin I leave thee, which will thee defile” (88-90). According to Bunyan, God is not mocked. True repentance, not meaningless pleas, will result in an answer from Him.

Bunyan also notes the diverse approaches of vice in an individual’s life. Diabolus uses a diverse group of soldiers to attack Mansoul, including *Bloodmen* and *Doubters* (227). Bloodmen are called such due to the “malignity of their nature” and “fury that is in them” and are governed by “*Intellectuals*” (228). Bunyan seems to be making the case that Satan at times uses fierce persecution to attack the believers and that this persecution comes from those considered “intellectuals.” Certainly Dissenters were the targets of vicious attacks by the well-educated Anglicans. In his *A Relation of My Imprisonment*, Bunyan records a conversation he had with a Mr. Foster of Bedford who, like Bunyan, was on trial for his Dissenting views. Foster recalled how his judge had deemed him “unintellectual”: “He said that I was ignorant, and did not understand the Scriptures; for how, said he, can you understand them when you know not the original Greek?” Bunyan’s point is that such disparaging comments attack the soul and could potentially cause one to draw back from the faith. Doubters were “terrible” (176), described as ones who “turned the men of *Mansoul* out of their Beds...they wounded them, they mauled them, yea, and almost brained many of them. Many, did I say, yea most, if not all of them. Mr. *Conscience* they so wounded, yea, and his wounds so festered that he could have no ease day nor night, but lay as if continually upon a rack” (205). The danger of Doubt was a major theme in many of Bunyan’s writings. After not receiving a reply concerning their petition, the citizens of Mansoul were despairing, not realizing that Emmanuel would soon acknowledge the town’s repentance and rescue it for his great love for its people. Bunyan had written in a sermon about

the root cause of doubt in an individual's life: "[T]hou knowest but little of the willingness that is in his heart to save thee; and this is the reason of the fear that ariseth in thy heart, and that causeth thee to doubt that Christ will not receive thee. Unbelief is the daughter of ignorance" (Bunyan, *Complete* 606). Bunyan had struggled with doubt during his conversion, and he understood the bondage it brought to the soul: "There was nothing now that I longed for more than to be put out of doubt" (Bunyan, *Complete* 55).

Bunyan also uses the *The Holy War* as a picture of how the individual soul relates to universal church history, also referred to as "God's universal economy." This is the ultimate picture of the fight between vice and virtue since, although relevant to the individual's spiritual state, they are fought on a universal scale. The narrative begins with a description of Diabolus's rebellion: This *Diabolus*, is indeed a mighty Prince...as to his Original, he was at first one of the Servants of King *Shaddai*...This *Diabolus* was made Son of the morning (9). This recalls the description of Lucifer, called "Son of the morning" in Isaiah 14:12.⁶¹ Diabolus is then described as "being thus cast out of all place of trust, profit, and honour, and also knowing that they had lost their Princes favour for ever, (being banished his Court and cast down to the horrible Pits)... they would now add to their former pride, what malice and rage against *Shaddai*, and against his Son they could" (10). This is little doubt that this refers to the downfall of Lucifer from Heaven and his desire to destroy humanity, described in I Pet. 5:8 as a "roaring lion."

The narrative continues with Mansoul's fall. Diabolus slyly discredits Shaddai's commandments: "*Tis not true, for that wherewith he [Shaddai] hath hitherto awed you, shall not come to pass, nor be fulfilled, though you do the thing that he hath forbidden*" (16). Likewise, the serpent, always understood as an incarnation of Satan, casts doubt on God's commandment not to eat of the forbidden fruit by stating to Eve, "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4b). In fact,

⁶¹ Bunyan's side gloss at this point in the narrative reference Is. 14:12 (242).

Bunyan's side gloss in this episode states, "*Diabolus* his subtilty made up of lies." The serpent in the garden is likewise described as "subtle" (Gen. 3:1a).

The plan to liberate and restore Mansoul follows. This plan is initiated by Shaddai: "*That at a certain time prefixed by both, the Kings Son should take a journey into the Countrey of Universe, and there in a way of Justice and equity, by making of amends for the follies of Mansoul, he should lay a foundation of their perfect deliverance from Diabolus, and from his Tyranny*" (29). This is clearly representative of God's plan to restore humanity. The plan originates with God the Father and is carried out by the incarnation of Jesus Christ. This restoration provides victory over the power but not necessarily the presence of sin in the life of the church: Greaves states, "In soteriological terms, the unfinished history of Mansoul is the story of Christ's redemption of the elect through unmerited grace and their subsequent sanctification, a lifelong process plagued by periodic backsliding but undergirded by grace sufficient to sustain them through recurring battles with Diabolonian temptations" (419). Through Mansoul's sin, even after liberation, *Diabolus*'s continually plots to re-take the town: "[W]hen the *Diabolonian* Lords that were left, perceived that *Mansoul* had through sinning offended *Emmanuel* their Prince, and that he had with-drawn himself and was gone, what do they but plot the ruin of the Town" (162). Again, Bunyan points to the continual battle believers face throughout the Christian life.

Emmanuel's return and the second restoration of Mansoul is viewed as complete. In his final words to Mansoul, he states

There thou shalt meet with no sorrow, nor grief, nor shall it be possible that any Diabolonian should again (for ever) be able to creep into thy skirts, burrow in thy walls, or be seen again within thy borders all the days of eternity. Life shall there

last longer, than here you are able to desire it should, and yet it shall always be sweet and new, nor shall any impediment attend it for ever. (247)

This period of peace and joy may well be the Millennial Kingdom. (Rev. 20:6). Greaves observes that “Bunyan provides various clues to indicate that he deems Emanuel’s second conquest to be the commencement of the millennium” (427). One clue is the reference to “a thousand years” (247). Such a view would be important theologically, being consistent with Bunyan’s interpretation of eschatology, but the view would also be important practically as the Non-conformists earnestly looked for deliverance from their present persecution. Greaves also notes Bunyan’s desire to portray God’s economy in the narrative:

The Holy War incorporates the broad swath of Christian history in a millenarian framework, commencing with humanity in its Edenic purity, Diabolus’ plot to seize control of Mansoul, and the ensuing fall. Emanuel’s initial conquest and the appointment of the Lord Chief Secretary (the Holy Spirit) as the principal teacher represent the apostolic church and Pentecost, and Diabolus’ reconquest of the town symbolizes the church’s decline and captivity throughout the medieval era...The last judgment and Christ’s final return remain in the future, as does the transfiguration of redeemed Mansoul, when Emanuel promises to dismantle and rebuild it in heaven. (427)

Such a panorama includes all of the historical events from creation to the Millennial Kingdom. Bunyan’s incorporation of the Christian worldview into the story reinforces his belief that human existence must be viewed from God’s perspective.

In so addressing the conflict between good and evil allegorically, Bunyan extends the thread of Medieval literature to his own contemporary society. Devotionally, Bunyan applies the

battle of virtue and vice to the spiritual warfare that takes place in the human soul. *The Holy War*'s attachment to the English allegorical tradition also gives evidence of an author familiar with this type of literature who was able to take a theme and create an epic. The following chapter will explore Bunyan's voice as a social critic as he uses of vice and virtue in regards to the larger Restoration period, in particular the hardships Bunyan and his fellow dissenters experienced under the monarchy of Charles II during the restoration crisis.

Chapter 3: The Politically Critical Thread of Vice and Virtue in Bunyan's *The Holy War*

John Bunyan's use of the battle between vice and virtue in *The Holy War* goes beyond narrative and devotional enrichment. Bunyan also uses his allegory as a means of social criticism of Charles II and his role in the Succession Crisis. Vice, in Bunyan's opinion, was represented by a political leader in moral or theological error and that also actively persecuted Non-conformists and undermined their beliefs. Virtue, conversely, was represented by pious Dissenters battling to overcome the hostility of an ungodly government, the possible return of Catholic power to England, and literary propaganda of Royalists. In this last regard, *The Holy War* can be specifically viewed as an important and useful work due to its direct contrast to John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), as both works were, in part, a response to the Succession Crisis. An examination of Bunyan's work in conjunction with Dryden's adds depth and dimension to one's understanding of *The Holy War*.

The Puritans' loss of control of Parliament to Royalists and the subsequent Restoration of the monarchy with the return of Charles II to the throne in 1660 had reversed the fortunes of the Religious Dissenters, such as Bunyan, who had so staunchly supported the Commonwealth of Oliver Cromwell. Pressure immediately began to mount against preachers who would not give allegiance to the Anglican Church or use its *Book of Common Prayer*, and many of them were incarcerated, including Bunyan in late 1660. In 1662, Parliament codified their antagonism to Non-conformists by passing "The Act of Uniformity," effectively barring anyone who had not been ordained by the state church from preaching. Throughout Bunyan's imprisonment in the 1660s, persecution remained intense for Dissenters. By 1665, Charles's journalist Henry Muddiman noted, "the Conventicles are now so hotly pursued, no meeting but presently snapt and the Brethren prosecuted according to the strictness of the Law." By 1668, Secretary of State

for the north William Morice stated that “fire of zeal for suppression of Conventicles may be so hot, that it may burn those that cast them in, as well as those that are cast in” (qtd. in Greaves 267).

Upon Bunyan’s release after twelve years in the Bedford gaol, he found the government hardly less hostile to his religious views. Although Charles issued a “Declaration of Indulgence” (1672), granting religious freedom to non-Anglicans (this was apparently a result of Charles’s Catholic sympathies rather than from any love for Protestant Dissenters),⁶² Parliament soon blocked the measure from implementation, forcing its retraction by the king. The very next year Parliament passed the “Test Act” (1673), barring non-Anglicans from holding public office and effectively marginalizing them from public life. After three years of liberty, Bunyan was again jailed for preaching, albeit for a shorter sentence of six months. After release from prison and three years of liberty, Bunyan was again arrested in 1676 and imprisoned for six months before being permanently released in 1677.

In addition to the persecution from the Anglican government, the Popish Plot of 1678 caused fears to brew that Catholicism would be reinstated as the state church, resulting in even greater persecution of Non-conformists. The turmoil would be brought to a boil with the Succession Crisis of 1681. At the center of controversy was the issue of Charles II having no legitimate heir and his decision to appoint the Catholic James as his successor. Parliament, dominated by Anglicans and hostile to Catholics as well as Dissenters, was resolute in its determination to prevent a Catholic from ascending to the throne. Charles attempted to appease his opponents in Parliament by promising that James’s crowning would not prevent the

⁶² Charles’s sympathies to Roman Catholicism are evidenced by his desire that his Catholic brother James, the Duke of York, succeed him as king, and by discussions that he had with foreign powers regarding the re-introduction of Catholicism as the state church in England.

government from remaining under Protestant control. However, continued hostility against James's succession led to Charles arresting and trying numerous Anglican political opponents, including Lord Shaftsbury.

Charles intensified his efforts to suppress Dissenters, who not only feared a Catholic resurgence in England but also believed that the Pope was the Antichrist. Repression of Non-conformists became severe in numerous English towns as Conventicles, and the Dissenters who attended them, including numerous members of Bunyan's Bedford church, faced legal action. Bunyan's own friends John Owen and Matthew Meade were subpoenaed and heavily fined in 1681 for violating the Five-Mile Act against non-conformity (Greaves 407).⁶³ Owen, who Bunyan often visited when in London, published *An Humble Testimony unto the Goodness and Severity of God in His Dealing with Sinful Churches and Nations* (1681), and Greaves suggests that its contents describe Non-conformists' concern about the dual threats of Catholicism and an oppressive government. Among many other targets for oppression was the Bunyan's local Bedford government. Two Dissenting chamberlains were removed from their positions and the town recorder who, although a staunch loyalist who had not strictly enforced the Corporation Act, had his vote on the town council revoked in 1681. The following chapter will include the political and historical context to Bunyan's writing of *The Holy War*, Bunyan's development as a social critic, an overview of allegorical literature during the Succession Crisis with special attention to John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, and an exposition of Bunyan's portrayal of Charles II in *The Holy War* contrasted with Dryden's portrayal of Charles in *Absalom*.

⁶³ The Five-Mile Act required that a Non-conforming minister not live within five miles of the church from which the government had expelled him.

I.

In this politically-charged atmosphere, Bunyan again picked up his pen. Although no longer a prisoner, Bunyan surely still felt the sting of twelve years of imprisonment as he watched the continuing persecution of his friends and neighbors. In jail, although certainly not isolated from news of the outside world, he must have been more limited in his understanding of current events. Perhaps his constant exposure to the winds of persecution was stoked to even greater intensity to write a commentary of the times.

Bunyan's purpose in the criticism in *The Holy War* is apparent: He sought to bring an indictment of the injustices and corruption of the leading powers of his era as well as to encourage those Non-conformists bearing the brunt of persecution in order to demonstrate the vice of an oppressive government and the virtue of true faith resisting it. In fact, Walker states that *The Holy War*, more than any other of Bunyan's narratives, is enmeshed with its historical-political background (108). Bunyan's seventeenth-century English context does not merely set the stage for the narrative of *The Holy War*, however. References to political events are sewn throughout. Henry Talon concurs, adding, "In this work we are intended to read: a symbolic story of the fall and the resurrection of man, an account of the events of Bunyan's time, and, if we are familiar with the belief in the millennium which the seventeenth-century sects had, a prefiguration of the New Jerusalem" (243). Bunyan wanted to make not just a devotional but also a political and social statement.

His purpose for using allegory as a means of leveling these charges must also be considered once again. Although most of Bunyan's works contained vivid imagery or allegorical elements, the majority of his publications since his first in 1656 had nonetheless simply been expanded sermons. He realized his need to be cautious in how he approached his critique. He had

already spent twelve years in jail for defying the national laws against Non-conformity and surely had no wish to return. Government censors prevented books considered “radical” or “seditious” from being published, and he had even seen his own books burned in government raids. Those who dared publish writing openly critical of Charles II faced execution.⁶⁴ The time of *The Holy War’s* writing was especially perilous in light of the Succession Crisis and the invigorated persecution on Dissenters. Many of Bunyan’s Non-conformist friends faced legal charges, including many of those from his Bedford church. For all of these reasons, allegory was a good means of critique. Bunyan’s Dissenting followers could “read between the lines” to understand the cryptic commentary, but Non-dissenters either would miss the message below the surface or, if they did understand, would not be able to have clear grounds for legal action.⁶⁵

Second, Bunyan was familiar with devotional allegory and with the vast amount of allegory and satire being used as a means of social critique present in England’s literary history. Bunyan’s use of allegory for social commentary, like his devotional emphasis, was not original. Once again, imitation was considered artistic, and numerous allegories and satires of social critiques had been published before *The Holy War*.⁶⁶ Such works prepared the seventeenth-century English audiences for allegorical critique in *Holy War*, including John Skelton’s allegorical *Magnyfycence* (1515) and *The Faerie Queen*. *Magnyfycence* was a subtle admonition to Henry VIII to oppose evil corruption in his kingdom. In the plot, “Magnyfycence” (Henry) is invited to virtue by “Felycyte” (Happiness), “Lyberte” (Liberty), and “Measure” (Good

⁶⁴ Greaves records that Edward Fitzharris was charged with writing *The True Englishman*, an openly excoriating attack on Charles II, and executed in 1680.

⁶⁵ Greaves states, “The basic story of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* is simple, perhaps deceptively so. In part, Bunyan’s genius was framing it in a manner that allowed most Christians to identify with the principal figure, Christian, and thus miss the acute critique of society, government, and the established church embedded in the book. Non-conformists, however, would have readily identified with the struggling, persecuted Christian and recognized Bunyan’s searing assessment” (227).

⁶⁶ Although “allegory” and “satire” are certainly distinct in their characteristics, the terms will be viewed harmoniously here in order to address their common purposed of political commentary.

Judgment) and tempted to vice by Counterfet Countenance (Deceit), Clokyd Colusyon (Conspiracy), and Courtly Abusyon (Court Abuse). Leeming and Drowne contend that these vices were widespread in courts of Skelton's era (165). Although Bunyan most likely had not read this work, it most certainly helped spur literary interest in political satire and helped lead to its influence and future popularity.⁶⁷ *The Faerie Queene* (1590) achieves an even greater sophistication of political allegory.⁶⁸ Each character not only represents a specific virtue but a personage or institution of England's socio-political situation. In nearly all of the six narratives of *The Faerie Queene*, a knight represents a single virtue that battles a specific vice, but also represents political commentary. For example, Lemming and Drowne state that in the first book of *The Faerie Queene*, the Red Crosse Knight, representing patron saint George, travels alongside Una, who represents the true Church (Anglicanism), that battles and destroys the dragon (Catholicism) (97). This interpretation should be considered as political rather than religious due to the succession controversies that had transpired with the Catholic Mary becoming Queen and her imposition of Catholicism as the state church. William Haller describes *The Faerie Queene* as the embodiment of Elizabethan court politics (330). Although there is little evidence that Bunyan read Spenser, there is good indication that he was familiar with the same popular literary works that Spenser would have read.⁶⁹

II.

⁶⁷ John Skelton's *The Bowge of the Court* (1499), his first allegory, was treatment of King Henry VII's Court of Star Chamber. Henry, in order to neutralize the power of regional barons, arbitrarily formed this court of seven-members, that answered only to Henry and had the power to strike down any law or lower-court ruling. Skelton's *Bowge* was written in seven lines, and the main character was a captain who met seven characters with names such as "Suspicion" and "Disdain." These characters represent the kind of abuse of power the court became known for.

⁶⁸ *The Faerie Queen* as a devotional influence on Bunyan is discussed in ch. 2

⁶⁹ Pooley notes the similarity of Spenser's and Bunyan's allegorical works, suggesting that they were both products of Revelation and the Arthurian legends (83). In fact, James Forest and Roger Sharrock state, "There is a "separateness of *The Holy War* which in its devotion to a single allegorical system, complex references for that system, and a realism restricted merely to tone of presentation, looks back in chronological isolation to the high genre of allegory, to the folk and morality elements in *The Faerie Queene*" (xx).

However, the seventeenth century, wracked by the upheavals of the Civil War, Commonwealth, and Restoration proved the most prolific time for political allegory. Walker comments, “Literature played its part in the politics of these years, with many of the major writers of the Restoration period taking sides partisan in the emergence of party politics” (112). What is fascinating is that all sides during this contentious time—Tory-Anglican, Dissenter, Catholic—used allegory or satire as a means of political and social commentary.⁷⁰ The years leading up to the Civil War saw a dramatic increase in both religious and political allegory which would nearly explode during the Restoration.⁷¹ James Sutherland states that during times of national crisis such as the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Bill, “the normal stream of satirical verse became a flood” (162). Still, despite the threat of recrimination, some critics chose to publish their work. Andrew Marvel, whose satires include *Mr. Smirke* (1676), which attacked both the monarchy and the Anglican Church’s intolerance of Dissenters, and *The Rehearsal Transpos’d* (1672-3), a blistering attack on the Archdeacon of Canterbury Samuel Parker. Marvell’s publisher was Nathaniel Ponder, who also published many of Bunyan’s works and retained a close working relationship with him. Certainly Bunyan would have been aware of

⁷⁰ Samuel Butler’s *Hudibras* (1662) is an example of Royalist satire. His work parodies Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* to mock a wide variety of people and their beliefs, but saves his harshest critique for Roundheads, the Rump Parliament, and Dissenters. Just as Spenser’s knights represented virtues, *Sir Hudibras*, a knight whose conscience is made up of hypocrisy and is off to fight Roundheads during the Civil War, represents vice. Sutherland notes that *Hudibras*, a humorous work, was extremely popular (158). In *The Progress of Honesty* (1680), Tom Durfey, another Royalist, allegorizes the succession crisis and the political schism brought about by the Civil War. He begins the poem with lines from Horace, saying, “already a second generation is being crushed by Civil War, and Rome is falling through her own strength.” The narrative recounts a rebellion “of the long ear’d rout,” most likely Roundheads, against Titus the second, a monarch with “God-like clemency,” most likely Charles II. Jack states that while the King’s men are given strong, classical names, those in the opposition, including Charles’s nemesis Lord Shaftsbury, are given names by biblical villains, such as Hophni, Achitophel, and even “chief Advocate of Hell” (55). In addition, Honesty, who is described as an old moralist who remains loyal to the king, chides Error, who is described as a wickedly pursuing pleasure instead of righteousness. At one point, in an obvious jab at Dissenters, Honesty states, “Loyalty [is] the noblest Vertue of the Wise.” Bunyan may never have read this work. However, it again shows the popularity of political satire at this time and its power to critique. Diarist Narcissus Luttrell clearly understood the political intention of the work, writing in his copy of *The Progress of Honesty*, “A Character of our Court & Citty, reflecting on ye fanatic faction.” Indeed, so popular was *The Progress of Honesty* that it warranted a second edition, and Durfey produced three more political satires during this period.

⁷¹ Sutherland traces many of these anonymous manuscripts, obviously ones that cast scorn on Charles II, to Shadwell, Settle, and Durfey (162).

Marvell's satires. George Larkin, another of Bunyan's publishers, was arrested for his publishing of satirical verse in 1668, including Ralph Wallis's *Room for the cobbler of Gloucester and his wife with several cartloads of abominable irregular, pitiful stinking priests* (c.1666), a satire on the Anglican Church. John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), a pro-Royalist allegorical treatment of the succession crisis, had been published at the same time as Bunyan's writing of *The Holy War* and, despite its more aristocratic origin, he most likely was familiar with it.⁷² Indeed, political satire was very well-received in the higher literary culture, provided it had a Royalist bent.⁷³ *Naboth's Vineyard: or, The Innocent Traytor* (1679) John Caryll and *The Progress of Honesty* (1680) by Thomas D'Urfey, for instance, both allegorize the succession crisis known as the Popish Plot. Bunyan may not have been familiar with the latter works, but he may well have heard of them. In any case, allegory and satire were popular means of expressing political opinion throughout every class of society at this time, and Bunyan certainly would have been aware of that fact. Allegory would have been an inviting means of expressing his views given its general appeal.

Third, Bunyan had shown increasing versatility in using allegory as social commentary. In the previous two decades, he had written and published numerous books of sermons. As a fire-brand Puritan Dissenter, he had never shied away from being outspoken on theological controversies and wrote numerous books on heretical and apostate religious movements. Because these works are examples of the type of Bunyan's early social commentary and display his response to England's cultural vice, a brief treatment of them here gives useful context for a study of *The Holy War*. In 1656, he had entered into a heated dialogue with Quakers, resulting in

⁷² Bunyan's likely knowledge and possible response to *Absalom and Achitophel* will be dealt with later.

⁷³ Nathaniel Lee's drama *Lucius Junius Brutus* was banned by the government after a few performances in 1680 upon suspicion that some lines in the play were anti-monarchical (Sutherland 71)

the publication of his first two books of theological criticism, *Some Gospel-Truths Opened* (1656) and *A Vindication of Gospel-Truths Opened* (1657). By the time of his third publication, *A Few Sighs from Hell* (1658), he was known as a critic of not only mystical religious groups like Quakers and Ranters, but also of the professional Anglican clergy. This third work is noteworthy as it is his first commentary on rising persecution against Dissenters. Bunyan's reference to persecution in *A Few Sighs* suggests a growing public sense of antagonism toward Non-conformists. In addition, this work gives commentary on the religious and cultural debauchery of mid-seventeenth century England. He accuses Anglican clergy of relying on philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato rather than on biblical truth and describes the English populace as "painting their faces, feeding their lusts, following their whores, robbing their neighbors, telling of lies, following of players [theatre actors], and sports to pass away the time (n. pag.)."⁷⁴ Bunyan's final publication before his imprisonment was *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded* (1659). Although primarily a theological work, Stuart Sim and David Walker suggest that Bunyan subtly referenced the current political situation as well. Cromwell had died, and his son, Richard, was soon dominated by a Loyalist Parliament that quickly moved to repeal religious toleration Puritans had enjoyed during the ten years of the Commonwealth. Sim and Walker propose that Bunyan's references to scriptures such as Heb. 12:28 and Gal. 5:1 display Bunyan's fear that persecution would soon come (Greaves 86-87). Perhaps his cautious writing was due to the potential danger that lay ahead.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Notably, *A Few Sighs* is the first work into which Bunyan incorporates allegorical elements. John Brown notes that in this work he uses the parable of the rich man and Lazarus to describe "the literal facts of the unseen world" with creative imagination (112). This combination of social commentary and allegory may well have been a precursor to *The Holy War*.

⁷⁵ An indictment had been brought against Bunyan for his unlicensed preaching in 1658 under a left-over statute from pre-Commonwealth days (Greaves 131).

While in prison from 1660-1672, Bunyan continued writing works of theology and social commentary. His first book published from prison was theological, *I Will Pray with the Spirit* (1663).⁷⁶ This work attacks both Anglicanism and scripted prayer, and urges believers to practice personal prayer. But underlying the theology is, again, social commentary. During his trial and sentencing, Bunyan had held a vigorous exchange with his judge, Sir John Kelynge over Anglicanism and the use of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Kelynge had demanded to know why Bunyan refused to use the Anglican prayer book. Bunyan had replied that, although he did not fault those who did use it, Dissenters disagreed with its use for two theological reasons: no scriptural precedence for using *The Book of Common Prayer* exists, and the book was merely the product of men's thoughts rather than true prayer, which results from the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life.⁷⁷

In 1663, Bunyan's *Christian Behavior; or The True Fruits of Christianity* was published. This work, one that Bunyan thought might be his last in the face of possible execution, is more admonition than theology, encouraging recent converts to non-conformity to remain resolute in the face of persecution. Bunyan employs the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25) and the story of Nebuchadnezzar and the fiery furnace (Daniel 3) to respectively describe the limited opportunity for salvation and the persecution of Dissenters. Again, however, Greaves states that Bunyan's work contained social criticism, this time toward Charles II and the Anglian hierarchy. He states the following:

He was scathing in his denunciation of those, surely including the magistrates who had incarcerated him, who zealously prosecuted people whose worship

⁷⁶ This book was first published without the printer's information, most likely because it would not have received approval from the government censor (Greaves 152).

⁷⁷ These letters were published posthumously as *A Relation of the Imprisonment of John Bunyan* (1765).

differed from their own...his dissenting readers would have found it easy to substitute Charles II for Darius. Enforcers and proponents of the state-sanctioned church were palpably in Bunyan's mind when he castigated those who confused the tenants, traditions, and worship of humans with the doctrines and worship of God. (166)

Yet Bunyan veiled his attacks, never naming them specifically. In fact, he prudently shifts his attacks to Catholics to avoid scrutiny. Greaves even suggests that when Bunyan remarks that "Papists and their companions" have been responsible for inhumane persecution throughout recent history, he was insinuating a link between Catholicism and the Anglicans who were persecuting him (166). This cryptic commentary would be used greatly in *The Holy War*.

The Holy City, published in 1665, was Bunyan's next book and contained his most extensive use of allegory to that date. This work uses the description of the New Jerusalem from Revelation as a description of church history. Every part of the city is described typologically to represent three general ages of the church: the first a time of purity in the era of the apostles, the second a time of captivity during the Middle Ages, and the third a time of rejoicing during the Millennial Kingdom. In his treatment of the captivity period, Bunyan again seems to criticize the Anglican Church. Greaves cites Bunyan's accusation that compromised religionists are "confused heap of rubbish and carnal Gospellers that everywhere like locusts crawl up and down the nations" is a condemning description of state churches in England and elsewhere (183). Again, Bunyan discreetly conceals the target of his attack with allegorical description.

During these years of turmoil, however, Bunyan increasingly turned his attention to writing allegory, producing *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Mr. Badman*, and *Holy War* in a span of seven years. Although political and social commentary is not a major theme of the first two

works, such commentary is clearly present. As such, the works preview Bunyan's use of allegory for social critique in *The Holy War* and merit attention. Although *Pilgrim's Progress* describes the journey of the Christian life, it is also laced with a strong critique of the political persecution that abounded during its writing. Specifically, it addresses renewed efforts to suppress freedom of conscience during the political crisis of 1667-1673, which centered on the expiration of the Conventicle Act of 1664, Dissenters' cries for toleration, and the government's renewed efforts to suppress Non-conformity. Greaves states that

Bunyan wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress* not only as a guide to the Christian life but as a contribution to the Restoration crisis of 1667-1673, the crux of which was a debate about liberty of conscience that raised profound questions concerning the limits of the state's authority, the relationship between church and crown, and the rights and obligations of subjects. (222)⁷⁸

An incredible amount of writing on religious liberty and freedom of conscience was written during and shortly after this time, and Bunyan joins the call for liberty in his poetic introduction to *The Pilgrim's Progress*:

Indeed if they abuse
Truth, cursed be they, and the craft they use
To that intent; but yet let Truth be free
To make her Salleys upon Thee, and Me,
Which way it pleases God. (6)

⁷⁸ The "crux" centered on the Conventicle Act passed by Parliament in 1664. This act outlawed unauthorized religious meetings. It was set to expire in 1667, and as that date drew near, a feverish debate on religious toleration filled England.

Such calls were quieted in 1668, however, when Charles II sided with Parliament and renewed repression of Dissenters.⁷⁹ In *Mr. Badman*, Bunyan critiques his contemporary society. Greaves states that *Badman* indicts Restoration society for its opposition to Christian principles and its need of a spiritual awakening (379). More specifically, Bunyan fictionalizes accounts of debauchery he had witnessed in his own congregation and in his visits to London:

For that wickedness like a flood is like to drown our English world; it begins already to be above the tops of the mountains; it has almost swallowed up all; our youth, our middle age, old age, and all, are almost carried away of this flood. O debauchery, debauchery, what hast thou done in England! Thou hast corrupted our young men, hast made our old men beasts; thou hast deflowered our virgins and hast made matrons bawds; thou hast made our earth to reel to and fro like a drunkard. (484)

⁷⁹ Allegorical references of political persecution abound in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Greaves notes that each type of foe Christian faces, whether Apollyon, Pope, Pagan, or Despair, represents a different type of persecution Dissenters faced (245). Bunyan also seemed to critique the Anglican Church with characters such as Worldly-Wiseman from the town of Morality, and Formalist and Hypocrisy (258-259) and the aristocracy with the marginal comment "Sins are all Lords and Great ones." The most vivid example of Bunyan's criticism, however, is the episode of Vanity Fair. Pooley states, "The element of [Bunyan's] protest come out most clearly in the Vanity Fair episode which brings together Bunyan's protests at the extremes of the market economy, the persecution of Non-conformist Christians, and the social snobbery which informed it" (88). During the writing of *Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan appeared in court several times (1665, 1668, 1669, and 1670) only to be rejected and returned to prison for his conscientious objection to the practices of the Anglican Church. This experience of legal injustice must have been fresh in Bunyan's mind, then, when he described Christian and Faithful's appearance before the bar at Vanity Fair and their subsequent sentencing. Bunyan's *Reflections* records the same type of arguments used against him as the judges used against Christian and Faithful. Greaves also notes Bunyan's sharpest critique of Charles II and the Stuarts to date. Bunyan also seized the opportunity to castigate Stuart justice by having Judge Hategood approvingly cite statutes of an unnamed pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and Darius, all of whom had tyrannically persecuted those who rejected the state religion. The Egyptian case was especially iniquitous because males had been drowned to prevent them from possibly disobeying the government. These were damning though implicit parallels with Charles II. (248). *The Pilgrim's Progress* was Bunyan's most elaborate work to that date and reveals both a renewed interest in as well as complex use of allegory as social commentary. After Charles issued an indulgence granting freedom to Dissenters in 1672, Bunyan used his liberty to pastor the Bedford church and publish expanded sermons such as "The Straight Gate" and "A Treatise on the Fear of God" which contained sparse allegorical elements but subtle indictments of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches.

By the time he wrote *The Holy War*, Bunyan had apparently become sufficiently comfortable with allegorical writing as to dedicate the majority of his time to such work.⁸⁰ Bunyan, no doubt, also recognized the success of his previous allegories. *The Pilgrim's Progress* had been exceptionally successful, boasting seven editions by the time Bunyan was writing *The Holy War* in 1681.⁸¹ Walker states, "In moments of political crisis that bring with it possible threats to his religion, Bunyan can often be found having recourse to the pen" (116). Bunyan was well-prepared to write the strong critique found in his next major work, *The Holy War*. The majority of his works had included harsh evaluations of England's political and ecclesiastical institutions, as well as its cultural and moral degeneracy. His most recent publications at this point, and also his most extensive works, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) and *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680) were allegories that, at least to some extent, had both worked the political-social situation underneath the surface narrative.

III.

However, the most well-known of all political satires during the Restoration was Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*. This work was published shortly before *The Holy War* and was similarly embedded with social commentary but that held a contrasting view of the monarchy. Since Dryden's work, like Bunyan's, was saturated with social commentary about England's political climate in the early 1680s, it is useful in better understanding Bunyan's use of social criticism. In turn, then, Bunyan's use of virtue and vice paradigm reaches its zenith as he does allegorical battle with the literary giant of the age. Bunyan's previous dabbling in

⁸⁰ Anne Dunan-Page includes *Grace Abounding* (1666) in the list of Bunyan's allegorical works despite its autobiographical nature when she notes that all of Bunyan's fiction works were published within an eight-year span (1).

⁸¹ Brown records that Charles Doe, one of Bunyan's later publishers, claimed that 100,000 copies of *The Pilgrim's Progress* were sold in the author's lifetime (444)

allegory for social commentary certainly prepared him for this moment, and *The Holy War* was certainly his entire focus during the Succession crisis.⁸²

Absalom and Achitophel itself was a direct product of the succession crisis and, as such, a brief account of the historical context is warranted. Charles's plan to let his Catholic brother James succeed him to the throne intensified in September of 1679 when Charles sent Monmouth, his illegitimate son and potential rival to James, to Holland and soon after brought James to England as a sign of his intentions. Outraged Protestants in Parliament began petitioning the King to exclude James from the succession. Lord Shaftsbury and his Parliamentary supporters, including Titus Oates, brought evidence to the Privy Counsel of a plot to restore Catholicism as the state religion (Greaves 392). During this crisis, political parties developed. The Tory party defended the authority of the King and the Anglican Church. The Whig party defended the authority of Parliament and accused the Tory party of being sympathetic to Catholicism. Parliament, made up of mostly Whigs, passed an Exclusion Bill to exclude James from the throne. Charles, in turn, dismissed Parliament and called for new Parliamentary elections. New elections produced another Whig majority in Parliament, however. Soon after, the popular Shaftsbury, who had become a leader of the Whigs, was arrested in June of 1681 for treason. During his imprisonment, as popular opinion in London waxed strong against the monarchy, Charles asked Dryden, England's poet-laureate and a loyal Tory, to write a satire in his defense concerning this crisis to help turn the tide of public opinion. Charles William Previt -Orton states, "[Charles] was only just able to keep down the Whigs. It was necessary to attack their influence among the educated classes of the towns, and for this purpose Charles had the happy

⁸² Sharrock states, "Bunyan published nothing between *Badman* in 1680 and *The Holy War* in 1682. The interval is unusual for him and suggests that he was giving his whole attention to the new allegory; there is internal evidence, too, that it was more deeply meditated than any previous work" (118).

thought of calling on his laureate, Dryden, to satirize the Whigs and their Exclusion Bill” (96).⁸³ In satirizing the Whigs, Dryden was both praising Charles and satirizing those who feared a Catholic monarch. One of Dryden’s targets in the narrative was eminently clear: Dissenters received a blistering attack. Ian Jack notes that irony directed toward the villains in the narrative was, as such, always directed toward Non-conformists (70).

Dryden was not interested in merely attacking his foes in a vacuum, however. What really mattered to him was the effect the work had on the public’s perception of Charles and his role in the Succession Crisis (Minor 209). Made available to the public shortly before a London grand jury finished deliberations in Shaftesbury’s treason trial, the work was intended to convince the public of Charles’s divine right to rule and ridicule Shaftesbury in hopes of turning public opinion against him. In essence, he wanted to “dampen political ardor and instill obedience” to the King (Lord 159). However, soon after release of the work, Shaftesbury was acquitted.

Although the work perhaps failed to influence the jury in Shaftesbury’s case, its impact on the public was still tremendous. G. Saintsbury notes, “The popularity of *Absalom and Achitophel* was immense, and its sale rapid” (84). In one sense, the work’s success is remarkable.

⁸³ Dryden, renowned for his dramas and poetry, was no stranger to political satire. In response to the Dissenting publication *Mirabilis Annus*, which laid blame for all the catastrophic events of the 1660s at Charles’s feet, Dryden wrote *Annus Mirabilis* (1667), adamantly defending Charles’s rule. In contrast to Dissenting opinion, Dryden saw Non-conformity, not the monarchy, as England’s chief problem. George deF. Lord states, “War, plague, and fire had, as dissenting prophets declared, been a judgment of God for sin, but the sin, in Dryden’s view, was that of the rebellious citizens of London and not the allegedly profligate King and his court” (172). This rebuttal in the King’s defense, no doubt, had some bearing on Dryden being named poet laureate the following year. Dryden’s strong belief in the authority of the monarchy and his opposition to dissent made him a major foe of the Whigs. Dryden was leery of the political instability that dissent from the Crown could bring. In fact, he was seen as one of the chief advocates for the monarchy in the face of a hostile Parliament. Lord states that “[a]s a leading defender of and spokesman for this order from 1660 to his death in 1700 Dryden devoted his energies and talents to discrediting political innovation by advancing the conservative myth of restoration against the radical myth of apocalypse” (160). Clearly Dryden enjoyed the idea of both defending the King and ridiculing his Whig opponents. James Sutherland adds, “In *Absalom and Achitophel* we have the necessary conditions for great satire: the writer really cares about the cause he is asserting, but is not so personally involved in the events as to have lost control of his temper” (183).

Dryden was a writer of high literature, yet his poem, written in a heroic style, was popular with commoners. Luttrell wrote the following words of praise in his copy of *Absalom and Achitophel*: “An excellent poem agt [against] ye Duke of Monmouth, Earl of Shaftesbury & that party & in vindication of the King & his friends” (qtd. in Roper 76). Not all responses to Dryden’s poem were positive, however. Whigs and Dissenters were incensed at the adoration of Charles and the attack on Shaftesbury, and a torrent of new political allegories and satires followed, many following Dryden’s use of biblical typology. Harold Whitmore Jones remarked, “That such replies were considered necessary testifies both to the popularity of *Absalom and Achitophel* with the layman in politics and to the Whigs’ fear of its harming their cause” (n. pag.).

However, little to no attention has been given to Dryden’s relation to Bunyan’s work, in particular *The Holy War*, which was being written during the height of *Absalom and Achitophel*’s prominence and which was published the following year. There are several reasons to believe that Bunyan knew of the work and a possibility that *The Holy War* was, at least in part, a response to the same historical event as *Absalom*. Numerous allegorical—and inflammatory—responses had almost immediately begun circulating after the publication of *Absalom*. Well-known dramatists Elkanah Settle and Samuel Pordage wrote *Absalom Senior* and *Azaria and Hushai*, respectively (Settle n. pag.). The anonymous *History of the Babylonish Cabal* described as a response to Shaftesbury who had been in London’s tower as a Daniel in the lion’s den and included a dedication to Shaftesbury. In addition, Sir Walter Scott records that a Non-conformist minister published two responses, *A Whip for the Fool’s Back, who styles honourable Marriage a cursed confinement, in his profane Poem of Absalom and Achitophel*, and *A Key, with the Whip, to open the Mystery and Iniquity of the Poem called Absalom and Achitophel* (218). If

Bunyan was not aware of the former early responses, he most likely would have been aware of the latter as a pastor and leader of Non-conformists.

That Bunyan was aware of the content of *Absalom and Achitophel* is also implied by Bunyan's note in his later work *Pilgrim's Progress: The Second Part* (1684) that "Madame Bubble pitted Absalom against his father David" (408). Greaves notes

Like its predecessor the second part is sensitive to the historical context in which it was composed. Bunyan's dismay over the extent to which Monmouth and his close allies had gone in considering a general insurrection is reflected in his comment...John Dryden's poem *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) had done much to popularize the identification of Absalom with Monmouth, and it was easy step to interpret Madame Bubble's nefarious deed as having incited the duke against Charles II. (510)

This reference to "Absalom" suggests that Bunyan understood, like most other English citizens, the association of the biblical character with Monmouth. In fact, during the tumultuous time of the succession crisis, a pamphlet attributed to Cave Underhill was distributed in Frankfurt, England (1681) and then London (1682) asserting that "the tinker of Bedford," obviously referring to Bunyan, along with other Dissenters, of treason and accusing some of their followers as following "'pragmatical young Absalom,' an allusion to Monmouth (Greaves 437).

Underhill recognized that Dissenters—and Bunyan specifically—understood the association of Absalom with Monmouth due to Dryden's work.

Another reason that Bunyan most likely was familiar with *Absalom* is the work's sheer popularity. The work was written for a wide audience (Wilding 201) whom it enchanted (Young 126); the result was rapid sales, (Saintsbury 84) reaching seven editions within two years of its

publication (Greaves 409). With Bunyan's many trips to London around the time of its publication, he would have been hard-pressed to avoid hearing about it. In addition, Bunyan's own literacy in a time when few could read,⁸⁴ along with his close association with highly-educated men, such as Owens, would make his ignorance of Dryden's work improbable (Greaves 226). In fact, in 1680, Owens said that half the world was talking about the Popish plot (Greaves 358), increasing the likelihood that Bunyan would not have been ignorant of the highly-publicized literary work Dryden wrote in response to it.

A reason that *The Holy War* may be Bunyan's opposing view to *Absalom and Achitophel* is his association with dissenting writers who were rivals to Dryden. Bunyan's chief publisher was Nathaniel Ponder (a longtime associate of Bunyan) who also published works by Bunyan's friends Owen and Andrew Marvell (See Greaves 347, 639). Marvell, most likely the author of the originally anonymous *Advices and Last Instructions to a Painter* (both highly critical of the Charles) (Sutherland 162), was a rival of Dryden (Lord 184). Marvell died in 1678 before the succession crisis had reached its peak, but not before he and Dryden had become rivals. In 1672, Marvell criticized the laureate Dryden in his *The Rehearsal Transposed* as a "champion of arbitrary power," associating him with the Tory Samuel Parker (Lord 184). Again later that year, he used his poem commending Milton's *Paradise Lost* to criticize Dryden as "the town Bayes" (Miner 184). Dryden, for his part, had Marvell's praise of Cromwell in *Heorique Stanzas* in mind when he wrote *Absalom and Achitophel* (Lord 172-173) criticizing the former Lord Protector. Lord notes, "Nearly all Marvell's details appear in Dryden's stanzas" (173). Neither time nor death seemed to nullify the Dryden's antipathy toward Marvell, as Dryden criticized his rival as "a Presbyterian Scribler, who sanctify'd to the use of the Good Old Cause" (Miner 184). One

⁸⁴ According to Donald Stark, two thirds of people were illiterate during Bunyan's formative years (See *The Development of Literacy: Northern England 1640-1740*).

reason that Marvell so strongly criticized Dryden was his rival's intense hostility to Dissenters and the Whig Parliament. Although some have suggested that Dryden was a moderate Tory, Lord rejects this assessment, noting Dryden's stalwart opposition to anyone challenging the King: "Dryden...persistently represented any attempt by parliamentary opposition to check the extension of royal power as a usurpation (Lord 182). Dryden's strong opposition was surely noted by Bunyan as well as Marvell. Since Bunyan and Marvell shared the same publisher during the days leading up to the succession crisis, Bunyan most likely would also have seen Dryden as a leader of his opponents and have had him in mind as he was working on *The Holy War*.⁸⁵

Another reason for evaluating *The Holy War* in conjunction with *Absalom and Achitophel* is the common practice of responding to political writing during the restoration period. Greaves records an example of such bantering back and forth during the period. In 1669, loyalist Samuel Parker (whom Marvell had associated with Dryden in his writing), attacked Dissenter use of typology and allegory (which Bunyan had used extensively in his writings) in *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Polite*. Owen, a close associate of Bunyan, counterattacked by publishing *Truth and Innocence Vindicated* (1669) which defended Non-conformity, Parker responded with *A Defence and Continuation of the Ecclesiastical Politie* (1671), Andrew Marvell attacked back with *The Rehearsed Transpos'd* (1672-3), which included Marvell's criticism of Dryden and, in 1675, Bunyan entered the argument with his publication *Light for Them That Sit in Darkness: or, a Discourse of Jesus Christ* (Greaves 317)⁸⁶ The fact that this back-and-forth between rivals occurred during this time—not to mention Bunyan's being part of it—gives credibility to the

⁸⁵ As noted earlier, Francis Smith, another of Bunyan's publishers, published *Mirabilis Annus*, a collection of essays blaming Charles II for the country's woes. In response, Dryden wrote *Annus Mirabilis* (1667) as a response. Bunyan's association with Smith and Dryden's response to him indicates where the lines of opposition were drawn.

⁸⁶ Samuel Butler later criticized *Pilgrim's Progress* as being a "series of infamous libels upon life and things" (Greaves 627).

assumption that *The Holy War* can be viewed as Bunyan's response to the Succession Crisis from a Non-conformist perspective, just as *Absalom and Achitophel* was the Royalist response. Michael Mullet, in fact, calls *The Holy War* "the Puritan *Absalom and Achitophel*" (Hill 240).

IV.

The best evidence, however, that Bunyan's work is related to *Absalom and Achitophel* is the allusions to Charles and the Succession Crisis in the work itself. As noted previously, numerous writings, many allegorical, were published in response to Dryden's seminal poem. Although Bunyan has traditionally been considered a devotional writer, Hill acknowledges the growing acceptance of Bunyan as a satirist.⁸⁷ Bunyan's allegory, written during the height of *Absalom and Achitophel*'s popularity and published shortly afterwards, should be at least considered one simply because of its timing in the midst of its historical context. Walker states that one cannot deny *The Holy War* was written with allusions to the events leading up to the succession crisis (117).⁸⁸ If Bunyan did indeed write *The Holy War*—at least in part—as a response to *Absalom and Achitophel*, then he did so because, like Dryden, he wanted to influence public opinion regarding the contemporary political and cultural turmoil about Charles. In his introduction to the reader, Bunyan could be referring to Dryden when he writes of those who

...raise such mountains, tell such things
 Of Men, of Laws, of Countries, and of Kings:
 And in their Story seem to be so sage,
 And with such gravity cloath ev'ry Page,
 That through their Frontice-piece says all is vain,
 Yet to their way Disciples they obtain

⁸⁷ See Hill 223

⁸⁸ Walker specifies the events of the Popish plot of 1678 and the Meal Tub plot of 1679 (Walker 117).

If Bunyan did not have Dryden in mind when he wrote these lines, it is hard to image whom he did.

In Dryden's narrative, Achitophel, the King's disloyal counselor, works to persuade the illegitimate Prince Absalom to rebel against his father, King David. At first, Absalom is hesitant to challenge his father and is self-deprecating. Absalom soon succumbs to Achitophel's flattery and deceit, however, and steals the hearts of the insubordinate Jews. A description of David's loyal and heroic men follows, and the poem ends with David reasserting his authority as rightful monarch. In light of the current political crisis, there was no doubt that Dryden was making a direct correlation of the biblical story to the main players in the Succession episode. In fact, part of the work's popularity was due to the enjoyment people received by conjecturing who represented whom.⁸⁹

If Bunyan was familiar with Dryden's work,⁹⁰ which highly praises Charles and greatly criticizes those who oppose him, he most likely would have seen Dryden's work as regarding vice as virtue and virtue as vice. After all, Dissenters viewed Charles as a tyrant, and they had been greatly persecuted for what they believed was following scripture. Dryden, however, saw that the biblical story of Absalom's rebellion against David paralleled the Succession Crisis and used it to promote Charles's position. Lord states, "The whole tendency of Dryden's adaptation of traditional mythic material in this poem is to remove—or at least obscure—the orthodox

⁸⁹ Joseph Addison would later remark the following:

It is no wonder therefore that on such Occasions, when the Mind is thus pleased with itself, and amused with its own Discoveries, that it is highly delighted with the Writing which is the Occasion of it. For this Reason the Absalom and Achitophel was one of the most popular Poems that ever appeared in English. The Poetry is indeed very fine, but had it been much finer it would not have so much pleased, without a Plan which gave the Reader an Opportunity of exerting his own Talents. (Roper n. pag.)

⁹⁰ *Absalom and Achitophel* was published in November of 1681 and *The Holy War* was published around February of 1682. The instant popularity of *Absalom* makes plausible the notion that Bunyan was at least familiar Dryden's work. If not, at least he was aware of his contemporary literary context, since numerous political satires were published during or in response to the Succession Crisis.

distinctions between the divine Maker and the secular Master and to assert the God-like authority of King Charles” (190). Dryden had already cast Charles as David-like in his *Astrea Redux*, in which he welcomed him back to the throne in 1660 (Jack 55), but now cast him as “god-like David” (line 14). He also refers to him as gentle (“in peace the thoughts of war he could remove” [25]), gracious (“His motions all accompanied with grace” [29]), heavenly (“And paradise was opened in his face” [30]), generous and naïve (“To all his [Absalom’s] wishes nothing he denied”[33]), one who overlooked the faults of others (“His father could not, or he would not see [36]), possessing divine justification for his actions (“Heaven punishes the bad, and proves the best” [44]), “honest” (507), “righteous” (811), “the faith’s defender” (318), “just” (319), “humble” (325), “Inclined to mercy” (325), and harmless (“averse from blood” [326]). In addition, Dryden refers to him as “good” four times. Dryden does acknowledge David’s immorality (“promiscuous use of concubine and bride” [6]) and his numerous illegitimate children (“Scattered his Maker’s image through the land” [9-10]). Although the text appears to condone this behavior as natural and decries morality as an unnatural religious imposition (In pious times, ere priestcraft did begin, / Before polygamy was made a sin...Ere one to one was cursedly confined; / When nature prompted and no law denied” [1-2, 4-5]), Dryden was, despite his intense loyalty to the crown, a moralist who did not resist the opportunity for biting satire at the expense of Charles’s infidelity. This satiric element in no way restrains Dryden’s lavish praise of Charles. Jack notes the constant flattery of Charles in *Absalom*, stating that “*Absalom and Achitophel* was deliberately written, as every line proclaims, to please the King” (75). However, Dryden also makes clear his own beliefs about the King. He believes Charles righteous in his oppression of Non-conformity, justified in his decision to make the Catholic James his heir, and above a place of public accountability for his personal actions despite his immoral

behavior. Virtue resides in the fact that Charles is King in fact, not in his policies or in his lifestyle. Dryden championed Charles because of his belief in the absolute right of kings, not because of his personal merit (Miner 171). Power and tradition determined what was right in Dryden's eyes.

Bunyan's view of Charles, however, was far different than Dryden's. Dryden spent much of *Absalom and Achitophel* attempting to emphasize the importance the King's supreme authority. In contrast, Bunyan allocates much of his allegory to describing the importance of resisting a tyrant. Greaves states, "Bunyan espouses the need to exercise the will and to strive throughout the text of *The Holy War*, along with the need for constancy and the right to resist an ungodly ruler" (116). There is little question that Diabolus is a depiction of Charles.⁹¹ Diabolus is described as a "Dragon" (12), "deceiving," "perverting...the right purport and intent of the law," (73), a "Master of the lie," (74), a "Usurper," a "Traitor" (75), "Sacrilegious" (76), an "enemy to all that is good," (201), and a "lion" (49). He is also described as someone who flatters himself (33), calls those who follow virtue "slaves" (34), tries to prevent the citizens from hearing virtue (39), and a hater of what is good (85). Diabolus also does not want to take responsibility for his failures. Upon re-entering the town, Diabolus views the uncooperative nature of the people as rebellion (209).

Despite such numerous indictments against Diabolus, Bunyan gives greatest attention to three specific vices represented by the "Tyrant": manipulation, deceit, and immorality. First, Diabolus is portrayed as a manipulator. He enters Mansoul and immediately decides to "new-model the town," usurping the established government (21). Here he removes the legitimate authorities (at least those who will not join him) and replaces them with his own people who are loyal to him. He replaces existing laws with new laws that favor him. While Bunyan was writing

⁹¹ Both Greaves (433) and Walker (115) see Diabolus as Charles II.

The Holy War, such “remodeling” of local town governments, known as “Corporations” was being done by Charles. Outraged by Shaftesbury’s acquittal in 1681 by Whig-controlled London, Charles and those loyal to the monarchy decided to remodel the capital city by dismissing those who did not support him and replacing them with those loyal to him (Brittain 340). In 1682, The remodeling included replacement of the city’s mayor and sheriffs with supporters of Charles. At the same time that London was being remodeled, Bunyan’s own Bedford Corporation was being targeted for the same fate, and the town was remodeled in 1684. Forrest and Sharrock concur: “The remodeling of the corporation of Mansoul, with a new Lord Mayor and a new Recorder, Lustings in place of Understanding and Forget-good in place of Conscience, closely reflects the imposed reform of the Bedford municipality” (xxiv).⁹² Bunyan here describes Charles as a manipulator of local government. If he suspects that anyone in positions of even local power oppose him, he replaces them like Diabolus. In addition, Charles’ dismissal of two Parliaments during the succession crisis, his suppression of the press, and his arrest of opponents led many to think of him as tyrannical. Greaves states the following:

Thus in the opinion of the Whigs, Charles, in his determination to have his brother succeed him, abetted the establishment of tyranny, as did his infamous alliance with Louis XIV. As a threat to Mansoul’s spiritual *bene esse*, Diabolus could be read as a stand-in for Charles, an interpretation reinforced by Bunyan’s description of Diabolus making havoc of Shaddai’s laws, spoiling the law books, and establishing ‘his own vain Statutes and Commandments. (433)

⁹² Brown also states that “Diabolus new modeling the corporation, changing mayor, recorder, alderman, and burgess at pleasure, was simply doing the same thing the king and Lord Ailesbury were doing at Bedford about the time *The Holy War* was written.”

Forrest and Sharrock echo Brown: “In *The Holy War* it cannot be denied that the struggle for man’s soul is seen as emphatically a political transaction [...] What may be less clear to the present-day reader is that the changes in the government of the town and its officials brought about by Diabolus’s usurpation closely reflect a revolution in English local government occurring in the years when Bunyan wrote (xx-xxi).

Bunyan referred to Diabolus as “Tyrant” no less than thirty-one times. This seems to be a common opinion of Charles, as Andrew Marvell noted in 1677 that “there now for diverse Years a Design been carried on, to change the lawful government of England into an Absolute Tyranny” (Zwicker 8). Although Dryden’s work portrays Charles as embodying the virtues of being “good,” “just,” and “gracious,” Bunyan demonstrates that he embodies vice.

Second, Diabolus is also portrayed as a deceiver. In his initial speech to Mansoul, Diabolus states, “*I will assure you, it is not my self but you; not mine, but your advantage that I seek by what I now do*” (14). After conquering Mansoul, he lies to the citizens about his true intentions for the town as well as keeps them unaware of his plotting for their ruin (15). When news reaches Diabolus that Emanuel is coming to liberate the town, Diabolus tries to deceive the town into believing that the Prince only wants to put them into bondage:

Gentlemen, and my very good Friends, You are all as you know my legal Subjects ...you know how from the first day that I have been with you until now, I have behaved my self among you, and what liberty, and great priviledges you have injoyed under my Government...Your old King, Shaddai, is raising of an Army to come against you, to destroy you root and branch...But my heart is so firmly united to you...Shall you with him live in pleasure as you do now? No, no, you must be bound by Laws that will pinch you...Consider, my Mansoul: would thou were as loth to leave me, as I am loth to leave thee. But consider, I say, the ball [of slavery] is yet at thy foot. Liberty you have, if you know how to use it. Yea, a king you have too [himself], if you can tell how to love and obey him. (32-33, 72)

On March 21, 1681, while Bunyan was in the midst of writing *The Holy War*, Charles addressed both houses of Parliament in regards to the Succession Crisis. In it, he tries to convince a hostile

Parliament that he has no intention of allowing “Popery” to regain its foothold in England, despite his refusal to exclude James from succession. Charles had already been accused by Shaftesbury of being Catholic himself despite Charles’s denials to the contrary, and many Whigs were suspicious that his plan of putting James on the throne would re-institute Catholicism as the state church.⁹³ Charles, in his address to Parliament at Oxford in early 1681, assured the members of Parliament that a Catholic king would not mean a change of the state church. Many Protestants were suspicious of his honesty, wearing ribbons with the words “No Popery, No Slavery” as the Parliament convened (Greaves 402). A comparison between the King’s speech to Parliament and Diabolus’ speech to Mansoul is striking. Charles states,

I, who will never use Arbitrary Government myself, am resolv’d not to suffer it in others...I am desirous to forget faults...It is much my Interest, and it shall be as much my Care as Yours, to preserve the Liberty of the Subject...And I wou’d have you likewise be convinc’d, that neither your Liberties and Properties can subsist long, when the just Rights and Prerogatives of the Crown are invaded...perhaps, [some] may wonder more, that I had Patience so long [with Parliament]...no Irregularities in Parliament shall make me out of love with them ...to remove all reasonable Fears that may arise from the Possibility of a Popish successor’s coming to the Crown; if means can be found...I shall be ready to hearken to any such Expedient. (n. pag.)

During this time, Bunyan was not the only Dissenter see deception in the Popish plot. An anonymous poem from *A Looking Glass for all true Protestants* (1679) states, “But our good God with his All-seeing Eye, / He found them out and quickly them did spy: / He dasht them all

⁹³ These fears were well founded. Unknown to the public until a century later, Charles had signed the Treaty of Dover with King Louis of France and other Catholic monarchs in 1670, declaring that he was truly Catholic and that he would secretly work to make England Catholic again (Brittain 275, Hill 311-12).

to pieces in a trice, / Let's love the truth, and all believe in Christ" (Wedgwood 159). Although Dryden describes Charles as possessing the virtues of being "honest," "righteous," and "the faith's defender," Bunyan's Charles possesses vice.

Third, Diabolus is also immoral. He appoints Mr. Whoreing an alderman of Mansoul, makes Mr. Love-flesh a governor of Sweet-sin Hold, and makes Lord Lusting the mayor of Mansoul. Upon Diabolus' ejection from Mansoul, Lord Fornication, Lord Adultery (187), and Lord Laciviousness (195) are chief plotters with him in re-taking the town. He promoted vice among the people (24), and repressed virtue (30-31). Bunyan here is critical of Charles II not only for oppressing non-conformist Puritans but also for his licentious court lifestyle. Walker states the parallel that must have existed for Bunyan between Charles II and Lord Lusting, stating, "*The Holy War* is also a running commentary on Bunyan's dissatisfaction with the regime of Charles II and that monarch's love—as Bunyan sees it—of a dissolute and ungodly lifestyle" (115). Bunyan had noted the debauchery of Belshazzar, another monarch, in *Sighs from Hell*: "[Y]ou will find he was careless, and satisfying his lusts in drinking, and playing the wanton with his concubines" (765). Bunyan here suggests he was well aware of the moral lewdness of Charles, but he was not the only English citizen who was aware of the King's sordid reputation. An anonymous lampoon on Charles in 1674 states, "He spends his day in running to Plays, / When he should in the Shop be poring; / And he wasts all his Nights in his constant Delights, / Of Revelling, Drinking and Whoring" (Wedgwood 152). Although Dryden describes Charles's behavior as "natural," Bunyan once again demonstrates Charles's vice.

Forth, Diabolus is portrayed as deadly. Diabolus' use of Bloodmen in his second attempted conquest of Mansoul reveals his lethal intentions for the town: "The *Bloodmen* are a people that have their name derived from the *malignity* of their nature, and from the fury that is

in them to execute it upon the Town of *Mansoul*” (228). Their captains include those with a reputation for shedding blood: Cain, Nimrod, Saul, Judas, and Pope (229). In *Paul’s Departure and Crown* (ca. 1679-80),⁹⁴ Bunyan describes the blood spilled by Dissenters to retain their beliefs: “[T]he blood of the saints, that they lose for his name, is a sweet savour to God...The sufferings of the saints are of a redeeming virtue; for, by their patient enduring and losing their blood for the word, they recover the truths of God that have been buried in Antichristian rubbish, from that soil and slur that thereby hath for a long time cleaved unto them” (n. pag.). Bunyan describes the sufferings that he both witnessed and feared at the prospect of a Catholic resurgence. Walker notes, “*The Holy War* can be—and has been—read as a strident defense of Bunyan’s faith in an age of religious and political persecution. Bunyan’s narrative responds to attacks on his religion with the language of violent conflict and the necessity of militant and military reaction when the true faith is under siege” (115). Although Dryden describes Charles as having the virtues of being “gentle,” “inclined to mercy,” and “harmless,” Bunyan describes him as having deadly vice.

Such a juxtaposition of *The Holy War* and *Absalom and Achitophel* provides the needed context for careful analysis of Bunyan’s allegory. Through *The Holy War*, Bunyan raises a voice of opposition not only to the perceived Royalist abuses in the time surrounding the Succession Crisis but also a voice of opposition to Royalist sympathizers (among whom Dryden was one). Without evaluating these two works together, Bunyan’s full purpose in writing *The Holy War* lacks clarity, and the Royalist support of Charles’ reign in Dryden’s *Absalom* appears unanswered in the broader context of seventeenth-century English literature. However, an examination of the two works adds significance to Bunyan’s role as social critic and to *The Holy War* as a literary work of the Restoration.

⁹⁴ This work remained unpublished until after Bunyan’s death.

Conclusion

Examining each of the various layers of allegory in *The Holy War* is helpful in understanding a fuller context of Bunyan's intention in writing the work and a more complete sense of his achieved artistry. Bunyan's opposing position to Dryden over the virtue or vice in King Charles brought to a climax Bunyan's use of allegory for social criticism. Bunyan lived to see the death of the tyrant King Charles II, another crisis created by the enthronement of Catholic James, and the "Glorious Revolution" of William and Mary. Yet during the times of greatest persecution, Bunyan had communicated—cautiously through artistry—a challenge to his fellow Dissenters to endure the antagonism of an unsympathetic English government. His willingness to suffer hardship for his faith during twelve years in prison and consequent resoluteness in proclaiming the gospel afterwards was an example of how a believer could suffer for Christ and not be shaken by Satan's attacks. His voice had been one of assurance in tumultuous seventeenth-century England that vice would be overcome by virtue. Through this work, we are better able to understand the period of the Succession Crisis and its players.

Bunyan's attention in *The Holy War* to the nature of the soul's spiritual wrestling likewise both encouraged and challenged believers. Bunyan's own turbulent spiritual experience allowed him to see humanity's universal need of personal salvation and of realization that temptation is inescapable. His attention to spiritual concerns, as always, was his priority. Bunyan's audience no doubt took comfort in knowing both that struggle in one's spiritual life is normal and that Christ, although severe in punishing wrong, is willing to redeem and forgive the wrongdoer. This work furnishes us not only with a warning but also an encouragement for our own spiritual lives. Vice is not stagnant in an individual's life, and a Christian may be overcome by its power by his or her own sin. However, redemption and forgiveness are possible as well.

The text's allegorical treatment of the nature of virtue and vice demonstrates not only Bunyan's familiarity with English literary history but also with nature. Bunyan used the Medieval binary found in so many works from the Middle Ages to the English Restoration and adapted it for his contemporary readers to show the mutual hostility of virtue and vice. An understanding of the nature of the importance of virtue and vice in the early modern era of the 1600s exemplifies the power the themes of the old morality plays still held in the imaginations of the English people and how those themes helped to shape the worldview of *The Holy War*.

The Holy War was the last allegory Bunyan produced, yet it uniquely demonstrates Bunyan's skill as he incorporates these various layers of significance into the allegorical narrative of *The Holy War*, a rare achievement. Although some have derided the "tinker of Bedford" as simplistic, his ability to tell an engaging story while including a description of the individual soul and a critique of Restoration England is truly remarkable. Bunyan had certainly sharpened his allegorical ability in the years preceding publication of *The Holy War* with the publication of *Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*. Forrest and Sharrock state, "*The Holy War* shows how far Bunyan had advanced, not in genius or total imaginative achievement, but in the construction of a bold, firm, and ambitious narrative" (xviii).

Unfortunately, his artistic integration of criticism into the narrative has been greatly underrated. Although most critics regard *The Holy War* as inferior to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Forrest and Sharrock note, "*The Holy War* is an ambitious work with a power and sweep in its continuous narrative that certainly entitles it to be called an epic. *The Pilgrim's Progress*, in terms of literary construction, seems episodic in comparison, sustained only by the metaphor of the journey and the road" (xxxiv). Gulliver, in his introduction to the works of Bunyan, states, "[Bunyan's] language possess some of the highest qualities known to rhetoric; his thought, even

in his most abstract treatises, where it is cumbered with the system of minute subdivision then in vogue, is precise, discriminating, comprehensive, and at times profound” (3).

Bunyan very naturally works the different strands of allegory into the narrative in seamless fashion. In fact, the work is distinct in this regard from *The Pilgrim's Progress*. John Brown argues that in its subtlety of psychological distinctions *The Holy War* is the superior of the two texts (310). Bunyan's decision to make *The Holy War* more complex than his previous works is apparently intentional. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is said to have been effortless, a matter of inspiration. *The Holy War*, however, shows greater effort. Forrest and Sharrock state, “Throughout there is the play of an ever alert intellectual skill in building analogies, as well as Bunyan's shrewdness of observation” (xxxvii). Although often overlooked in anthologies and given little of the recognition of *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Holy War* is Bunyan's seeming attempt at epic prose.

This work usually does not rank among the top literary works in history, or even as devotional literature. However, James Anthony Foude states that *The Holy War* could easily have “entitled Bunyan to a place among the masters of English literature” (82). Such praise for a work that many people do not even realize Bunyan wrote is puzzling. Although many modern readers consider his first allegory about Christian's journey to the Celestial City a classic, they often are not aware even of *The Holy War's* existence, much less its high quality. In response, publishers such as Zondervan, Baker Books Publishing, and Eerdmans Publishing make *The Pilgrim's Progress* available but not *The Holy War*. Perhaps, like many epic works of high-literary value, *The Holy War's* quality has not translated into popularity. Perhaps, like many political satires, the underlying social critique fell flat once the historical events had passed.

Nevertheless, Bunyan's work deserves recognition as a literary work of extraordinary achievement.

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