CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO PURITANISM

ed. John Coffey and Paul Lim

Puritanism and Literature

by

N. H. Keeble

1.   THE PURITAN PRESS

Puritanism was an intrinsically bookish movement.   Just as the spread of Protestantism through Europe in the early sixteenth century was greatly facilitated by, if not dependent upon, the resources of the printing press, so the penetration by Puritanism of the nation's religious, political and cultural life was achieved primarily through the printed word.   Religious works comprised at least half the 100,000 or so titles that represent the total output of the press from the accession of Elizabeth in 1558 to the end of the seventeenth century.[1]   Of these, a very significant proportion – and during periods in the seventeenth century a majority – were Puritan. They included the century's bestsellers which sold in unprecedented numbers: Arthur Dent's fictionalised dialogue *The Plaine Mans Path-way to Heaven* (1601), went through over thirty editions by 1682; John Ball's *Short Catechisme* (1615?) nearly sixty editions by 1689; Richard Baxter's 600-page treatise on preparing for *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (1650) reached its fourteenth edition by 1688 and his evangelistic *A Call to the Unconverted* (1658), its twenty-eighth edition by 1696; the first part of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) reached its twenty-second edition by the end of the century.[2]

Contemporaries recognised the extraordinary asset that had been, as they firmly believed, providentially placed in their hands. 'Printing', wrote Richard Baxter, 'hath been a blessed means of increasing knowledge and religion' for 'the Press hath a louder voice' than that of any single person: 'the Writings of Divines are nothing else but a preaching the Gospel to the eye, as the *voice* preacheth it to the ear'. In his view, the printed word had a number of advantages over oral preaching: readers, unlike auditors, need not rely on their memories; books, unlike a minister's sermon, can be chosen to address an individual's particular need and circumstance; they are more readily accessible than good preachers; and books can be studied at the reader's own pace. Their value was especially evident during the period of persecution that followed 1660 when publication represented the one way in which Puritan ministers, separated from their congregations as nonconformists, could continue their ministries: '*Preachers* may be silenced or banished, when *Books* may be at hand'.[3] Like *The Pilgrim's Progress* (and many of his now less well-known publications) Bunyan's spiritual autobiography *Grace Abounding* (1666) was a prison

book, written by an author who, unable in person to 'perform that duty that from God doth lie upon me, to you-ward' through print addresses his congregation from his prison. His precedent lay in the epistles St. Paul had written from captivity in Rome, in Bunyan's time thought to include the epistle (I Timothy) which provided him with his title (1:15).[4] From the prisons of the Interregnum as well as of the Restoration, Quakers smuggled out for printing a stream of admonitions, epistles, jeremiads, exhortations and prophecies. And, in addition to works written explicitly for a public readership, we must add the extraordinary mass of private letters, commonplace books, conversion narratives and diaries, many subsequently printed to become classics of autobiographical writing: Lady Brilliana Harley's *Letters* (1854); George Fox's *Journal* (1696), Richard Baxter's *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), Lucy Hutchinson's *Memoirs* of the life of her regicide husband John (1806), Oliver Heywood's *Diaries* (1882-5), Edmund Ludlow's *Memoirs* (1698) and, of course, *Grace Abounding*.   In short, Puritans had what one historian has described as an 'obsession with the written word'.[5]

2.   PURITAN READERS AND WRITERS

Producing books would not, of course, have had much effect were there not persons capable of reading them.   In a population of some 3 million in 1500 and 5.5 million in 1700, full literacy (that is, the ability both to read and to write) was possessed by perhaps 15% of the population at the start of this period, and no more than 30% at its close.[6] Puritanism saw it as one of its tasks to increase this proportion so that believers might study the Bible and benefit from the wealth of religious works available: 'By all means let children be taught to read', parents were exhorted, 'if you are never so poor, and whatever shift you make'.[7]

As that remark implies, Puritan writers were especially anxious to reach the socially disadvantaged and marginalized who had never before been supposed capable of literary engagement.   Habitually Puritan authors addressed their texts to the 'vulgar', that is, the mass of the common people.   Baxter would rather that his printed sermons 'might be numbred with those Bookes that are carried up and downe the Country from doore to doore in Pedlers Packs' than with those that 'are set up in the Libraries of learned Divines'.   To reach such readers, breviates and chapbook versions of larger texts were frequently available, hawked for a few pennies – as of

The Pilgrim's Progress in 1684.[8] Ministers frequently gave away copies of their own books, and might arrange with their publishers to forgo profit in order to have them sold as cheaply as possible. Reading aloud to groups, lending, borrowing and bequeathing books, establishing public libraries, these and other expedients were also much encouraged among the godly, facilitating the dissemination of texts among , and access to them by, the impoverished. Bunyan's first wife came from a poor family, but Puritan texts were not beyond its reach: she brought with her as dowry two of the century's bestsellers: Lewis Bayley's P*ractise of Pietie* (1612) and Dent's *Plaine Mans Path-way* (GA, §15).

Puritanism's drive for readers was a key step in moving the patronage of literature away from privileged elites (notably, the court) to a popular readership, a necessary prerequisite for the development of the novel in the next century. By so doing Puritanism revalued not only the book but the act of reading. Puritan readers, whatever their socio-economic background, were not to be unduly impressed by the fact of a book's publication, nor by the reputation of its author.   They were, as Bunyan's pastor John Gifford taught, to take 'not up any truth upon rust, as from this or that or another man or men, but to cry mightily to God, that he would convince us of the reality thereof' (*GA*, §117). In the oft-quoted words of I Thessalonians 5:21, the godly were themselves to 'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good', to assess, weigh and analyse evidence before accepting an author's contentions.   Faith, that is to say, carried the obligation to be a critical and self-aware reader.[9]

If the Puritan press reached out to new categories and classes of reader, so, too, it was open to new kinds of writer.   An increasing number of non-university men and, for effectively the first time, many women were inspired to write, and to publish, by their Puritan experience. From its inception in the early 1650s Quakerism in particular was extraordinarily adept at making repeated use of the press to disseminate its message, publishing broadsides, tracts, prophecies, personal testimonies, as well as polemical and controversial pieces, by a wide range of male and female authors. Margaret Fox challenged head-on patriarchal prejudice in her argument in *Women Speaking Justified* (1666) that women are as entitled as men to a public voice (and so, implicitly, to publish).[10]   If in the 1640s and 50s there was a democritisation of the press, a 'downwards dissemination of print', [11] it was in very large part achieved

through the confidence to access, and to participate, in literary culture that Puritanism inspired in those hitherto excluded from it.

3. PURITANS AND CENSORSHIP

All this activity represented as significant a challenge to governing elites as did the political and military threat posed by Puritanism. Those elites - even the Puritan regimes of the Interregnum – hence sought to restrain and control what was published. There was nothing novel about this. From its inception printing had had to contend with government attempts to control the output of the press. The printing trade and pre-publication censorship developed together. Essentially, every legally published title required prior approval (that is, a licence to publish) from an appointed censor (generally an episcopalian cleric), and that approval was of course not forthcoming for texts that challenged either political or ecclesiastical authority. Very substantial fines and terms of imprisonment, and even banishment, were risked by printers who produced, booksellers who disseminated and authors who wrote unlicensed texts. [12] Amongst the many freedoms championed by Puritanism was hence freedom of the press, most famously in Milton's 1644 tract *Areopagitica ….for the Liberty of Unlicenc'd Printing*.

Puritan authors adopted a number of expedients to circumvent the restraining authority of the censor. Heterodox works, such as Milton's own theological treatise *De Doctrina Christiana*, and satirical works, such as Andrew Marvell's Restoration verse satires, might circulate in manuscript and not be put into print. In printed works, self-censorship might operate, but so too did a variety of rhetorical and allusive strategies that allowed oblique and implicit expression of meanings that could be denied if need be. In fiction and allegory the relationship between imagined and contemporary worlds might be particularly suggestive: how far does the depiction of Satan on his 'throne of royal state' in *Paradise Lost* (*PL*, 2:1) represent evil, how far corrupt monarchy, and how far specifically Charles I (or, indeed, Cromwell)? Is it worldliness in general, or Restoration London in particular, that is represented in Vanity Fair, and, if the latter, does Bunyan glance at Charles II in its lord, Beelzebub?[13]

Often, rather than work through allusion and implication, authors resorted to anonymous and unlicensed publication. This was commonest among more radical Puritans, such as the Quakers, less frequent among Independents and Presbyterians with their greater respect for legality. The Quaker leader George Fox was habitually anonymous in his (literally) hundreds of tracts. Of Bunyan's sixty publications, only *The Pilgrim's Progress* appears to have been properly licensed. Indeed, the cat-and-mouse game with the censors and the authorities could become part of the rhetorical strategy of the texts themselves: in his printed but unlicensed prose satires *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* (1672) and *Mr. Smirke* (1676), Marvell ridicules the impotency of the censors and the absurdities of the system they attempt to operate. The imprint of the former mockingly called attention to its illegal status: 'Printed for the Assigns of *John Calvin* and *Theodore Beza'*.[14]

Puritan publishing was hence often a joint, even communal, enterprise, requiring from printers, booksellers and other tradesmen a joint commitment with the author to challenge and outwit the agents of the state. The anonymous manifesto that may be taken to mark the inception of Puritanism as a publishing and literary tradition – *An Admonition to Parliament* (1572) - was printed on a clandestine press. The mockingly scurrilous, subversively parodic and colloquially inventive anti-episcopal tracts by 'Martin Marprelate' (1588-89) were printed surreptitiously by a committed Puritan printer, Robert Waldegrave on a portable press. The Leveller tracts of John Lilburne and Richard Overton were among a stream of texts produced in the Netherlands and smuggled into England in the 1640s. During the Restoration, a network of committed radical printers operated in London in defiance of the authorities. Husband and wife partnerships such as those of Giles and Elizabeth Calvert, Thomas and Anne Brewster, John and Joan Darby, each at different times imprisoned for their activities, demonstrate that this was something far more than a business activity.[15]

## 4.	'THE PURITAN SELF

Though extraordinarily rich and diverse, the literature produced by these means exhibits a distinctively Puritan set of recurrent emphases and imaginative constructions. First among them is a preoccupation with the personal. An uncompromising individualism champions conscience above worldly authorities and

always prefers inwardness and experiential immediacy to formalism and convention. It was for 'crowding free consciences and Christian liberties into canons and precepts of men' that Milton condemned the 'prelaticall tradition' in *Areopagitic*a (1644), and for 'the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties' that he argued passionately in that tract.[16] Throughout his writings there runs an opposition between the hollowness of habitual compliance with external forms and the integrity of inner commitment. The hypocrisy which he stigmatised in such phrases as 'a grosse conforming stupidity', 'the iron yoke of outward conformity', 'the ghost of a linnen decency', 'the gripe of custom' (*CPW*, 2:563-4), was conceived as the single most serious obstacle to the spiritual life, and sincerity as its highest virtue. This leads to Milton's paradoxical but understandable assertion that a person 'may be a heretick in the truth; ... if he beleeves things only because his Pastor sayes so ... though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresie' (*CPW,* 2:543). This Milton saw exemplified in Roman Catholicism: for him, Popery is 'the only or greatest Heresie' because its stress on obedience to ecclesiastical authority reduces faith to subservience, requiring its adherents to believe only 'as the church believes' (*CPW,* 8:420-1). Milton's God, the 'Spirit, that dost prefer/ Before all temples the upright heart and pure'(*PL*, 1:17-18), is more concerned with personal integrity than with compliant conformity to priestly dictates.

This privileging of inner commitment explains the otherwise puzzling insistence of Puritan writers upon their lack of qualification as writers. Bunyan's determination to convey in his writing, as in his preaching, 'what I felt, what I smartingly did feel' led him to present himself as an ill-educated and culturally impoverished writer solely dependent upon the Bible and divine illumination: he'never endeavoured to, nor durst make use of other men's lines' for he 'found by experience, that what was taught me by the Word and Spirit of Christ, could be spoken, maintained, and stood to, by the soundest and best established Conscience' (*GA,* §§276, 285). Unlike 'carnal Priests' who 'tickle the ears of their hearer with vain Philosophy', he 'never went to School to *Aristotle* or *Plato*' and 'has not writ at a venture, nor borrowed my Doctrine from Libraries. I depend upon the sayings of no man'; instead, he offers the reader 'a parcel of plain, yet sound, true and home sayings' drawn from 'the Scriptures of Truth, among the true sayings of God'.[17] Bunyan was hardly as poorly read as he pretends: the purpose of this insistence on his

lack of resources is to create a persona trustworthy precisely because it speaks with the authority only of divinely-guided personal experience.   That is why, though vastly learned, Milton nevertheless claims, like Bunyan, to have formulated the arguments of his *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* with 'no light, or leading receav'd from any man' but with 'only the infallible grounds of Scripture to be my guide' (*CPW,* 2:433). In *Paradise Regained*, when Satan proposes mastery of Gentile learning as the way for the Messiah to fulfil his mission, the Son disdains all those resources of Greek and Roman culture that had shaped the Renaissance (and, indeed, Milton himself): 'he who receives/ Light from above, from the fountain of light,/ No other doctrine needs' (4:288-90).

This appeal to experiential (or, as the seventeenth-century term was, *experimental*) Christianity was encouraged both by the practice in gathered churches of requiring from prospective members accounts of their conversion experiences,[18] and by the universally recognised duty of self-scrutiny to analyse spiritual progress.[19] These practices lay behind the development of spiritual autobiography as a distinct genre of Puritan writing,[20] a genre that contributed to the development not only of autobiography but also of the novel: it was as the confessional autobiographies familiar to his readers that early in the eighteenth century Daniel Defoe presented his fictions *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*.[21]

5.   THE PURITAN STYLE

As Bunyan's claim to offer 'plain … home sayings' suggests, Puritanism associated individual integrity and authenticity with simplicity and plainness, in worship, in social manners and in aesthetics. The Quaker habit of using the familiar *thee* and *thou* to all, regardless of rank, epitomises this preference for plain dealing over the dictates of social and cultural etiquette.   In *Paradise Lost*, Adam walks out to meet Raphael 'without more train/ Accompanied than with his own complete/ Perfections, in himself was all his state'. He has no need of 'the tedious pomp that waits/ On princes, when their rich retinue long/ Of horses led, and grooms besmeared with gold/ Dazzles the crowd and sets them all agape' (5:351-7).   The ostentatious display beloved of the Stuarts has become contamination in that *besmeared*.   Similarly, plainness is Puritanism's preferred stylistic option.   'In matters of religion he is learnedest who is planest' says even Milton, and he reiterates the Puritan commonplace that 'in main

matters of belief and salvation' the Bible is 'plane and easie to the poorest' (*CPW*, 7:271-2, 302).   Though in *Paradise Lost* generic decorum required of Milton the grandeur of epic style, plainness is nevertheless affirmed as virtue's style: it is the rhetorical dexterity taught by Classical rhetoricians that declares Satan's duplicity; Adam and Eve dress up neither themselves nor their words.[22]

6.   THE PURITAN LIFE

Such plain dealing inevitably affronted political and ecclesiastical hierarchies: there is hardly a Puritan writer of note who was not at some time arrested, imprisoned, mutilated, fined, bound over, pursued or persecuted. Though not in prison, Milton was 'fallen on evil days … In darkness, and with dangers compassed round,/ And solitude' (*PL*, 7:26-8) when he wrote his three great Restoration poems.   No wonder that in Puritan writing the Christian demeanour is almost by definition adversarial and the Christian condition oppressed. In book 12 of *Paradise Lost*, Michael foretells that the Apostles will be succeeded by 'grievous wolves' who will 'force the spirit of grace it self, and bind/ His consort liberty' , with the result that 'heavy persecution' will fall on 'all who in the worship persevere/ Of spirit and truth' (XII.508-35).   'You must', Evangelist warns Faithful and Christian, 'through many tribulations enter into the Kingdom of Heaven' (*PP*, p. 87).   In an inescapable reference to the plight of nonconformists in the 1660s, the Chorus in *Samson Agonistes* is dismayed at the suffering of God's chosen, dragged before 'unjust tribunals, under change of times,/ And condemnation of the ungrateful multitude' (ll. 695-6). Samson's triumph shows the Chorus's disillusion to be mistaken: troubles, far from causing dismay, should be welcomed for, in Milton's words, 'that which purifies us is triall' (*CPW*, 2:515). From the Lady in *Comus*, through Satan, Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost* and the Son in *Paradise Regained* to Samson's despair, all Milton's great poems are focused upon the psychology of temptation and the challenge of remaining faithful in adversity.   In this sense, Milton has only one subject, and it is a characteristically Puritan choice.

This constancy is most tellingly represented in the unwavering commitment of Abdiel, the one angel in *Paradise Lost* to resist Satan's blandishments:

Among the faithless, faithful only he;
Among innumerable false, unmoved,

Unshaken, unseduc'd, unterrified,

His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;

Nor number, nor example with him wrought

To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind

Though single (5:896-903).

Such resolution is not passivity. On the contrary, Puritanism promoted a vigorously active conception of the Christian life which was characteristically rendered in dynamic images of action and endeavour. Moral responsibilities and spiritual demands are presented in terms of struggle and effort: 'our faith and knowledge thrives by exercise, as well as our limbs and complexion' (*CPW,* 2:543). The Puritan mind does not declare itself in a particular sectarianism or dogmatism: Christian understanding is a continuing process of education and spiritual enlightenment rather than a goal ever finally achieved. 'Truth', wrote Milton in *Areopagitica,* referring to Psalm 85:11, 'is compar'd in Scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetuall progression, they sick'n into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition' (*CPW,* 2:543). What animates the tract is not the revelation of truth but the excitement of its pursuit through interrogation and debate: 'to be still searching what we know not, by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it ... is the golden rule in *Theology*' (*CPW,* 2:551).

In conceiving and representing this spiritual effort, the Puritan imagination was especially responsive to the narratives of the many historical battles and migrations through which God guides his chosen people Israel in the Old Testament and to the Bible's many metaphorical deployments of warfare and of wayfaring, culminating in the great dominical assertion of John 14:6 ('I am the way') and in the Pauline imagery of the race for salvation (e.g. I. Cor. 9:24) and of the armour of faith (e.g. Eph. 6:11-13). Its preferred images and narrative patterns derive from journeying and combat, itinerancy and warfare – witness, for example, Benjamin Keach's *War with the Devil* (1673) and *Travels of True Godliness* (1683), and, of course, Bunyan's *The Holy War* (1684) and *The Pilgrim's Progress.*

7.   THE PURITAN JOURNEY

The key to Puritan representations of the Christian life as a journey lies in chapter 11 of the Epistle to the Hebrews.   Its image of the faithful as nomadic 'strangers and pilgrims on the earth' who 'seek a country', 'that is, an heavenly' (11: 13-16) structures *The Pilgrim's Progress.*[23]   Puritans thought of themselves as 'Outlandish-men' like Christian and Faithful at Vanity Fair, that is, foreigners in transit (*PP*, p. 90). They were *Children of Light Walking in Darkness* (Thomas Goodwin (1636)) on a perambulation, a progress, a journey, even, in Edward Taylor's image of the saints 'Encoacht for Heaven', a stage-coach journey.[24]

The topography of the Puritan journey was established by Biblical narratives of desert journeys. Given their Eurocentric assumptions, we can understand that Puritan emigrants to America, '*satisfy'd*, they had as plain a command of Heaven to attempt a Removal, as ever their Father *Abraham* had for his leaving the *Caldean* Territories',[25] supposed that, like him (Genesis 12:1-10, 14:4, 10), they were engaged on what Samuel Darnforth called an *Errand into the Wilderness* (1670). When, however, in her untitled poem 'As weary pilgrim', the New England poet Anne Bradstreet creates a wilderness as the context of her mortal life, beset by 'dangers', 'travails', 'burning sun', 'briars and thorns', 'hungry wolves', 'erring paths' and 'parching thirst', it is not Massachusetts she is describing.[26]   Bunyan, after all, found precisely the same topography in Bedfordshire, England: the narrator of *The Pilgrim's Progress* walks 'through the wilderness of this world' (*PP*, p. 9) and it was from the prison where 'I stick between the Teeth of the Lions in the Wilderness' that Bunyan addressed the reader of *Grace Abounding* (*GA*, p. 1). Such a portrayal of England as a desert prowled by wild beasts, like depictions of New England as a waste land, is intertextual rather than referential, recalling a far distant land and time in order to trace in the authors and readers' experience the patterns of significance which Hebrews taught them to read in Old Testament narratives. A Puritan reader would have recognised just this signification in the wilderness setting of the Son's encounter with Satan in *Paradise Regained*.[27]   The work in which the Presbyterian nonconformist Thomas Gouge, instructed London apprentices that we are to live 'as a citizen of heaven, and a pilgrim on the earth' is entitled *The Young Man's Guide through the Wilderness of this World to the Heavenly Canaan* (1670).

The journey is not an easy one. Unlike Bunyan's complacently (and tragically) confident Ignorance, the true pilgrim is spiritually alert and morally engaged at all times: '*Departing from iniquity*', wrote Bunyan, 'is not a work of an hour, or a day, or a week, or a month, or a year: *But it's a work will last thee thy life time*' (*MW*, 9:276). This point was often made by associating with the figures of the journey and the pilgrimage the Pauline image of the race for the prize or crown of salvation (I Cor. 9:24; Gal. 5:7; Phil. 2:16; Heb. 12:1).   It was with this image that Milton famously scorned the notion of religious retreat from the world: he could not praise 'a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd and unbreath'd, that slinks ... out of the race, where that immortall garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat' (*CPW*, 2:515).

## 8.	THE PURITAN HERO

Though the journey is the controlling metaphor of *The Pilgrim's Progress* Bunyan's allegory draws also upon another store of imagery: combat.   Its climactic moments and exemplary figures are martial: Christian in his Pauline armour of faith confronting Apollyon; Valiant-for-Truth fighting so vigorously with his '*right* Jerusalem *blade*' that his sword cleaves to his hand with blood; Greatheart the giant slayer (PP, pp. 56-60, 290-1, 295).   The Puritan hero, however, bore no resemblance to the questing knight-errant of medieval chivalry. In the opening to book 9 of *Paradise Lost*, Milton mocks the 'long and tedious havoc' of Medieval and Renaissance chivalric romance, and, asserting that he is 'Not sedulous by nature to indite/ Wars, hitherto the only argument/ Heroic deemed', explicitly rejects traditional epic heroic values. In their place, he offers as 'more heroic' than traditional epic subjects 'the better fortitude/ Of patience and heroic martyrdom' (9:14, 26-41).   Michael's denigration of the heroic code as the worship of brute force, and of traditional heroes as 'Destroyers rightlier called and plagues of men' (11:689-97), is of a piece with this rejection, as is the attribution of the heroic 'virtues' to Satan. There is a strongly pacifist vein in Milton's later writing, especially in the Son's refusal in *Paradise Regained*, of the 'ostentation vain of fleshly arm,/ And fragile arms' as means to secure his kingdom (3:387-8), as there is generally in later seventeenth-century Puritan writing, which, disillusioned by the collapse of the New Model Army's achievements into military

dictatorship, repudiate the use of 'carnal weapons' and insisted, in the words of John 18:36, that Christ's kingdom is 'not of this world'.

This repudiation of an ideal that had inspired Europe for two millennia not only declined to admire aggression: it also substituted for an elitist model an ideal attainable by every reader in the context of their daily lives. The 'better fortitude' that *Paradise Lost* defines in terms of self-denial rather than self-assertion, of trust rather than aggression (12:561-87), is not restricted to a privileged armigerous class. On the contrary, it is wholly consistent with worldly insignificance and powerlessness. Puritanism challenged every person to become a Christian hero in the context of their everyday domestic and commercial dealings. After the defeat of the political and ecclesiastical ambitions of Presbyterian Puritanism during Elizabeth's reign, Puritan aspirations were redirected into works of homiletic and practical divinity. This programme of evangelical publishing ensured that when political circumstances again favoured Puritanism in the 1640s, there was a body of committed support ready. This prolific output of sermons and expository treatises explaining the process of conversion and identifying the characteristics and duties of the saint was the work of men whom William Haller long ago styled the 'spiritual brotherhood' of preachers, mostly graduates of the University of Cambridge, where their undergraduate careers overlapped, who went on to minister in London, Essex and East Anglia.[28]

Their treatises have no concept of the 'spiritual' or 'religious' life separate from everyday business, social and family dealings. The context for the life of faith is not some romance otherworld but the actual world of the reader's (and author's) experience. The body of theological writing by Puritan ministers is homiletic, moral and casuistical, rather than systematic or metaphysical, concerned with advising on the actual challenges faced by believers. The fate of over-confident Ignorance trusting to his good intentions and works in *The Pilgrim's Progress* should not blind us to Christian's assertion in discrediting Talkative that 'The Soul of Religion is the practick part' (*PP*, p. 79). 'It was never the will of God that bare *speculation* should be the end of his *Revelation* or of *our belief*. Divinity is an *Affective practical* Science' asserted Baxter.[29] The Puritan classics are exercises in what we would now call psychological analysis and counselling, remarkable for their clear-sighted address

to fallible human nature and the conditions of human life.   It is to this that *The Pilgrim's Progress* owes the circumstantial accuracy of its realism.

The preoccupations of Milton's great poems chime exactly with this Puritan bias.   For all the grandeur and universal scale of *Paradise Lost*, at its centre lies a peculiarly humdrum and domestic Eden where Adam and Eve eat, drink, do a little gardening and make love.   This is not otherworldly perfection but the perfection of the world of the reader's everyday experience.   Ordinariness is essential to Milton's conception of Eden.   Marriage is a condition of this ordinariness.   Milton's hero, Adam, is, like Bunyan's Christian, a married man.   In contrast to the conventions of Medieval fiction, marriage, and love within marriage, for the first time become standard literary expectations in Puritan writing, in for example the poetry of Spenser and Anne Bradstreet, as well as in Milton.   Still more striking, and in contrast to the traditional masculinist notion of heroism, the Puritan ideal is not gender specific.   It is true that misogyny is no less in evidence within Puritanism than within other cultural traditions, but what is remarkable is the strength of the contrary tendency.   *Paradise Lost* presents the creation of Eve not as an afterthought but as the completion and perfection of a paradise in which, without her, Adam is discontent: 'In solitude/ What happiness ….?' (8:364-5).   This had been the view of the early Puritans' preferred Bible, the Geneva translation of 1560, which glossed Genesis 2:22 with the comment 'mankind was perfect when the woman was created, that before like an imperfect building'.   Puritan writings have no patience with Roman Catholic notions of asceticism and abstinence.   'Who bids abstain/ But our destroyer, foe to God and man?' asks the narrator in *Paradise Lost* (4:748-9) and in just this vein Lucy Hutchinson is wonderfully scornful of the 'superstitious prince' Edward the Confessor 'who was sainted for his ungodly chastity'.[30]   Accepting the legitimacy of human sexuality, Puritan writing locates human happiness in loving relations between men and women, the 'sum of earthly bliss' (8:522).   This is the cultural context for Milton's moving wedding hymn for Adam and Eve (4:750-73), and for the poem's celebration of the experience of Adam and Eve 'Imparadised in one another's arms' as 'The happier Eden' (4:506-7).

So it is that, unexpectedly but not absurdly, *Paradise Lost* can be claimed as our first novel: it concerns a marriage which hits a sticky patch but pulls through in

the end.   Just this description would fit that other claimant to the title: *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The final image of the poem is of a man and a wife restored to each other. Milton's epic culminates not in the judgemental image of the 'brandished sword' but in the scene of Adam and Eve walking together, 'hand in hand', to encounter the world beyond Eden, 'and Providence their guide' (12:633, 648).

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NOTES

[1] John Barnard, D. F. McKenzie and Maureen Bell, *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: vol. IV: 1557-1695* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), chapters 1, 2 and 26 (especially pp. 557-67), and appendix 1; also Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 13-14 and appendix 1.

[2] These figures derive from Donald Wing, *Short-Title Catalogue of Books … 1641-1700*, 2nd edn. rev. and enlarged, 3 vols. (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1988-98), and from Green, *Print and Protestantism*, appendix 1, which explains (pp. 591-2) why they cannot be exact.

[3] Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory* (1673), 1:60, 2:580; *True Christianity* (1655), fol. A4^{v}. See on this N. H. Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987), pp. 78-92.

[4] John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, ed. Roger Sharrock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 1 (hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *GA*).

[5] John Spurr, *English Puritanism, 1603-1689* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 151.

[6] Green, *Print and Protestantism*, p. 26; David Cressy, *Literacy and the*

Social Order ... in Tudor and Stuart England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), esp. pp. 72-5.

7   Baxter, *Christian Directory*, 2:580.

8   Baxter, *True Christianity*, p. 120. See Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories* (London: Methuen, 1981); Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp. 445-502.

9   See further Sharon Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader*(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

10   Barnard, McKenzie & Bell, *Book in Britain, 1557-1695*, pp. 70-5; H. Barbour and A. Roberts (ed.), *Early Quaker Writings, 1650-1700*, new edn. (Wallingford: Pendle Hill, 2004).

11   Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1680* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 23-4.

12   On this see: Frederick Siebert, *Freedom of the Press in England, 1476-1776* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1952); Christopher Hill, 'Censorship and English Literature', in his *Writing and Revolution in 17ᵗʰ Century England* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1985), pp. 32-71; Keeble, *Literary Culture*, pp. 91-126. Barnard, McKenzie & Bell, *Book in Britain, 15567-1695*, pp, 560-7, is, however, deeply sceptical that censorship in fact inhibited the publishing industry.

13   John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, ed. Roger Sharrock (Oxford:

Clarendon Press, 1960), pp. 89-97 (hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *PP*). For readings of Milton and Bunyan in this way see Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (1977; rpt. London: Faber, 1979, pp. 404-10,471-2, and *A Turbulent, Seditious and Factious People: John Bunyan and His Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 215-21, 243-50.

14   Annabel Patterson *et al*. (ed.), *The Prose Works of Andrew Marvell*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 1:4-6, 2:51-2, 56.

15   Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967), pp. 118-21, 391-6; Pauline Gregg, *Freeborn John: a Biography of John Lilburn* (1961; rpt. London: Dent, 1986), esp. chapters 9, 11 and 12; Leona Rostenberg, *The Minority Press* (New York, 1971); Richard Greaves, *Deliver Us from Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 207-25, and *Enemies Under His Feet* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 167-90.

16   Don Wolfe (gen.ed.), *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 8 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953-82), 2:560 (hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *CPW*).

17   Roger Sharrock (gen. ed.), *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*, 13 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976-94), 1:345; 2:16, 8:51 (hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *MW*).

18   On the practice and its literature see Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Visible Saints: the Congregational Way 1640-1660* (1957; rpt. Oswestry: Quinta Press,

2001), esp. pp. 109-16; Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: the Beginnings of American Expression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[19] On the Puritan habit of diary-keeping and its consequent autobiographical literature, see N. H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 132-43.

[20] Owen Watkins, *The Puritan Experience* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972); D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

[21] See G. A. Starr, *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965).

[22] For discussions of Puritan style see: Keeble, *Baxter*, pp. 48-68; Keeble, *Literary Culture*, pp., 240-62; Lawrence A. Sasek, *The Literary Temper of the English Puritans* (New York: Greenwood, 1961).

[23.] Brainerd P. Stranahan, 'Bunyan and the Epistle to the Hebrews', *Studies in Philology*, 79 (1982), 279-96.

[24.] Edward Taylor, 'The Joy of Church Fellowship rightly attended', l.4, in Donald E. Stanford (ed.), *The Poems of Edward Taylor*, 2nd abridged edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 334.

[25] Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), 1.6 §3.

[26.] Anne Bradstreet, *The Works*, ed. Jeannine Hensley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 283.

27   N. H .Keeble, 'Wilderness Exercises: Adversity, Temptation and Trial in
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28   William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (1938; rpt. New York: Harper &
      Row, 1957), pp. 49-82; Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, pp.
      125-30; Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England*
      (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Jacqueline Eales, 'A
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      Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (ed.), *The Culture of English
      Puritanism, 1560-1700* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 184-209.

29   Baxter, *Directions for Weak Distempered Christians* (1669), pt. I, pp. 97-
      8.

30   Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, ed. N. H
      Keeble (London: Dent, 1995), p. 5.