

1 - THE AUTHOR'S APOLOGY FOR HIS BOOK

WHEN at the first I took my pen in hand
Thus for to write, I did not understand
That I at all should make a little book
In such a mode: nay, I had undertook
To make another, which when almost done,
Before I was aware, I this begun.

And thus it was: 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,
In more than twenty things, which I set down.
This done, I twenty more had in my crown;
And they again began to multiply,
Like sparks that from the coals of fire do fly.
Nay, then, thought I, if that you breed so fast,
I'll put you by yourselves, lest you at last
Should prove ad infinitum, and eat out
The book that I already am about.

Well, so I did: but yet I did not think
To show to all the world my pen and ink
In such a mode; I only thought to make
I knew not what. Nor did I undertake
Thereby to please my neighbour—no, not I!
I did it mine own self to gratify.

Neither did I but vacant seasons spend
In this my scribble; nor did I intend
But to divert myself in doing this,
From worsè thoughts, which make me do amiss.

Thus I set pen to paper with delight,
And quickly had my thoughts in black and white,
For having now my method by the end,
Still as I pulled, it came; and so I penned
It down; until it came at last to be,
For length and breadth, the size which you see.

Well, when I had thus put my ends together,
I showed them others, that I might see whether
They would condemn them, or them justify:
And some said, "Let them live"; some, "Let them
die";

Some said, "John, print it"; others said, "Not so";
Some said, "It might do good"; others said, "No."

Now was I in a strait, and did not see
Which was the best thing to be done by me:
At last I thought, "Since you are thus divided:
I print it will"; and so the case decided:
"For," thought I, "some, I see, would have it done,
Though others in that channel do not run."
To prove then who advised for the best,
Thus I thought fit to put it to the test.

I further thought: if now I did deny
Those that would have it thus to gratify,
I did not know but hinder them I might
Of that which would to them be great delight.

For those which were not for its coming forth,
I said to them, "Offend you I am loth;
Yet, since your brethren pleased with it be,
Forbear to judge, till you do further see.

If that thou will not read, let it alone:
Some love the meat; some love to pick the bone."
Yea, that I might them better moderate,
I did too with them thus expostulate:

"May I not write in such a style as this;
In such a method too; and yet not miss
My end—thy good? Why may it not be done?
Dark clouds bring waters, when the bright bring
none.

Yea, dark or bright, if they their silver drops
Cause to descend, the earth, by yielding crops
Gives praise to both, and carps not at either;
But treasures up the fruit they yield together:
Yea, so mixes both, that in her fruit
None can distinguish this from that: they suit
Her well when hungry: but if she be full,
She spews out both, and makes their blessings
null.

You see the ways the fisherman doth take
To catch the fish: what devices doth he make!
Behold how he engages all his wits;
Also his snares, lines, angles, hooks, and nets:
Yet fish there be that neither hook nor line,

Nor snare, nor net, nor device, can make thine;
They must be groped for, and be tickled too,
Or they will not be caught whate'er you do.

How doth the fowler seek to catch his game
By divers means, all which one cannot name!
His gun, his nets, his lime twigs, light, and bell:
He creeps, he goes, he stands; yea, who can tell
Of all his postures? Yet there's none of these
Will make him master of what fowls he please.
Yea, he must pipe and whistle to catch this;
Yet if he does so, that bird he will miss.

If that a pearl may in a toad's head dwell,
And may be found too in an oyster shell;
If things that promise nothing do contain
What better is than gold; who will disdain
That have an inkling of it, there to look,
That they may find it? Now my little book
(Though void of all those paintings that may make
It with this or the other man to take),
Is not without those things that do excel
What do in brave but empty notions dwell."
"Well, yet I am not fully satisfied
That this your book will stand when soundly
tried."
"Why, what's the matter?" "It is dark." "What
though?"
"But it is feigned." "What of that?" I trow
Some men by feigned words as dark as mine
Make truth to spangle, and its rays to shine."
"But they want solidness." "Speak, man, thy
mind."
"They'd drown the weak; metaphors make us
blind."

Solidity, indeed, becomes the pen
Of him that writes things Divine to men;
But must I needs want solidness because
By metaphors I speak? Were not God's laws,
His gospel laws, in olden time held forth
By types, shadows, and metaphors? Yet loth
Will any sober man be to find fault
With them, lest he be found for to assault
The highest wisdom. No, he rather stoops,
And seeks to find out what by pins and loops,
By calves and sheep, by heifers and by rams,

By birds and herbs, and by the blood of lambs,
God speaks to him; and happy is he
That finds the light and grace that in them be.

Be not too forward, therefore, to conclude
That I want solidness—that I am rude.
All things solid in show, not solid be:
All things in parables despise not we;
Lest things most harmful lightly we receive,
And things that good are of our souls bereave.

My dark and cloudy words they do but hold
The truth, as cabinets enclose the gold.

The prophets used much by metaphors
To set forth truth; yea, whoso considers
Christ, his apostles too, shall plainly see
That truths to this day in such mantles be.

Am I afraid to say that Holy Writ,
Which for its style and phrase puts down all wit,
Is everywhere so full of all these things—
Dark figures; allegories; yet there springs
From that same book, that lustre, and those rays
Of light that turn our darkest nights today's?

Come, let my carper to his life now look,
And find there darker lines than in my book
He finds any; yea, and let him know
That in his best things there are worse lines too.
May we but stand before impartial men,
To his poor one I dare adventure ten,
That they will take my meaning in these lines
Far better than his lies in silver shrines.
Come: Truth, although in swaddling clouts, I find
Informs the judgment; rectifies the mind;
Pleases the understanding; makes the will
Submit: the memory too it doth fill
With what doth our imaginations please;
Likewise it tends our troubles to appease.

Sound words, I know, Timothy is to use,
And old wives' fables he is to refuse;
But yet grave Paul, he nowhere did forbid
The use of parables, in which lay hid
That gold, those pearls, and precious stones that
were

Worth digging for, and that with greatest care.

Let me add one word more: O man of God,
Art thou offended? Dost thou wish I had
Put forth my matter in another dress?
Or that I had in things been more express?
Three things let me propound, then I submit
To those that are my betters, as is fit.

1. I find not that I am denied the use
Of this my method, so I no abuse
Put on the words, things, readers; or be rude
In handling figure or similitude
In application: but, all that I may,
Seek the advance of truth, this or that way.
Denied, did I say? Nay, I have leave—
(Examples too and that from them that have
God better pleased by their words or ways
Than any man that breathes now-a-days)—
Thus to express my mind, thus to declare
Things unto thee, that excellentest are.

2. I find that men (as high as trees) will write
Dialogue wise; yet no man doth them slight
For writing so: 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 sallies upon thee and me
Which way it pleases God: for who knows how
Better than he that taught us first to plough,
To guide our minds and pens for his design
And he makes base things usher in divine.

3. I find that Holy Writ in many places
Hath semblance with this method, where the cases
Do call for one thing to set forth another.
Use it I may then, and yet nothing smother
Truth's golden beams; nay, by this method may
Make it cast forth its rays as light as day.

And now, before I do put up my pen,
I'll show the profit of my book, and then
Commit both thee and it unto that hand
That pulls the strong down, and makes weak ones
stand.

This book it chalks out before thine eyes,

The man that seeks the everlasting prize:
It shows you whence he comes, whither he goes,
What he leaves undone; also what he does:
It also shows you how he runs, and runs
Till he unto the gate of glory comes.

It shows too who set out for life amain,
As if the lasting crown they would attain:
Here also you may see the reason why
They lose their labour, and like fools do die.

This book will make a traveller of thee,
If by its counsel thou wilt ruled be;
It will direct thee to the Holy Land,
If thou wilt its directions understand:
Yea, it will make the slothful active be;
The blind also delightful things to see.

Art thou for something rare and profitable?
Wouldst thou see a truth within a fable?
Art thou forgetful? Wouldst thou remember
From New Year's day to the last of December?
Then read my fancies; they will stick like burrs
And may be, to the helpless, comforters.

This book is writ in such a dialect,
As may the minds of listless men affect:
It seems a novelty, and yet contains
Nothing but sound and honest gospel strains.

Wouldst thou divert thyself from melancholy,
Wouldst thou be pleasant, yet be far from folly?
Wouldst thou read riddles, and their explanation
Or else be drowned in thy contemplation?
Dost thou love picking meat? Or wouldst thou see
A man in the clouds, and hear him speak to thee?
Wouldst thou be in a dream, and yet not sleep?
Or wouldst thou in a moment laugh and weep?
Wouldst thou lose thyself and catch no harm?
And find thyself again without a charm?
Wouldst thou read thyself, and read thou know'st not
what,
And yet know whether thou are blest or not,
By reading the same lines? Oh then, come hither,
And lay my book, thy head, and heart together.

JOHN BUNYAN.