

# The Recorder

*The Official Newsletter of the International John Bunyan Society*

Spring 2012

Volume 18

ISSN 1198-8894



**The International  
John Bunyan Society**

**Nigel Smith, President**

Princeton University, USA

E-mail: [nsmith@princeton.edu](mailto:nsmith@princeton.edu)

**Anne Dunan-Page, Vice-President**

Université de Provence, France

E-mail: [anne.page@univ-provence.fr](mailto:anne.page@univ-provence.fr)

**Michael Davies, Secretary**

University of Liverpool, UK

E-mail: [Michael.Davies.1@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:Michael.Davies.1@liverpool.ac.uk)

**Galen Johnson, North American Treasurer**

Siloam Springs, Arkansas USA

E-mail: [galenkjohnson@gmail.com](mailto:galenkjohnson@gmail.com)

**David Walker, European Treasurer**

Northumbria University, UK

E-mail: [david5.walker@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:david5.walker@northumbria.ac.uk)

**Chris Garrett, Editor, *The Recorder***

Oklahoma City University, USA

E-mail: [drcegarrett@gmail.com](mailto:drcegarrett@gmail.com)

IJBS Website: <http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/~dgay/Bunyan.htm>

## The President's Column

I have just finished a two-year stint as president of the Andrew Marvell Society and am in the middle of a single year as President of the Milton Society of America. These are largely honorary positions inside academe although they usually reflect the incumbent's interests, and they often involve some degree of campaigning, albeit in a mild and necessarily interrupted way. The classroom will see to it that one is never a president of a learned society for more than a few hours at a time. With the Marvell Society it has been a labor of love: I had given up fifteen years of my life to edit and annotate Marvell's poetry and a further seven to complete a biography. I was naturally committed to seeing interest grow in an author who, as far as I and a number of others were concerned, was underrepresented in syllabuses, in dissertation and scholarly work more generally, and in the public eye. It was very easy to commit oneself to furthering the cause of someone whose corner one has been fighting for many years. With Milton, and in a society among the most well established of single author societies anywhere in the world, the issue is one of stewardship: how to draw younger scholars to a community that is growing ever older, and how to exploit the recent possibilities of information technology for a society that began when information technology was closer to Gutenberg than it is to us today.

But Bunyan. Well, I wonder. What is happening out there? Bunyan is not just an academic author and he is read widely across the world because he is an author of faith. Milton used to be read that way, but I think not quite so much any longer. I had heard that the planned Hollywood blockbuster movie of *Paradise Lost* was abandoned because the large religious film-going audience anticipated after the presidential election of 2008 didn't materialize (but who knows; it might still). People read Bunyan in all sorts of walks of life and places, and he doesn't need movies to spread this fame. Amazon.com lists a series of popular reprint editions of Bunyan, and *The Pilgrim's Progress* is by no means first among them. Editorial standards are thrown to the wind as simple cheap texts are made available. And listen to the reader fervor:

Outside of the Bible, this is the best book I have ever read!!! This book is for anyone who wants to follow the Lord with all of their heart. It will give you a clear understanding of how the grace of God not only saves us but enables us to follow Him even to the cross, where we can then die to ourselves so that He can live through us! This book will show how Christ works in our lives and brings us to the full joy of knowing God, not just knowing He exists.

This of a work called 'Acceptable Sacrifice.' Forthcoming is promised a book this year by Brian Najapfour entitled *The Very Heart of Prayer: Reclaiming the Spirituality of John Bunyan*, a book which one of its blurbs hopes will 'bridge the gap between scholarly and pious readings of Bunyan.'

Where though *are* the scholarly readings of Bunyan? Last year in academe there was published nearly nothing in article form on Bunyan. We've had a *Cambridge Companion to Bunyan*, ed. Anne

Dunan-Page (Cambridge, 2010) and an *Oxford Handbook to Bunyan* is on the way, the latter like the former a reliable and useful distilling of the scholarship on Bunyan and Nonconformist literary culture that marked the 1980s and the 1990s. But I have an uneasy sense that Bunyan might be being left behind or even abandoned in mainstream academic publishing as well as in the mainstream public sphere: the people who read the broadsheet newspapers, the 'educated public.' Last year there were only two (yes two) scholarly articles on Bunyan (I mean specifically on Bunyan alone) published. The year before, 2010, was better:

six pieces independently but enforced by Ken Simpson's collection of essays from the *Recorder*, *Texting Bunyan: Essays on Attribution, Influence and Appropriation* (Open Latch, 2010). In 2009 we are back to just three.

Much of the interest in Bunyan twenty-five years ago was in his association with seventeenth century radicalism and his own humble and somewhat occluded roots. For the time being, and at least on any widespread scale, that association has faded into insignificance. We live now, if might be said, in an age of Lucretius, where the radical or startling is judged to be found in cosmological alterity (and heterodoxy is valued in philosophy rather than in religion and politics), and in an age of the history of the book, where value is found not in what someone said, or how they said it, but in the way in which the means of dissemination (namely the printing press) had an impact upon the shaping of an author's work and ultimately it's reception. The charge against the history of the book is that it forgets that authors had thoughts and feelings. The challenge to Bunyan scholars is, I think, very clear. We must be writing about the literary as well as theological gifts of this extraordinary writer.

I have begun to organize the next triennial meeting of IJBS. It will take place at Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, 12-16 August 2013, and will have the general title 'John Bunyan: Conscience, History and Justice.' The last conference took place at Keele University in the UK, the one before at Dartmouth College, NH. All of the conferences I can remember have taken place at universities. The conference will be an opportunity for those members of IJBS to come together to share work on Bunyan his contemporaries, and to share it with some of those outside of the academy who also greatly esteem Bunyan. We are going to have our work cut out, but let's put our shoulders to the wheel.

Nigel Smith

29 April 2012

# Bunyan as Reader and Bunyan's Readers: Evidence in the Reading Experience Database

By Bob Owens

A focus on the reception of texts by readers has been one of the most significant developments in modern literary studies. Various strands of contemporary literary theory, however different in other respects, recognise in one way or another that literary texts need to be understood not in isolation, but in relation to specific acts of reading and to the responses of readers. For the most part, however, these theories have been concerned with hypothetical readers and acts of reading, and have attempted to infer reading processes and activities from a close study of texts alone.

More recently, however, scholars working within the discipline of Book History have begun to focus attention on *actual* readers from the past. A great deal of empirical evidence is being uncovered not only about what readers read, but about the circumstances in which they read, and about the impact their reading had on them. The UK Reading Experience Database (RED) was set up to collect as much information as possible about British readers, at home or abroad, between 1450 and 1945, and to make this information available in an easily searchable form to anyone interested in any aspect of the history of reading. Similar projects are being established in Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, and New Zealand, and users will be able to search across as well as within national databases. The UK RED database is housed and maintained at The Open University, and currently contains well over 30,000 individual records of reading. It can be used by anyone, anywhere, at: [www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK](http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK). The records collected in RED enable us to get closer to the cognitive and affective elements of reading, to see individual readers and groups of readers at work, making meaning from the texts they read. They also help us to understand more about the changing historical circumstances and conditions within which reading takes place.

Members of IJBS will not be surprised to learn that the famous account of Bunyan reading Luther's *Commentary on Galatians* is included in RED:

God . . . did cast into my hand, one day, a book of *Martin Luther*, his comment on the *Galathians*, so old that it was ready to fall piece from piece, if I did but turn it over . . . I found my condition in his experience, so largely and profoundly handled, as if his Book had been written out of my heart . . .

This is one of the richest examples of what we might call a 'transformative' reading experience. We don't know exactly when or where the reading took place, though it probably took place some time in the year 1650, when Bunyan was living in Bedford and was still working as a brazier, and had not yet become a writer and preacher. What is remarkable is Bunyan's depiction of the impact of reading

Luther. He remembers the physical form of the book, how it was fragile, ready to fall in pieces. He also remembers the shock of recognition as he read: Luther was expressing Bunyan's own 'wounded conscience', 'as if his book had been written out of my heart'.

Many entries in RED record the reading experiences of famous writers, simply because they are more likely than ordinary people to have left a written account of their reading. But RED also contains records of the reading practices of less famous and sometimes quite unknown people. Here, for example, is a record drawn from Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861) where Mayhew interviews an unnamed crossing sweeper about his reading:

Sometimes, after I get home, I read a book, if I can borrow one. What do I read? Well, novels, when I can get them. What did I read last night? Well, Reynolds's Miscellany; before that I read the Pilgrim's Progress. I have read it three times over; but there's always something new in it.

Other records are drawn from autobiographies, and these confirm the importance of *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a book read in childhood. Interestingly, the illustrations are often mentioned. For Samuel Bamford, the son of a weaver, it was the rough woodcuts in his childhood copy that inspired his 'feeling and imagination'. Elizabeth Rignall, a London painter's daughter, remembered the pleasure she took every Sunday in reading a copy with lurid coloured depictions of giants and monsters: 'stretched out full length on the sofa with the book open before me I would proceed, week after week, to frighten the life out of myself'.

There are also accounts of people coming back to *The Pilgrim's Progress* in later life, and reading it very differently. Emrys Daniel Hughes, son of a Welsh miner, read it first as an illustrated adventure story. When he was jailed during the First World War for refusing conscription, he reread it and discovered a very different book: 'Lord Hategood could easily have been in the Government. I had talked with Mr Worldly Wiseman and had been in the Slough of Despond and knew all the jurymen who had been on the jury at the trial of Hopeful at Vanity Fair. And Vanity Fair would of course have been all for the War.'

Reading, of course, can be a social as well as a solitary occupation. The minutes of a Quaker reading group meeting in October 1921 provide evidence of a collective reading experience.

The rest of the evening was devoted to John Bunyan. H.R. Smith read a paper dealing with the main episodes of his life. This was a valuable introduction and gave the right historical & religious setting of Bunyan. C.E. Stansfield read an Appreciation of Pilgrim's Progress & of the writing of Bunyan. He referred to Bunyan & Milton as the two writers who expressed most completely the Puritan ideal. He expected Pilgrim's Progress to live as it expressed the universal quest of mankind. There were several readings from Bunyan's works which added greatly to the interest. Mrs Smith read from 'Grace Abounding' the book which is his spiritual autobiography. R.H. Robson read the Fight with Apollyon C.I. Evans [ditto] The trial scene in

Vanity Fair Mrs Unwin [ditto] The Interpreter's House. In the general discussion some doubt was expressed of C.E. Stansfield's opinion that the Pilgrim's Progress will live. It was felt by some that the story will always be attractive to children, but that the puritan flavour & crude theology would prevent it becoming anything more than an interesting historical document for older people.

As the reference here to *Grace Abounding* indicates, evidence in RED of people reading Bunyan is not confined to *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In 1806, for example, Joseph Mayett, at that time a soldier in the Royal Buckinghamshire militia, read *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded* searching for enlightenment about the unpardonable sin.

I met with a book written by Mr Bunyan the title of the book was the two Covenants in this book the unpardonable Sin was explained this part I soon found and read it over with eagerness for I thought Mr Bunyan Could not be deceived such a man as he was but I found no satisfaction for all seemed to be against me I read it again several times over for I Could not give it up.

These are just some examples of the range of information about reading and readers to be discovered in RED. As well as using RED for your own research purposes, I'd urge you to consider contributing evidence to it. The project has benefited enormously from the contributions of individual scholars, students and members of the general public. Some contributors have provided details of the reading of particular authors; others have contributed details of specific readers, drawn from a range of sources such as diaries, commonplace books, marginalia, etc. Information about Bunyan's own reading in RED is by no means complete, and it would be good if members of IJBS could send in further examples. Similarly, although there are dozens of records of people reading Bunyan, a great many more could be added. I've recently been compiling a list of references to reading *Grace Abounding*, and will put these into RED in due course. If in the course of your own work you come across evidence of reading, it is very easy indeed to have this included in RED. Just go to the website, and click on 'contribute' and you will be given all the information you need. We are beginning to know more about the national and transnational circulation and dissemination of *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a publishing phenomenon. What we need is more evidence of the experience of readers – why, how, when, where they read Bunyan – and RED is the ideal way of collecting and presenting that evidence.

## BOOK REVIEW

Anne Dunan-Page, ed., *The Cambridge Companion*

*to Bunyan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Review by Peter Hinds, University of Plymouth

Cambridge Companions on the subject of mid to late seventeenth-century writers come fairly infrequently. John Milton was first in 1989, then both Aphra Behn and John Dryden arrived in 2004, and now John Bunyan is here along with Andrew Marvell (both 2010). Whilst they are all to be warmly welcomed, the Companions appear to be getting shorter. Dryden would have been ecstatic that he was considered substantial enough for around 300 pages of critical attention, the same as Milton, the poet he so admired. For this Companion to Bunyan the publishers have allowed only 187 pages yet, thankfully, the editor's and the contributors' ability to work extremely well within these constraints have produced a volume that makes the most of the opportunity to elucidate Bunyan's works, life and contexts for a general audience.

A book should be rated by its ability to deliver on its aims, and this Companion achieves its goal of providing an 'accessible introduction', which is not an entirely bland observation, for two reasons: firstly, because Cambridge Companions have not always been consistently shaped for undergraduates, a major part of their target audience; and, secondly, because much of the context for Bunyan involves the Bible and theology, topics which (in this reviewer's teaching experience) are becoming less and less tractable for students. A book should also be rated on its utility and in this respect the volume succeeds again as many essays in this companion will be required reading for students.

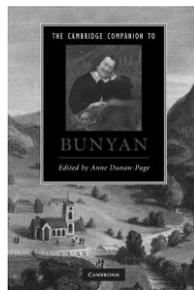
The volume is split into three well-conceived sections: 'John Bunyan in his seventeenth-century context'; 'John Bunyan's major works'; and 'Readership and reception'. Importantly, the contributors are well-chosen. For instance, N.H. Keeble introduces Bunyan's immediate literary and publishing contexts (precisely the scholar for the job), W.R. Owens looks at Bunyan in relation to the Bible (ditto), and so on. Owens' essay appears in the first section, along with Keeble's, Nigel Smith's and Vera J. Camden's. His very nicely-judged piece looks at the Bible from several perspectives. Firstly, he gives a brief history of the Bible in English, together with a consideration of how commentaries, paraphrases and abridgements helped its readers. He also provides an extremely useful section on the relationship between the Old and New Testaments and on modes of reading (allegorical, tropological, etc.). Finally he looks at how the Bible and Bible reading featured in Bunyan's work and his life. Without simplifying, Owens' essay excellently boils down for introduction a potentially intimidating aspect of

this writer. He demonstrates in an accessible way the Bible's fundamental importance for understanding Bunyan and how it saturated his writing.

The second section includes essays on *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and *The Pilgrim's Progress* but also ventures to look at *The Life and Death of Mr Badman*, *The Holy War*, and *A Book for Boys and Girls*. Stuart Sim offers readings of *The Life and Death of Mr Badman* in relation to the formation of the novel. His essay interestingly explores how the text might slip from the grasp of Bunyan's intentions as it 'transcends the rigidity of the author's ideological scheme' (p. 104): in this respect he sees Bunyan 'knowingly or otherwise, flirting with the picaresque', and sees a link here between Defoe's and Fielding's later fiction (p. 97); he also sees a sinning protagonist capable of inspiring sympathy, not the censure that Bunyan would have wished for; and he spots a conceptual loose end or 'lack of absolute closure' in the mild manner of Badman's death rather than an unambiguous, condign divine punishment (p. 98). By concentrating on these elements Sim successfully brings *Mr Badman* from out of *The Pilgrim's Progress*' shadow as a novelistic text as well as to show how it 'continues to speak to later generations' by pointing out those moments that threaten to escape Bunyan's moralism and didacticism (p. 104). In noting how *Mr Badman* might escape from its author, Sim usefully outlines what it might be escaping from and thus gives both a contextualized reading together with one that cuts against its grain.

The third section's consideration of the afterlife of Bunyan's works demonstrates nicely his posthumous influence and starts with Anne Dunan-Page's essay on the construction of his canon shortly after his death in 1688, moves through Emma Mason's essay on his Victorian legacy, and closes with Isabel Hofmeyr's consideration of Bunyan in postcolonial contexts. The essays are very interesting and accessible in themselves and reflect historicist critical trends in offering a posthumous cultural history, but the section also represents a good pedagogical move; rather than imploring to students to appreciate Bunyan's skill and importance setting out his enduring appeal and staggering popularity in this way might help inspire students' interest and engagement in his works when cajoling fails.

Overall, there is plenty of material in this collection to encourage students to feel some affection for Bunyan, and to spark intellectual excitement in his words, his thinking and his contexts.



## Wanted: Book Reviewers for *Bunyan Studies*

By Bob Owens

Since 1998, David Walker has been editor of book reviews for *Bunyan Studies*. We are grateful to David for all the work he has done on this, but having recently become the UK treasurer for IJBS, he felt the time had come to step down as reviews editor. I'm very pleased to say that Dr Alasdair Raffe, lecturer in history at Northumbria University has agreed to take over from David as book reviews editor. Alasdair is a historian of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century religious and political culture. His work to date has been focused particularly on Scottish religious controversy and politics. He has published several articles on aspects of this topic, and his book, *The Culture of Controversy: Religious Arguments in Scotland, 1660–1714*, is forthcoming from Boydell & Brewer.

Now that we are committed to publishing *Bunyan Studies* annually, we are keen to build up the book reviews section and make it a more prominent feature of the journal. We want to try to ensure that we have a good coverage of titles relevant to the interests of readers of the journal in terms of discipline and period. If you would like to offer yourself as a book reviewer, please get in touch with Alasdair (details below). If you know of a book or books that you would like to review, he will try to obtain copies from the publisher. Even if you don't want to write a review, if you know of books that you think should be reviewed in *Bunyan Studies*, please do pass the details on to Alasdair. It is usually easier to get review copies if they are requested at the time of a book's publication and not later. You may like to know that we are planning to devote a special number to William Hale White ('Mark Rutherford') in 2013, the centenary of his death. We will want to include reviews of relevant books on Dissenting culture in the Victorian period in that special number.

Stuart Sim and I, as editors of *Bunyan Studies*, are looking forward to working with Alasdair, and he is already busy getting a first crop of reviews organised for the 2012 number. Do please get in touch with him. His contact details are:

Alasdair Raffe, Department of Humanities, School of Arts and Social Sciences,

Northumbria University, Lipman Building, Sandford Road

Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8ST, UK

Email: [alasdair.raffe@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:alasdair.raffe@northumbria.ac.uk)

# MEMBERSHIP FORM

## The International John Bunyan Society

Note: Dues should be forwarded in the form of an international money order (in pounds sterling) payable to the International John Bunyan Society. Please send membership dues to the European Treasurer:

Dr. David Walker, Head, English and Creative Writing  
School of Arts and Social Sciences  
Northumbria University  
Newcastle Upon Tyne  
UK NE1 8ST

Canadian and American members can forward dues by check or money order (in Canadian or U.S. dollars) to the North American Treasurer:

Dr. Galen Johnson  
802 Amanda Drive  
Siloam Springs, Arkansas 72671 USA

Membership rates are:

- £ 20 / US\$ 35 per year for individuals
- £ 30 / US\$ 55 per year for couples
- £ 15 / US\$ 25 per year for students
- £ 15 / US\$ 25 per year for retirees
- £ 15 / US\$ 25 per year for under-employed scholars
- £ 80 / US\$ 140 for 5-Year Subscription (individuals)
- £ 120 / US\$ 220 for 5-Year Subscription (couples)

**The Recorder**, the newsletter of the International John Bunyan Society, and **Bunyan Studies**, the official journal of the IJBS, are now included in your membership package.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Business phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax number: \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of scholarly interest (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*The International John Bunyan Society is a registered non-profit organization and issues tax receipts for all donations over \$10.*

---

# The Recorder

*The Recorder* is the Newsletter of the International John Bunyan Society. Published once a year, it offers members of the society a forum for notes, queries, conference announcements, calls for papers, news of members, reviews, abstracts, bibliographies: anything of interest to scholars and readers of seventeenth-century texts.

Submissions are gratefully received by 1 March 2013 for the Spring 2013 issue. Electronic submissions are welcome.

E-mail submissions and all other inquiries should be sent to:

**Chris Garrett, Editor**

***The Recorder***

E-mail: [drcegarrett@gmail.com](mailto:drcegarrett@gmail.com)

**Cover image:** illustration of Christian battling Apollyon

(source: <http://www.spiritsrevealed.com/PhotoAlbums/Pilgrims/>)