

BUNYAN CHARACTERS
IN THE
PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

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FIRST SERIES : BY

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PORTRAIT OF JOHN BUNYAN
(from the statue at Bedford by Sir Edgar Boehm)

Foreword to New Edition

IT has been said that one of the greatest lacks in preaching today is imagination. If that be so then Alexander Whyte comes to the rescue. Often his vivid imagination goes beyond scripture, but the value of his contribution in this field is not to be missed. Whyte excels with Bunyan's Characters. Each one seems tailor-made to suit his particular gift. It is evident that he loves Bunyan, and his own ability to illustrate so graphically is heart warming and mind exercising. God's people cannot but be helped in their own pilgrim journey as they go hand in hand with Whyte through these characters. The whole tenor of the book is to lead us to godliness. The challenge of seeing our hearts as they really are is on every page, and for a 'readable sanctification' it hardly has a rival. One of its great values is that it is different. So many good books say the *same* thing as other good books. It is not so with this volume. Those coming to it for the first time will be blessed with the remarkable freshness. I have read the old three-volume set time and again and God has used it to the good of my soul every time I have picked it up. The publishers deserve our sincere thanks for seeing the need for this book. By making it available to another generation of Christians they have served us well. May the book set forth the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in the hearts of his dear people.

Alun T. McNabb
Stafford

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I

Introductory

'The express image' [*Gr.* 'the character'].—*Heb.* i. 3.



THE word 'character' occurs only once in the New Testament, and that is in the passage in the prologue of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the original word is translated 'express image' in our version. Our Lord is the Express Image of the Invisible Father. No man hath seen God at any time. The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. The Father hath sealed His divine image upon His Son, so that he that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father. The Son is thus the Father's character stamped upon and set forth in human nature. The Word was made flesh. This is the highest and best use to which our so expressive word 'character' has ever been put, and the use to which it is put when we speak of Bunyan's Characters partakes of the same high sense and usage. For it is of the outstanding good or evil in a man that we think when we speak of his character. It is really either of his likeness or unlikeness to Jesus Christ we speak, and then, through Him, his likeness or unlikeness to God Himself. And thus it is that the adjective 'moral' usually accompanies our word 'character'—moral or immoral. A man's character does not have its seat or source in his body; character is not a physical thing: not even in his mind; it is not an intellectual thing. Character comes up out of the will and out of the heart. There are more good minds, as we say, in the world than there are good hearts. There are more clever people than good people; character,—high, spotless, saintly character,—is a far rarer thing in this world than talent or even genius. Character is an infinitely better thing than either of these, and it is of corresponding rarity. And yet so true is it that the world loves its own, that all men worship talent, and even bodily strength and bodily beauty, while only one here and one there either understands or values or pursues moral character, though it is the strength and the beauty and the sweetness of the soul.

We naturally turn to Bishop Butler when we think of moral character. Butler is an author who has drawn no characters of his own. Butler's genius was not

creative like Shakespeare's or Bunyan's. Butler had not that splendid imagination which those two masters in character-painting possessed, but he had very great gifts of his own, and he has done us very great service by means of his gifts. Bishop Butler has helped many men in the intelligent formation of their character, and what higher praise could be given to any author? Butler will lie on our table all winter beside Bunyan; the bishop beside the tinker, the philosopher beside the poet, the moralist beside the evangelical minister.

In seeking a solid bottom for our subject, then, we naturally turn to Butler. Bunyan will people the house for us once it is built, but Butler lays bare for us the naked rock on which men like Bunyan build and beautify and people the dwelling-place of God and man. What exactly is this thing, character, we hear so much about? we ask the sagacious bishop. And how shall we understand our own character so as to form it well till it stands firm and endures? 'Character,' answers Butler, in his bald, dry, deep way, 'by character is meant that temper, taste, disposition, whole frame of mind from whence we act in one way rather than another ... those principles from which a man acts, when they become fixed and habitual in him we call his character. ... And consequently there is a far greater variety in men's characters than there is in the features of their faces.' Open Bunyan now, with Butler's keywords in your mind, and see the various tempers, tastes, dispositions, frames of mind from which his various characters act, and which, at bottom, really make them the characters, good or bad, which they are. See the principles which Bunyan has with such inimitable felicity embodied and exhibited in their names, the principles within them from which they have acted till they have become a habit and then a character, that character which they themselves are and will remain. See the variety of John Bunyan's characters, a richer and a more endless variety than are the features of their faces. Christian and Christiana, Obstinate and Pliable, Mr. Fearing and Mr. Feeblemind, Temporary and Talkative, Mr. Byends and Mr. Facing-both-ways, Simple, Sloth, Presumption, that brisk lad Ignorance, and the genuine Mr. Brisk himself. And then Captain Boasting, Mr. High-mind, Mr. Wet-Eyes, and so on, through a less known (but equally well worth knowing) company of municipal and military characters in the *Holy War*.

We shall see, as we proceed, how this and that character in Bunyan was formed and deformed. But let us ask in this introductory lecture if we can find out any law or principle upon which all our own characters, good or bad, are formed. Do our characters come to be what they are by chance, or have we anything to