

# Pilgrims Progressing: Ignatius of Loyola and John Bunyan

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**Abstract:** Ignatius of Loyola and John Bunyan have, in their different but related ways, both left particularly powerful images of the way in which the journey of the spiritual life unfolds, the end towards which it should tend, and the temptations that meet us on the way. This article focuses first on Ignatius, and his *Autobiography and Spiritual Exercises*, seeing how he outlines the life of the pilgrim on her or his journey towards God. Then it turns to Bunyan, focusing, with the same intent, primarily on *Grace Abounding* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan is read through the prism of Ignatius, to see what light this can throw on the progress of the pilgrim John Bunyan in his Christian journey, and of the other pilgrim, Christian, on his journey towards the Celestial City. Reading Ignatius in this way also allows Bunyan to question and develop insights in Ignatius.

**Keywords:** Ignatius of Loyola, John Bunyan, Spiritual Exercises, Pilgrim's Progress, spiritual life, journey

## Introduction

The theme of the spiritual life as a pilgrimage has an extremely long pedigree. It is already present in the Bible,<sup>1</sup> and was used in various forms from the earliest Christian writings.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, then, neither Ignatius of Loyola nor John Bunyan developed any new metaphors for talking of the spiritual life. Nevertheless, both of them, in their different but related ways, have left us with particularly powerful images of the way in which that journey unfolds, the end towards which it should tend, and the temptations that meet us on the way. In what follows, I will focus first on Ignatius, and his *Autobiography and Spiritual Exercises*, seeing how he outlines the life of the pilgrim on her or his journey towards God. Then I will turn to Bunyan, focusing, with the same intent, primarily on *Grace Abounding* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*.<sup>3</sup>

One further introductory clarifying remark may be necessary. I imagine it is clear that I am not suggesting that Bunyan had any knowledge of Ignatius. If he had known anything about Ignatius, we can probably assume that it would have been negative. For Bunyan and his fellow-believers, the name of Ignatius may have been unknown, but 'Jesuit' was already well-established as a telling put-down and insult against any

<sup>1</sup> Consider the so-called songs of ascent, Pss 120-134, for example. The story of the 12 year old Jesus in the Temple is set amidst the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> For a brief comment on the antecedents of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, see Christopher Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious, and Factious People: John Bunyan and his Church*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp.201-202. For an example of an earlier use of the metaphor, see Ivana Noble, "The Apophatic Way in Gregory of Nyssa" in Petr Pokorný, Jan Roskovec (eds.), *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Exegesis*, (Tübingen; Mohr Siebeck, 2002), pp.323-339.

<sup>3</sup> For reasons of simplicity and space, I will consider only Part 1 of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

suspicious behaviour.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Bunyan would have been rather horrified to be compared to a Roman Catholic. What I am proposing to do is rather to read Bunyan through the prism of Ignatius, to see what light this can throw on the progress of the pilgrim John Bunyan in his Christian journey, and of the other pilgrim, Christian, on his journey towards the Celestial City. In reading Ignatius in this way we can also let Bunyan question and develop insights in Ignatius.

## Ignatius of Loyola

### *Ignatius: Life and Times*

Iñigo López de Loyola<sup>5</sup> was born probably in 1491, in the northern Basque country, where his family were local nobility. He was born into a world which was on the verge of great changes. Granada was taken in the first year of his life, completing the *Reconquista*, and Spain was united under Ferdinand and Isabella. Later in 1492 Columbus landed on Hispaniola, and European settlement of the Americas began. This may be one explanation for the outburst of energy which seems to have gripped the Iberian peninsula at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. There was certainly a widespread suspicion of various forms of spiritual renewal,<sup>6</sup> which would cause problems for Ignatius in his early post-conversion years.

Ignatius begins his autobiography thus: ‘Until the age of twenty-six he was a man given up to the vanities of the world, and his chief delight used to be in the exercise of arms, with a great and vain desire to gain honour.’<sup>7</sup> It would seem that Ignatius was engaged in courtly life in various parts of Spain, engaging also in some minor skirmishes. In 1521<sup>8</sup> he was fighting for the Viceroy of Navarra in defence of Pamplona, which was being attacked by the French. In the course of this, his leg was broken by a cannon ball, and he was eventually allowed to return to his home to be

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<sup>4</sup> Somewhat amusingly, Bunyan himself was accused by his detractors among other things of being “a witch, a Jesuit, a highway-man and the like”, John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, (London: J.M.Dent and Sons, 1953 (Everyman edition)), p.92. See on this Anne Dunan-Page, *Grace Overwhelming: John Bunyan, The Pilgrim’s Progress and the Extremes of the Baptist Mind*, (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006), pp.25-26.

<sup>5</sup> He seems to have adopted the name Ignatius in honour of St. Ignatius of Antioch. As it is the name by which he is most commonly named, from here on I will call him Ignatius.

<sup>6</sup> Those who were considered part of this movement, or these movements, were often referred to as ‘illuminists’ (*alumbrados*). The basic problem seems to have been to do with the conflict between charismatic individuals and the institution, a rather common occurrence in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, though not only there.

<sup>7</sup> Autobiography [1]. I am using the translation by Philip Endean, in Joseph Munitiz and Philip Endean (eds.), *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), pp.13-64, here p.13. For his own reasons, Endean prefers to call the work *Reminiscences*. The paragraph numbers are found in most editions and translations, so I include them for ease of reference. The work is written in the third person, since it was dictated to a Portuguese Jesuit, Luis Gonçalves da Câmara, who had long pestered Ignatius for an account of his life. It was written on and off over some two years from August 1553 till October 1555. See on this Munitiz and Endean, *St. Ignatius*, pp.4-7

<sup>8</sup> This is one reason for the confusion over Ignatius’ date of birth. Like many of his contemporaries, he was probably simply unsure of the exact year of his birth.

cared for. At first he was more interested in how his leg would look after the bone had mended, and thus, when it seemed he would be left with a protruding bone, he had the doctors reset it, despite the pain and danger of infection. For some time, he was in grave danger of death, and he attributed his recovery to the intercession of St Peter, since it began on June 29<sup>th</sup>, the apostle's feast day.

He now found himself out of danger, but incapacitated. So lying in bed in the castle, he asked for some books to read. He really wanted courtly romances, but the castle library possessed only two books, *De Vita Christi* by Ludolph of Saxony and *The Golden Legend (Flos Sanctorum)* collated by Jacopo of Varazze. He set to reading these books, alternating his reading with dreaming of the services he would perform for a leading lady in the court. Ludolph's *Life of Christ* was a compendium of gospel sayings, stories and extracts from the church fathers, and was to be influential in Ignatius' preferred way of praying. Reading it and the lives of the saints, he found himself increasingly inspired to follow a life of service to God. Over a long period, he came to recognise a difference:

That when he was thinking about that worldly stuff he would take much delight, but when he left it aside after getting tired, he would find himself dry and discontented. But when [thinking] about going to Jerusalem barefoot, and about not eating except herbs, and about doing all the other rigours he was seeing the saints had done, not only used he to be consoled while in such thoughts but he would remain content and happy even after having left them aside... [finally] his eyes were opened a little, and he began to marvel at this difference in kind and to reflect on it, picking it up from experience that from some thoughts he would be left sad and from others happy, and little by little coming to know the difference in kind of spirits that were stirring: the one from the devil, and the other from God.<sup>9</sup>

When he had recovered sufficiently from his wounds, Ignatius decided to set out on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. First he spent the best part of a year in the town of Manresa, close to the Catalan pilgrimage site of Montserrat, some 60 kilometres north-west of Barcelona. It was here that he went through the spiritual schooling that would emerge eventually in his *Spiritual Exercises*. Already on his journey to Montserrat he begins to refer to himself as a pilgrim, and after that this is one of the most frequent ways he chooses to call himself.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Autobiography [8], Munitiz and Endean, *St Ignatius*, p.15

<sup>10</sup> See Autobiography [15], Munitiz and Endean, *St Ignatius*, p.19. The references continue right up to the end of the autobiography at fairly frequent intervals. In a remark to Gonçalves da Câmara, quoted in the *Memoriale*, Ignatius explains why he determined that those who wished to enter the Society of Jesus (the novices, those in the two year probationary period prior to first vows) should do a pilgrimage. He says it is because "I myself had experienced how advantageous they were, and I had found how well they suited me". See Alexander Eaglestone and Joseph Munitiz SJ, (trans. and eds.), *Remembering Iñigo: Glimpses of the Life of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. The Memoriale of Luis Gonçalves da Câmara*, (Leominster: Gracewing, 2005), p.84 (=Memoriale 137.12)

There is no need to recount the whole of Ignatius' life story in detail. However, certain further points are of relevance. After returning from Jerusalem, aged by now in his mid-30s, Ignatius applied himself to study. He also began leading people in a way of encounter with God which arose out of his reflections on God's action in his own life. This led, as already hinted at, to problems with the Inquisition, since Ignatius had no formal role in the church<sup>11</sup> and no theological education. In order to escape the Inquisition and acquire a proper theological education, he made his way to Paris, where he followed the humanities course, first at the College of Montaigu.<sup>12</sup> It was in Paris in 1534 that Ignatius and six companions he had gathered around him made private vows together in a chapel in Montmartre. This group was in 1540 to be constituted by the Pope as the Company or Society of Jesus. The name came to Ignatius in a vision on the road to Rome, in a small wayside chapel. There he experienced a strong sense of being placed by the Father under the protection of the Son. Ignatius was elected, against his wishes, as the first Superior-General of the Society of Jesus, and spent much of the subsequent time in organisation and writing the Constitutions of the Society, in which he sought to put into practice the insights of the Spiritual Exercises. He died in Rome on July 31<sup>st</sup> 1556.

### *The Spiritual Exercises*

In outlining very briefly the life of Ignatius, I have focussed on his own sense of call, and the way in which he was so intensely convinced of God's active presence in his life, following his conversion. As we shall soon see was the case with Bunyan, the stages of Ignatius' conversion story are not a glorious picture of uninterrupted progress, without temptation or difficulty. Especially in Manresa, he was subject to a number of very vivid temptations, and it took him a year of hard and intense work to get over them. Out of this developed the way of prayer which is encapsulated in his Spiritual Exercises.

What is now known as the book of the *Spiritual Exercises* is not in itself a spiritual masterpiece. It is basically a book of instructions for those who are to lead others through the experience of the Exercises, suggesting the type of exercise and pointing to some of the likely problems to be encountered. In this sense, it is a codification by Ignatius of the experience he had undergone in Manresa, tempered by his further reflections on that,

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<sup>11</sup> It is possible that he was formally of clerical status, but this was usually a way of getting out of legal problems, and this would seem to have been the motivation for Ignatius. Clerical status simply implied having received at least the most minor of the various degrees of orders in the church, and had clearly not meant anything previously.

<sup>12</sup> A more or less contemporary alumnus of this college was Jean Calvin. It seems unlikely that the two would have overlapped, since Ignatius arrived in 1528, when Calvin had probably already moved to Orleans. However, it is interesting to note that Ignatius, Calvin, and, earlier, Erasmus, all studied at the same institution.

and other key spiritual experiences in his life. There was a version printed in Ignatius' lifetime,<sup>13</sup> but it was never intended as a work for general perusal. In fact, Ignatius rather insisted on the fact that the Exercises should be given orally, and not in writing.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, the insights which Ignatius offers through this dry and generally somewhat dull text have continued to speak to people down through the ages, and thus the experience if not the book of the Exercises has come to have a central role, especially in contemporary Christian spirituality.<sup>15</sup> The Exercises are divided into four sections, conventionally termed 'Weeks'. The full experience of the Exercises in its most concentrated form is generally expected to last around thirty days.<sup>16</sup> It can also be made through what is now called the Exercises in Daily Life, usually lasting up to a year. Many Christians use elements from the Exercises for either annual retreats of varying lengths of time, or as a basis for their daily prayer lives. Also very important is the person of, to use Ignatius' own preferred phrase, the one who gives the Exercises, or as she or he is generally called in English, spiritual director. This person acts as a conversation partner, a more experienced guide, a mirror, to help the one making the Exercises reflect on how God is leading them in the prayer.<sup>17</sup>

The four stages can be summed up briefly as follows. The first Week of the Exercises helps the exercitant to recognise their sinfulness and their complete reliance on God. This is a necessary starting point for the process of determining the specific call of God in one's life. The Second Week, which normally is the longest of the four sections, consists of a series of meditations<sup>18</sup> on the Incarnation and public ministry of Jesus, into which are fitted a series of special meditations written by Ignatius himself, which appeal to the need to respond as wholeheartedly as possible to the call of Christ. The choice made in the Second Week is then to be confirmed by following, in the Third Week, the Passion of Christ. Here Ignatius insists

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<sup>13</sup> This edition was printed in 1548 by Antonio Blado, who was official printer to the Holy See. Blado also printed the first edition of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and also the first *Index librorum prohibitorum*, the Index of Prohibited Books, which contained *The Prince*. See, for example, David Greetham, *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p.99.

<sup>14</sup> See for example, *Remembering Iñigo*, p.183 (=Memoriale 312)

<sup>15</sup> It has long proved of value to members of nearly all Christian churches, and is no longer in any sense restricted to Roman Catholics.

<sup>16</sup> The text itself suggests that 'the Exercises should be completed in about thirty days.' SpEx [4]. I am using the translation in Munitiz and Endean, *St Ignatius*, pp.283-358, here p. 284. The paragraph numbers will enable the text to be found in any other modern translation.

<sup>17</sup> In this sense, the English term 'spiritual director' can seem off-putting to some, since it suggests an unwarranted intrusion into the relationship between God and the individual. This, though, would be to greatly misunderstand the role of the director. Ignatius says that the director should speak as little as possible, '[f]or it is not so much knowledge that fills and satisfies the soul, but rather the intimate feeling and relishing of things'. SpEx [2], Munitiz and Endean, *St Ignatius*, p.283.

<sup>18</sup> In fact, for Ignatius, they are contemplations, which tend to differ from meditations in that the former are more likely to use the imagination, whilst meditations tend to be more to do with thinking things through. See on this Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), p.46.

on us being aware that any call to follow Christ cannot bypass the cross. The Fourth Week gives further confirmation with the Father's response in the resurrection.

Before starting the actual text of the Exercises, Ignatius offers some introductory points, called Annotations. The aim of the Exercises, Ignatius tells us, is the 'preparing and disposing one's soul to rid herself of all disordered attachments, so that once rid of them one might seek and find the divine will in regard to the disposition of one's life for the good of the soul'.<sup>19</sup> One of the key points for Ignatius is that the exercitant should be a person who desires<sup>20</sup> strongly to do the Lord's will. Hence desire is a central theme in the Exercises, for Ignatius recognises that if a person is not moved by the Spirit to respond to the call of Christ, nothing will happen. Thus even when one cannot honestly say that one wants, for example, real poverty, at least one should pray for the desire for the desire. And this desire is, most fundamentally, to be entirely open to God our Lord and Creator, so that 'the Divine Majesty may make use of one's person and of all that one has according to His most holy will'.<sup>21</sup>

In order for this desire to find some very concrete form, Ignatius proposes a number of meditations. Roughly halfway through the Second Week of the Exercises<sup>22</sup> Ignatius presents us with what is entitled 'A Meditation On Two Standards,<sup>23</sup> one that of Christ our Commander-in-Chief and Our Lord, the other that of Lucifer, the deadly enemy of our human nature'.<sup>24</sup> This meditation presents us with two graphic pictures, of possible choices which we face, paths we are able to follow in our lives. The choices are not equal, the battle between the two standards is not a transcendental one, in the sense that Christ and the devil do battle on more or less equal terms. Ignatius is no Manichean. Rather, the battle is within the soul of each follower of Christ, who has to return constantly to the way of Christ, despite the temptations laid before them by the enemy of our human nature.

Ignatius always tells us to start our prayer time with a preparatory prayer, offering the time we are to spend to God. We remind ourselves, in the words of Romans, that it is not us who pray, but the Spirit who prays within us. Then he asks us to picture both the story we are about to meditate on and the place where it will happen. The third preamble is perhaps the most important, for it is here that we ask for what we want.

<sup>19</sup> SpEx [1], Munitiz and Endean, *St Ignatius*, p.283.

<sup>20</sup> See on this, Michael Ivens, *Keeping In Touch: Posthumous papers on Ignatian Topics*, (ed. Joseph Munitiz), (Leominster: Gracewing, 2007), pp.111-123.

<sup>21</sup> SpEx [5], Munitiz and Endean, *St Ignatius*, p.284.

<sup>22</sup> In a thirty day retreat this normally corresponds roughly to the half-way point of the retreat, since the Third and Fourth Weeks are generally considerably shorter than the first two Weeks.

<sup>23</sup> That is, flags or banners, signifying royal presence and often used in battle as a rallying point for soldiers.

<sup>24</sup> SpEx [136-148], Munitiz and Endean, *St Ignatius*, pp.310-312.

Mindful of the gospel injunction, ‘Ask and it shall be given’, Ignatius insists that if we are serious about our prayer, we should ask of God what it is that we seek. In this meditation it is ‘to ask for knowledge of the deceptions practised by the evil leader and for help to guard against them, and also for knowledge of the true life revealed by the supreme and true Commander and for grace to imitate Him.’<sup>25</sup>

The first part of the exercise asks us to consider ‘the leader of all the enemy powers as if he were enthroned in that great plain of Babylon, upon something like a throne of fire and smoke, a horrible fearsome figure’.<sup>26</sup> Ignatius uses various names to describe this figure – Lucifer, the enemy of human nature, the bad spirit.<sup>27</sup> His own experience had led him to recognise that the temptation to turn from the path of God was frequent and strong. The temptation to go off from this path happens in three stages, according to Ignatius. The first is to desire riches, especially, though not only, material wealth. Thus people will come to enjoy what he calls ‘the empty honours of this wealth’. Finally because they receive these honours, they will be convinced that they are responsible for their own well-being, and will be filled with pride. These three steps then lead to all further problems. Essentially what is being described here is a form of idolatry, in which I make myself my own god, since I can regard myself as responsible for all the good in my life.

Over against this, Ignatius proposes a second kind of thought-experiment. Imagine, he suggests, this time, ‘Christ Our Lord taking his stand in a great plain in that region of Jerusalem, in a lowly place, His appearance comely and gracious.’<sup>28</sup> Christ sends out his people on a mission to the whole world,<sup>29</sup> with this message. First, they are to call people to poverty, spiritual certainly, and if God desire and grant it, then also actual poverty. In doing this, they will attract insults and humiliation. This will in turn lead to humility, from which all that is good will proceed. Here then the call is to abandon the sense of self as god and enter into the service of Christ, poor, insulted, humble. We are to become like Christ, in order to be the visible presence of Christ for those around us.

## John Bunyan

### *Life and Times of John Bunyan.*

John Bunyan was born in 1628, probably in late November, in the village of Elstow near Bedford, an English provincial town some 60 miles north of

<sup>25</sup> SpEx [139], Munitiz and Endean, *St Ignatius*, p.311.

<sup>26</sup> SpEx [140], Munitiz and Endean, *St Ignatius*, p.311.

<sup>27</sup> Ivens, *Keeping In Touch*, pp.75-76.

<sup>28</sup> SpEx [144], Munitiz and Endean, *St Ignatius*, p.311

<sup>29</sup> On Ignatius’ view of mission, see in general Ignasi Salvat SJ, *Servir en Misión Universal*, (Santander / Bilbao: Sal Terrae / Mensajero, no date). In particular on the missionary dimension of the Two Standards, see pp.49-56.

London. His family were fairly poor, affected by the negative effect on smallholders of political changes from the late sixteenth century onwards.<sup>30</sup> His parents managed to send him to school for some education, though he claimed to have forgotten most of what he learned.<sup>31</sup> His teenage years were dominated by the English Civil War. Bedford and the surrounding area was very much a Parliamentary stronghold, and at some point in his teens Bunyan joined the army, though he seems to have spent most of his time as a soldier in Newport Pagnell, fourteen miles or so from his home. Although not involved in military action, the revolutionary fervour of the times, with its diverse religious expressions, is unlikely to have passed him by.<sup>32</sup>

Bunyan's conversion was at least as long drawn out as Ignatius', and could also be said to have begun with reading two books, left to his first wife by her father, and their only possessions when they married.<sup>33</sup> As Ignatius began slowly to feel stirrings of a desire for something different in his life, so did Bunyan. For John Bunyan, the first tentative step was to become a devoted participant in church services, though he says that his life for the rest of the week was largely unchanged. Bunyan's growing attention to the scriptures and his conscience at first served only to drive him to despair and the conviction that his sins were so dreadful that they could not be forgiven. He felt that he was so deeply steeped in sin that, in the words of Macbeth, 'should I wade no more, / Returning were as tedious as go o'er.'<sup>34</sup>

For Bunyan, the story of his conversion is fundamentally recounted in terms of a turn from growing outward compliance to inner reliance on the saving power of Christ. There is an interesting echo here of the Two Standards, when Bunyan writes of his neighbours' attitude to him when he began to change his life even more, stopping swearing and giving his life apparently to God:

they began to praise, to commend, and to speak well of me, both to my face and behind my back. Now, I was, as they said, become godly; now I was become a right honest man. But, oh! when I understood that these were their words and opinions of me, it pleased me mighty well. For though, as yet, I was nothing but a poor painted hypocrite, yet I loved to be talked of

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<sup>30</sup> See Christopher Hill, *Bunyan and his Church*, pp.16-27, for an overview of the social situation around this time.

<sup>31</sup> Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, p.7.

<sup>32</sup> Hill, *Bunyan and his Church*, pp.46-55.

<sup>33</sup> Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, p.10. The two books were *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* by Arthur Dent and *The Practice of Piety* by Lewis Bayly. See on Dent and Bayly, Hill, *Bunyan and his Church*, pp. 161-164. Dent's work was first published in Amsterdam in 1601, so was no doubt known to John Smyth, Thomas Helwys and others of the first Baptist congregation there. See Monica Furlong, *Puritan's Progress: A Study of John Bunyan*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), pp.53-54. It is in passing interesting to note that neither Bunyan nor Ignatius, deeply rooted as they were in the Scriptures, began their conversion journey with the reading of the Bible.

<sup>34</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* Act III, scene iv.

as one that was truly godly. I was proud of my godliness, and indeed, I did all I did, either to be seen of, or to be well spoken of, by man.

The conversion process for Bunyan needed to move beyond this, to discover the true knowledge of Christ, and true faith, the abandoning of his life to God. Again, though the circumstances and language are different, both Bunyan and Ignatius came to discover God through their attention to the motions of the Spirit in their hearts, to the poor around them,<sup>35</sup> then to the Scriptures, and finally to the voice of the Lord speaking through different groups.

However, although Ignatius mentions the trials and doubts he passed through in his time in Manresa, there is no doubt that *Grace Abounding* is much more a story of the pilgrim stumbling, than of the progress experienced by Ignatius.<sup>36</sup> Bunyan was constantly beset by doubts. There is a famous story in *Grace Abounding* of how he came to question whether he could really believe the Scriptures, since '[e]veryone doth think his own religion rightest, both Jews and Moors and Pagans! and how if all our faith, and Christ, and Scriptures, should be but a think-so too?'<sup>37</sup> Bunyan found respite only in recognising the negative effect these thoughts had on him, like Ignatius and his dreams of serving his lady: 'Only by the distaste that they gave unto my spirit, I felt there was something in me that refused to embrace them.'<sup>38</sup>

Christopher Hill notes that there was a huge amount of despair around in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, caused by the increasing and massive economic divide, and no doubt exacerbated by religious wars and, in England, revolution and regicide.<sup>39</sup> He goes on to point out that Bunyan's frequent references to Esau's selling of his birthright<sup>40</sup> are particularly apt here, since Bunyan felt not only that he had abandoned the saving power of Christ, but was also well aware of the way his family had gradually sold off its land. In other words, though the direct reference is indeed to his sense of having lost salvation, the literal interpretation of the text is one which has its power for him too.<sup>41</sup>

Eventually, Bunyan reached some form of certainty and security, perhaps as much through his engagement in preaching in Bedford and around as through anything else. He became more and more convinced of the presence of God's love, which was stronger than God's wrath, or any

<sup>35</sup> Cf, Munitiz and Edean, *Reminiscences* [18], p.20 and Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, p.16

<sup>36</sup> In the Autobiography, at one point Ignatius remarks how in the first months at Manresa, 'God was dealing with him in the same way as a school teacher deals with a child, teaching him': Munitiz and Edean, *Reminiscences* [27], p.25. There is rather less of this sense of God's patient leading in Bunyan, whose changes of mood are recounted in a much more tempestuous way.

<sup>37</sup> Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, p.32.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p.33.

<sup>39</sup> Hill, *Bunyan and his Church*, pp.68-69.

<sup>40</sup> This also returns in *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, pp.69-70.

temptations that he might face. Bunyan's story of his conversion is perhaps partly dressed up to make him seem worse than he was, for the glory of God, but it does seem to be an honest, at times almost unbearably honest, account of a search for some anchor, some rest,<sup>42</sup> which eventually he finds in the sense of being loved by God.

Although this was to be tested by long periods of imprisonment throughout most of the 1660s, Bunyan seems to have found prison a time of confirmation rather than temptation, and it is probably not entirely unfair to say that he was rather proud to have been made what the early church called a confessor, or a white martyr, someone who was imprisoned for their faith and still refused to give up on it. When he died in August 1688, of a fever caught whilst riding back from helping resolve an estrangement between a father and a son,<sup>43</sup> he had enjoyed success as the author of *Pilgrim's Progress* and was well-loved and respected by his congregation in Bedford.

### *The Pilgrim's Progress*

Unlike Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, *The Pilgrim's Progress* is both a spiritual but also a literary classic. Its evocative language has spoken to generations of people, Christians and non-Christians,<sup>44</sup> since its first publication, so much so that some of its imagery and phrases have passed into the English language, and are used by those who have perhaps never heard of Bunyan or his work. The journey of the pilgrim, Christian, towards the Celestial City, is similar but not identical to Bunyan's own life story as recounted in *Grace Abounding*. In this sense, like Ignatius, he draws on his own experience of the journey to faith in order to show his reader the sort of temptations she or he is likely to face. This means that, as Anne Dunan-Page remarks, '*The Pilgrim's Progress* is at times a guide to follow in the way to God only in the sense that it is a compendium of snares to be avoided by wary pilgrims.'<sup>45</sup> In other words, the work is more about 'how not to', rather than 'how to'.

Nevertheless, we should not push this too far, since in warning of the dangers, Bunyan is trying to help and console the seeker on her or his journey. Ignatius does much the same with his rules for discernment in the Exercises, which alert the giver of the Exercises to the type and nature of

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<sup>42</sup> It is perhaps not altogether accidental that the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century saw Descartes struggle for epistemological certainty.

<sup>43</sup> See "The Continuation of Mr Bunyan's Life; Beginning where he left off, and concluding with the time and manner of his death and burial, together with his true character", which was first added to *Grace Abounding* in 1692, in the Everyman edition, pp.130-135, for the circumstances leading to his death see 134-135.

<sup>44</sup> See Roger Sharrock's introduction in John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, (ed. by Roger Sharrock), (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p.vii. All references are to this edition.

<sup>45</sup> Dunan-Page, *Grace Overwhelming*, p.300.

the temptations which are likely to befall the exercitant over the course of the retreat. Moreover, as with most literature, it is the narrative tension caused by the confrontation with potential tragedy and disaster that gives the work its major driving force. In what follows, I want first to outline how I see the journey made by Christian as resembling and differing from the journey that Ignatius presents us with in the *Spiritual Exercises*, before briefly commenting on one passage from *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

As for Ignatius, so for Christian, the journey begins with an awareness of one's sinfulness. In the first week of the Exercises, the grace that is asked for is that of tears of sorrow and contrition for our sins. This is something that accompanies Christian throughout his journey. The story begins with Christian bursting out in tears, and asking 'What must I do to be saved?'<sup>46</sup> For Ignatius, too, the question is to do with our salvation. The programmatic statement which begins the Exercises, known as the Principle and Foundation, begins with these words: 'The human person is created to praise, reverence and serve God Our Lord, and by so doing to save his or her soul.'<sup>47</sup>

At one level, the subsequent journey, through the Slough of Despond, in through the Wicket Gate and on to the final arrival at the Celestial City, can be read in terms of the journey of coming closer to Christ, (Second Week), of the trials and tribulations that will bring, (Third Week), and of the final assurance of all being well in Christ (Fourth Week). To do this too simplistically would, however, be to impose an alien ordering on to Bunyan's work. As *Grace Abounding* makes clear, Bunyan always struggled with the temptation to what he calls legalism,<sup>48</sup> and much of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is in that sense a kind of anti-legalism, the constant desire to trust completely in Christ. This is not so different to Ignatius, but it is told from a different perspective. Ignatius' own conversion story starts with the immense desire to follow Christ as closely as possible, and that is the impetus behind all he does. Thus, for him, even the conviction of sin is seen in terms of its negative effects on fulfilling his desire. For Bunyan, on the other hand, the sense of sin is more overwhelming and the trust in God's mercy harder to come by. In this sense, Christian's journey seems more about the individual's response than about Christ, who is seen only on the cross.

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<sup>46</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, p.12.

<sup>47</sup> SpEx [23], Munitiz and Endean, *St Ignatius*, p.289. The exact way in which salvation is understood may well be different, of course, and I will return to this question briefly in the conclusion. Ignatius is a medieval Catholic, Bunyan is a convinced Calvinist, though in fact at some stages of his work there are some Arminian leanings.

<sup>48</sup> At the end of *Grace Abounding*, p.102, he lists what he terms "seven abominations in my heart", temptations to which he is constantly prone. The third of these is "A leaning to the works of the law". In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, after having been rescued from the Slough of Despond, Christian is urged by Mr Worldly-Wiseman to go the village of Morality and there consult with one called Legality. Cf. *The Pilgrim's Progress*, p.20.

Nevertheless, both of them see the journey towards the fullness of life in Christ as one beset by dangers and problems. As with Bunyan, so Ignatius experienced many temptations, though for him clarity came more quickly and more permanently. However, the nature of the temptations was not entirely dissimilar. One of the key terms for understanding Ignatius' spirituality is the idea of the *magis*, the 'more.'<sup>49</sup> As Michael Ivens notes, this is not about us doing more, but rather '[w]e are concerned with the 'more' of Christ's invitations and of the expanding possibilities of his grace, not the 'more' of compulsion.'<sup>50</sup> But the more we desire to be faithful followers of Christ, the more insistent and, in Bunyan's imagery, violent, are the temptations which we face. As 1 Peter 5:8-9 puts it, we need to be vigilant because our enemy is prowling around seeking to ensnare us, leading us, in the language of the Two Standards, on the path to riches, honour and pride.

In order to see this, we can turn to the well-known story of Vanity Fair, one of the most striking passages in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Christian is at this time travelling with Faithful. They have just had another meeting with Evangelist, who has told them what to expect in the city. The Fair, we are told, is a very ancient one, ruled over by 'Beelzebub, the chief Lord of this fair.'<sup>51</sup> It offers all sorts of forms of what Ignatius termed riches and honours, and the vices issuing from them. Interestingly, this is one of the few places where Christian is not tempted to turn from his path. Instead, he and Faithful stay true to what they have come to confess.

First of all, they are treated as madmen and aliens – 'They are outlandish men', some of the crowd say of them, seeing how they are dressed.'<sup>52</sup> This leads to them being mocked and beaten. Yet, we are told, 'Christian and Faithful behaved themselves yet more wisely, and received the ignominy and shame that was cast upon them with so much meekness and patience that it won to their side (though few in comparison of the rest) several of the men in the Fair.'<sup>53</sup> This is a graphic illustration of what Ignatius means when he talks of the choice of poverty leading to humiliations and insults and thus to humility. The anger which this occasions for their opponents reminds us that, in Ignatius' language, there are two opposing camps doing battle here, and when that of the enemy sees its plans challenged, it responds more furiously still.

The eventual trial and subsequent martyrdom of Faithful are meant to show the advantages of remaining true to the way of Christ. In this great

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<sup>49</sup> Reflected in the Jesuit motto, *Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*, To the Greater Glory of God.

<sup>50</sup> Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, p.75, note 3. See also Ivens, *Keeping in Touch*, pp.17-21, where Ivens reflects on what he calls the "glory-consciousness" in Ignatius, where what is to God's glory is the defining criterion for Christian activity.

<sup>51</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, p.79.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p.80.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p.81.

set-piece in his work, Bunyan, like Ignatius, does not aim to offer us a choice between two equally plausible alternatives. Rather, he shows us the kind of temptations to which we are likely to fall prey, and by presenting them so vividly, he helps us to see them for what they really are. Thus forewarned, it is much easier to stand firm and continue following the path we have set out on.

It is not that there are no further temptations. Ignatius takes us by the way of the cross, Bunyan has Christian go into By-Path Meadow, leading him to the encounter with the Giant Despair. Yet the goal of the journey keeps them going, as does the knowledge that the death of Christ is not the end, but that the journey ends in contemplation of the Risen Christ. The Exercises normally conclude with an exercise called The Contemplation for Attaining Love, which encourages the one making the retreat to focus on the way God is at work in all of creation to demonstrate his love for us. Wherever I look, I find God's loving action towards me. The first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* ends with Christian and Hopeful being received into the Celestial City, as those who have loved God. There is a reason to their journey, a hope that ultimately nothing can extinguish.

## Bunyan and Ignatius: Concluding Remarks

In this necessarily very brief consideration of Ignatius and Bunyan, I have sought to show their similarities, which transcend time, place and denominational affiliation. As I read both of them, I am constantly struck by how much they do have in common. In this concluding section, I want to sum up those similarities, as well as acknowledging the real differences between them.

Both of them underwent a profound conversion experience at roughly the same age, namely in their late 20s. For both, this conversion was a prolonged event, that did not always proceed smoothly, something apparent even more in Bunyan than Ignatius. Bunyan's work as a tinker, as much as his somewhat later call to be a preacher, meant that he lived an itinerant lifestyle, and Ignatius was partly led to conversion by the attraction of the lives of the saints, whom he wished to follow. Ignatius also embarked on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and between the mid-1520s and 1540 when he arrived in Rome, he travelled to Jerusalem and back, through Barcelona, Alcalá, Salamanca, Paris (with excursions to Flanders and even London, not to mention a short return journey home), on to Venice, and finally through Italy to Rome. In his autobiography, perhaps not surprisingly, it is these journeys which fill up the pages, so that his sense of being a pilgrim was always very strong. Thus it is no surprise that both Bunyan and Ignatius draw on the ancient Christian reality and metaphor of journey for their stories, and their spirituality.

The sense of temptation and the fear of backsliding, of abandoning the path they have set out on, are common to both. Although it is in a sense more real in Bunyan, it is present for both of them. Ignatius has several sets of ‘rules’, or perhaps we could better translate them as ‘handy hints’, in his Exercises.<sup>54</sup> Two of these deal with discernment, how to be aware of when it is God who is calling us and when it is the bad spirit, or enemy of our human nature, in Ignatius’ terms. He notes more analytically than Bunyan that these temptations are different at different points of the journey, becoming more subtle and thus in some ways harder to resist, the longer we continue in the Christian journey.

Ignatius also appends to the Exercises what Munitiz and Endean translate as ‘Helpful Notes for the perception and understanding of scruples and of the insinuations of our enemy.’<sup>55</sup> In general, it is probably true to say that scrupulosity is not such a temptation to our contemporaries, and yet it is a language that is particularly apt for describing the experiences of both Bunyan and Ignatius. It is perhaps another way of talking about the temptation to legalism, since it concerns worries about whether we have done things in the right way. Both Bunyan and Ignatius had to learn to get beyond this state, since it is in many ways even more paralysing than sin. It is the opposite of the *magis*, since it feeds on the self’s sense of unworthiness, which leads always to the less, for we find ourselves unable to do anything out of fear that we will do it badly or wrongly.

There are, of course, also differences between the two men. Some of these are socio-cultural. Ignatius, the nobleman, draws on the late medieval courtly images for his description of the journey. His insistence on poverty comes from his initial experience of plenty. For him, poverty is a choice, while for Bunyan, at least for most of his life, it was not. Bunyan comes from the largely dispossessed class of former smallholders, one of the socio-economic losers in the transformations from feudalism to capitalism. He may have been itinerant, but his wanderings were mostly within a fairly short compass, around his Bedfordshire home.

There are also, needless to say, religious differences between the two, or at least they use very different languages. Bunyan is hardly complimentary about the Roman Catholic Church, though in fact he is far more exercised by the Ranters and Quakers, or the more Latitudinarian tendency in the Church of England. His anti-Papal remarks tend to have the ring of cliché to them, not surprisingly since he is very unlikely to have actually encountered many Catholics in his part of England. Ignatius at one

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<sup>54</sup> Cf., for example, ‘Rules by which to perceive and understand to some extent the various movements produced in the soul: The good that they may be accepted and the bad that they may be rejected’, Munitiz and Endean, *Spiritual Exercises* [313-336], pp.348-353. See for a commentary, Ivens, *Understanding the Exercises*, pp.205-237.

<sup>55</sup> Munitiz and Endean, *Spiritual Exercises* [345-351], pp.355-356. See for a commentary, Ivens, *Understanding the Exercises*, pp.242-247.

or two points in the Exercises gets himself rather confused trying to be careful about his theology. The initial versions of the Exercises preceded his theological studies and subsequently he was most keen to avoid causing problems with the church authorities. Bunyan, too, was not first and foremost a theologian,<sup>56</sup> but had picked up enough from reading Luther, and from hearing sermons, and from his readings of the Bible, to have some language to articulate what he firmly believed.

I think that this lack of deep formal education is probably an advantage for both of them, since their deepest intuitions take precedence over the need to express it, either for Bunyan according to the language of justification or, for Ignatius, in some other form, allowing for the need of sanctification on the journey as well. In the end, it may be this honesty to their own experiences, and the burning desire to share them with others, which unites Bunyan and Ignatius most closely. In this sense, they are at the beginning of modernity, the individual wrestling with God and living to tell the tale. So strong was the experience of been won over by God for each of them, that, like Paul,<sup>57</sup> they are almost forced to share it with others. It is the immediacy and power of their respective visions that have enabled them to continue to speak to so many Christians and others over the intervening years, and which give their lives and works an ongoing vitality.

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<sup>56</sup> On Bunyan's theology, see for example, Furlong, *Puritan's Progress*, pp140-154, Hill, *Bunyan and his Church*, pp.155-193.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:16-18.

The Pilgrim's Progress is not an apologist book in the usual sense, in that it does not actually present arguments for Christianity being true. Instead, it simply assumes Christianity is true and depicts all arguments to the contrary as hazards and traps which the Christian must overcome on his way to salvation. Bunyan's book opens with the title character clothed in rags, bearing a heavy burden on his back and reading from the Bible. The more he reads from it, the more agitated and frightened he becomes. When he returns home and his wife and children ask what is the matter, he answers that he has learned from this book that the city in which they live is destined to be destroyed by fire from Heaven, and he knows of no way to escape this fate. John Bunyan, the son of a travelling brazier or tinker, was born at Elstow, near Bedford, in 1628, at a period His prevailed through the land. education was such as poor people could in those days He was sent to school and give to their children. taught to read and write ; when wickedness. but he was an idle boy, and. Bunyan was the author of another allegory, The Holy War, published in 1682, which is second only in merit to the Pilgrims Progress. has also told the story. In his. own life. John Bunyan is known to most people today as the author of The Pilgrim's Progress, a book he began writing in prison. It tells the story of "Christian," who makes his way from the "City of Destruction" (which represents this world) to the "Celestial City" (which represents Heaven). It's been described as "perhaps the world's best-selling book" (after the Bible), and has been "translated into over 200 languages." {1} Written in the form of an allegory, it essentially relates the story of Bunyan's own Christian journey. {2} And just as his life was full of trials and suffering, so also "Christian"

Answer. The Pilgrim's Progress (full title, The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come, Delivered Under the Similitude of a Dream) was written by John Bunyan (1628–1688) and since its publication has encouraged countless believers in their walk with God. From a purely literary viewpoint, The Pilgrim's Progress is without a doubt the greatest allegory ever written. Critics have called it "a hybrid of religious allegory, the early novel, the moral dialogue, the romance, the folk story, the picaresque novel, the epic, the dream-vision, and the fairy tale" (Lynn Veach Sadler, John Bunyan, Twayne Publishers, 1979). The world over, The Pilgrim's Progress is one of the most widely read books in history and has been translated into over 200 languages. In terms of numbers, Pilgrim's Progress would have been a runaway best seller had it appeared in our day. 100,000 copies were in print in English alone in 1692! In January 1672 the Bedford congregation called John Bunyan to be its pastor while he was still in prison. A stained-glass window is devoted to John Bunyan in Westminster Abbey, London. Bunyan combined his skill as a tinker and his love of music to create an iron violin; later, during his imprisonment, he carved a flute from the leg of a stool that was part of his furniture. When China's Communist government printed Pilgrim's Progress as an example of Western cultural heritage, an initial printing of 200,000 copies was sold out in three days! John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress Full Title: The Pilgrim's Progress from This World, To That Which is to Come Year Published: 1678 (Part 1); 1684 (Part 2) Wrote: During his prison days Language: English Genre: Religious Allegory Publisher: Nathaniel Ponder (Bunyan Ponder, name he got after success of the book) Important Quote: "As I walked through the wilderness of..." Codes for Plot Chart Place name: Blue colour (left alignment) Encounters: Orange colour (left alignment) Companion during Journey: Black colour (center alignment) Story told: Green colour Plot Chart (Part 1) City of Destruction Christian Evangelist, Advises Christian to seek out from "Wicked- Gate". Obstinate & Pliable, Christian's neighbors. Pliable convinced to join Christian.