

Essay

Secularization and the Loss of Love in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*

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Abstract: In this paper, I place Bunyan's popular *Pilgrim's Progress* into a cultural context infused with, and informed by, a change from a sacred to secular preunderstanding. I discuss the ways that Bunyan wrestles with these changes in light of Taylor's work on secularization, and theorize that Bunyan's text reveals how the sacred and secular imaginaries were able to merge through a shared embrace of an economic system of rationalization. Additionally, and more tragically, both ideologies share a disdain for love in its vulnerable, intimate, and material forms that has led us to desire security instead of attending to a more humble (but powerful and enriching) need for assurance. I conclude by discussing Adorno's discussion of love and Auschwitz as a warning still necessary in our 21st century secular age.

Keywords: secularization; love; theology; Bunyan; *Pilgrim's Progress*; Charles Taylor

1. Navigating Secularization in the Seventeenth Century

Having abandoned his family in the City of Destruction, and after having extracted himself from the Slough of Despond at that town's borders, Christian confronts Mr. Worldly-Wiseman from the Town of Carnal-Policy. Christian's conversation partner asks about his family and his burden, and advises Christian to "with all speed get thyself rid of thy burden" in order to "enjoy the benefits of the blessing that God has bestowed upon thee" ([1], p. 18). When Christian lays out his plan for eliminating the burden that he caught from reading his book, progressing through the Wicket Gate and toward the Celestial City, Mr. Worldly-Wiseman warns him of dangers ("wearisomeness, painfulness, hunger, perils, nakedness, sword, lions, dragons, darkness, and in a word, death, and what not?" ([1], p. 18))

that will beset him, and advises him to “send for thy wife and children to thee to this village, where there are houses now stand empty, one of which thou mayest have at reasonable rates; provision is there also cheap and good, and that which will make thy life the more happy, is, to be sure there thou shalt live by honest neighbors, in credit and good fashion” ([1], p. 20). He then advises Christian to allow Legality and Civility (from the town of Morality) eliminate his burden. Christian initially finds this advice persuasive and leaves his path until he confronts Evangelist, who warns him against “turning thee out of the way...labouring to render the Cross odious to thee” and “...setting thy feet in that way that leadeth unto the administration of death” ([1], p. 21). Chastened, Christian chooses to ignore the advice of Worldly-Wiseman and avoid questions of morality and legality in the hopes of a more perilous path to redemption.

Bunyan explicitly informs readers that he wishes that his book “direct thee to the Holy Land” ([1], p. 8), providing spiritual instruction in a secular space, because it “seems a novelty, and yet contains / Nothing but sound and honest gospel-strains” ([1], p. 9). Much of the introduction concerns Bunyan’s struggle with potential interlocutors who accuse him of using dark themes, allegory, figures or images that deviate from the Biblical text itself: against these critics, Bunyan asserts his right to tell a story, arguing that its beneficent effects will improve readers. Christian’s encounter with Mr. Worldly-Wiseman offers readers a different way of experiencing the struggle between the sacred and the secular realms, one that has little to do with authorial intent. By situating the village of Carnal Policy within sight of Morality and keeping it distinct from the City of Destruction, Bunyan discloses a space for a secularized civil religion. Mr. Worldly-Wiseman’s advice to Christian is honest and practical—although Evangelist condemns the advice for keeping Christian from pursuing redemption in the Celestial City, he does not claim that Worldly-Wiseman’s characterization of the perils of the journey is incorrect. The path to heaven leads away from the comforts of home and family, denying the solace of the security centered in the secularized suburb: family, houses at reasonable rates, food without inflation, and pleasant and honest neighbors. The only thing lacking in this scenario is a redemption mediated by the Cross, which will be purchased at great price and through gross perils (instead of the “credit” available in the Town of Carnal-Policy).

Thus, while he argues against the secular and at times exaggerates its nature, Bunyan does not shy away from discussing its allure—the type of honest life that a conscientious secular humanism provides. By describing Mr. Worldly-Wiseman as conforming to “this world,” Bunyan, through the Evangelist, instructs readers that the allegorical landscape (like the social terrain travelled by the reader) remains infused with and informed by the secular. The world of the allegory is *not* a holy or sacred realm; instead, it is another version of the reader’s own world—filled with temptations, perils and dangers. The implication is that the narrated world provides the reader with a way to practice navigating similar issues in the world beyond the text.

Bunyan’s allegorical account offers an important case study in the theological possibilities of literature, as well as an indication of what is at stake in the confluence of sacred and nascent secular preunderstandings of the world. Sensitive to spiritual and cultural shifts, Bunyan’s parable provides readers with a variety of ways to navigate the new possibilities opened by the advent of the secular age. I limit my reading of this text to Part One, a document that requires no second part, for two reasons. The First Part was written and published seven years prior to the Second Part and not only represents an earlier engagement with the advent of the secular, but also is more attuned with Bunyan’s

introspective work that autobiographically manifest in *Grace Abounding*. Additionally, I feel that Bunyan's focus on a single protagonist, instead of the Second Part's emphasis on community, more usefully discloses the primary phenomenological experience with the secular. Because my interest in this article involves ways individuals negotiated the onset of new possibilities that emerged with a new social imaginary, I choose to build on Charles Taylor's work on secularization. Although Taylor's work has been criticized for its lack of historical rigor, most critics also indicate that much of Taylor's account is plausible; focusing on Bunyan provides an early "on-the-ground" example of how real, historical individuals may have navigated entry into the secular age more or less as Taylor describes. The focus on the secular as an *imaginary* also provides a fruitful lens for investigating Bunyan's dreamscape, which itself was a potent force shaping the social imaginary for generations after its initial publication.

After discussing the secular, I turn to describing how Bunyan uses the trope of dreaming as a mode of attuning readers to a comfortable appropriation of a blended secular and sacred (pointing out how he eschews the excesses of Vanity Fair's wholly secularized interior), and also how the Calvinist theology he embraces provides a hidden acknowledgment of the secular through its contractual (covenantal) mediations. I then meditate on how Bunyan's emphasis on a desecularized embrace of the sacred, mediated by an anxiety-inducing contractual theology, ends up *excluding* the possibility of love—moreover, that this loss of love colors our experience of modernity writ large thanks to an internalization of the need to measure our experiences against a standard of rationalization. I conclude by examining how embracing love would allow readers to experience the world in ways that adhere neither to the nihilistic, rationalist race to the secular, nor to the occasionally heartless and frequently dangerous craving for the sacred. Instead, I claim, love allows us to passionately embrace the possibilities of assurance while humbly clinging to the variety of goods available to us, avoiding the perilous existential excesses that stem from ignoring the sacred or the secular.

2. The Trauma of Secularization

Charles Taylor describes "secularization" as taking transformative root in the seventeenth century, arguing that this moment introduced a new possibility, "a conception of social life in which the 'secular' was all there was." The novelty of the situation emerged because the term no longer had a counterpoint in terms of "religious" time that related to a transcendental mode of organization. Taylor clarifies that "the secular was, in the new sense, opposed to any claim made in the name of something transcendent of this world and its interests." ([2], p. 32). Building on this distinction, Taylor argues that, in time, people attained a preunderstanding in which "the 'lower,' immanent or secular, order is all that there is and that the higher, or transcendent, is a human invention" ([2], p. 33). In this way, terms that initially distinguished complementary experiences of time in daily life (the secular and religious) transformed and began to signify opposed modes of understanding the world (immanent and transcendent). Although "the religious", (what I have called the sacred, above) is never eradicated as a category, Taylor argues that the cultural world became one in which the concerns of the transcendent became optional instead of expected.

This process has often been translated in terms of progress, but Taylor emphasizes how secularization is not a "subtraction" story in which humans shed their false beliefs; instead, secularization

describes changes that altered how people, in general, understood the world. One of the more interesting and less controversial claims that Taylor makes concerns the creation of a “buffered” self (which gives individuals a sense of distance and control over their fates) instead of a “porous” self (who finds that “the most powerful and important emotions are outside the ‘mind’” ([2], p. 41)). The presumption of autonomy, independence and control created by the “buffer” introduces a new sense of power over the surrounding world. Distinguishing forces from agents allowed individuals, gaining distance from the surrounding environment, to objectify the spaces around them as objects that could be dominated and manipulated. David Harvey, who locates a shift in the experience of space and time during the seventeenth century (paralleling what Taylor defines as the rise of secularism), discusses this shift in terms of spatial orientations and assumptions:

What many now look upon as the first great surge of modernist thinking, took the domination of nature as a necessary condition of human emancipation. Since space is a ‘fact’ of nature, this meant that the conquest and rational ordering of space became an integral part of the modernizing project. The difference this time was that space and time had to be organized not to reflect the glory of God, but to celebrate and facilitate the liberation of ‘Man’ as a free and active individual, endowed with consciousness and will ... Maps, stripped of all elements of fantasy and religious belief, as well as any sign of the experiences involved in their production, had become abstract and strictly functional systems for the factual ordering of phenomena of space ([3], p. 249).

The bounded spaces of modern maps, which imply creators who have internalized a distanced, objective sense of self and users who are used to an immanent experience of space, are symptomatic of the increasing influence of the secular age.

The incorporation of a boundary permits a distinction between agents and forces, and generates an ability for humans to become masters of the earth, which becomes more predictable, knowable, and certain. Successfully appropriating this sense of mastery leads to increased economic benefits, which correlates positively with more kinds of power on Earth. Despite this, however, Taylor argues that our experience of the bounded self is often deprivative: “many people today look back to the world of the porous self with nostalgia, as though the creation of a thick emotional boundary between us and the cosmos was now lived as a loss” ([2], p. 42). Scrutinizing the world objectively required sacrificing one’s ability to be grasped by the world, offering a reduced sense of intimacy and harmony, diminishing the frequency with which we attain the quality of “fullness,” which Taylor attends to at the end of his major work, *The Secular Age* [4]. Taylor’s advocacy of fullness has led some critics to charge him with smuggling in a Catholic agenda; however, this would require Taylor’s engaging in a type of nostalgia that he avoids throughout his work. A more generous reading of this “fullness” understands it as a potential mode of being-in-the-world for which the Catholic religion, at one point and in certain areas, provided a definitional framework. Taylor does not indicate a desire to “return” to this framework—fullness is an abstraction available only in a secular world with multiple paths to attain that sense ([5], pp. 300, 321).

Although producing tools and knowledge creates boundaries for us that reduce the feeling that we exist at the ungentle whims of incomprehensible and often unkind powers, the resulting feeling of security only partially assuages our more fundamental need for *assurance*. Danielle Hervieu-Leger claims that assurance is “the source of the search to make the experience of life intelligible and which

constantly evokes the question of why,” describing how modernity “breaks with the sacred in that it invests humanity with the task of rationalizing the world,” but ultimately reproduces the uncertainty that it meant to tame “in the form of so many fragmented demands for meaning whose urgency reflects a world that is no longer fixed and stable, representative of the natural order, but unpredictable and unprotected” ([6], p. 73). Choosing to supplement the world with human interventions designed to make life more predictable, even when successful, reduces the natural and supernatural spheres to that which can be controlled and determined. Merely diminishing the number of sites that one might choose to look for answers, and avoiding altogether the possibility of living comfortably with uncertainty and cultivating the human capacity for faith, modernity’s pursuit of rationalization (and the secularization that arrives as a consequence) invites our forgetfulness that larger answers are possible. We desire, with Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, the security offered by houses, families, provisions, neighbors, and credit, the security offered when “this world” (as Evangelist describes it) rids itself of the inconvenient burden summoned by a revelation from God. Attending to these desires at the expense of our more vast potential produces a sense that we are unmoored, homeless. We experience emptiness and brokenness, not fullness.

The slow shift toward secularism within the cultural imaginary, a shift that most of Taylor’s critics recognize (disputing the possibility of fixing dates) made it more likely that individuals seek a security born of skepticism instead of an assurance born of trust. These factors contributed to a sense of unsettled anxiety: the guidelines that had allowed believers to comfortably navigate the social imaginaries of a medieval world no longer functioned appropriately. Bereft of its traditional methods for articulating meaning, cultural products—including Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*—often ended up instilling doubt instead of relieving it. William Bouwsma discusses what happens as familiar boundaries blurred in the seventeenth century:

But his predicament was even worse if this experience had taught him to doubt the very existence of boundaries. He then seemed thrown, disoriented, back into the void from which it was the task of culture to rescue him. And this, I suggest, is the immediate explanation for the extraordinary anxiety of this period. It was an inevitable response to the growing inability of an inherited culture to invest experience with meaning ([7], p. 172).

Whatever its potential for understanding and regulating the natural world, rationalization, skepticism and the unfurling of a secularized world did little to provide ways for me to participate in a meaningful cosmos, in which I could be assured that I matter, that I am important. Our desires for assurance grow from a need to truly matter—the resulting feeling of fullness occurs most clearly in love-based relationships, but this manifestation of love remains seemingly incompatible with the varieties of secularization and rationalization that became dominant.

Our modern malaise, caused by an unrest that persists despite our being aware that we have secured ourselves against all known dangers, differs from the discontent of those in the early-modern period. Individuals in the early stages of secularization had memories of a kind of love whose assumed presence was no longer certain despite having recently appeared with great frequency: today, we experience only the absence of a love that assures us that we matter. The distance has only grown due to our inability to engage in the warmth of the immediate, in works of love that bind and connect us without a technological remove. In a sacralized cosmos, individuals could feel secure in their

knowledge of a beneficent higher power—but felt anguish generated by not knowing how that power felt about them, or whether that power was concerned or curious about their lives. Those influenced by Calvin’s theology, like Bunyan, were freed from the need to work for or earn their salvation—but lacked the crucial knowledge of whether they were merely called and remained unchosen, sinners in the hands of an angry God.

Written at the hinge of the transition from the religious to the secular age, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* bears witness to how individuals struggled to incorporate the meaning of this change, how they attempted to continue to matter. The book indicates how Bunyan conscripts the world around him to participate in a cosmic struggle, using familiar landmarks to anchor a spiritual journey from the City of Damnation to the Celestial City. Albert John Foster [8] and Vera Brittain [9] show how the places important in Christian’s progress reflect the geography of Bunyan’s world. On the one hand, localizing the topographical features of his dream onto the mundane spaces around him shows how Bunyan still retains a “porous” sense of self, able to see spiritual forces as co-inhabitants of his environment. On the other hand, Bunyan’s framing of Christian’s journey as a dream shows how he has incorporated a sense of the boundary—the narrative frame provides the very buffer that Taylor discusses. Put simply, the text’s framework displays a culture during a time of tradition.

Following Christian (as opposed to Christ), indulging in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* as a supplement to the Bible, was important as readers could learn how to navigate a world even as it was changing. In other words, in addition to literalizing the Christian journey, the trope of the dream as a way to track Christian’s trip provided readers with one way to navigate the changes in boundaries introduced by the onset of the secular age. Dream worlds, like fictional worlds, offer framed spaces in which it seems possible to bend the rules considered normal. These also have the advantage of being private and internal worlds, adhering to Taylor’s sense that religion becomes privatized within the secular age ([4], p. 52). By creating a literally imagined realm, Bunyan’s text uniquely summoned a new reading community able to converse about the changes in the social imaginary as they were occurring.

3. Familiarizing Readers with a Blended World

Foucault describes Cervantes’ Don Quixote, presented in 1606, as a “diligent pilgrim” whose “adventures will be a deciphering of the world” as he attempts to translate the chivalric symbolic matrix into a present day Spain ([10], pp. 46–47). Sixty years later, Bunyan’s Christian allows the author and readers a vehicle capable of transporting them into a world severed from the mundane kingdom Quixote occupied. As opposed to a quixotic concern with representation and a desire to find that language points to the thing itself, Christian’s journey through Bunyan’s dream provides readers with access to a world of metaphoric representations. As opposed to Cervantes’ satiric glimpse of a man who is simultaneously ennobled and unmanned in his attempts to cling to an anxiety-free world, Bunyan writes a representation of himself, but a self able to make progress without succumbing to the agonies of uncertainty. Deviating from Cervantes’ narrative form, which allows the reader to take pleasure from the narrator’s wry distance from Quixote’s adventures, Bunyan integrates himself continually into the text. The earliest indication of this is the frontispiece, engraved by Robert White, showing Bunyan in the center, eyes closed and hand resting on a lion’s den (and near, in later additions, a skull and bones), with Christian walking above, from a city near Bunyan’s right shoulder

(left margin) toward a city in the upper right hand corner of the page illuminated by a bright sun in the uppermost right-hand corner. White's illustration shows Christian engaged in reading a book: readers are thereby implicitly aligned with the reading wanderer, a moment of identification intensified by the author's additional identification with Christian. Both Bunyan and reader bear witness to the plights of Christian and his companions as they traverse an unreal, literally sacralized world; Bunyan's incorporation of himself into the text informs readers of how to navigate the gap between the sacred and the secular as a separate and important concern.

That Bunyan intentionally frames his work as a space within which readers can practice integrating the secular and the sacred emerges through his frequent reminders concerning his dreaming self. Disrupting the narrative progress of Christian, these reminders of Bunyan's dreaming self anchor the story in an immanent, material, mundane reality. Most frequently, these interruptions are nudges as Bunyan begins a series of descriptions with a simple "I saw," two words that remind readers that Bunyan is a witness offering his testimony. Less frequent is the phrase "Now I saw in my dream," which appears only 36 times in the text: it highlights the more significant episodes in Christian's journey—where he encounters failure, success, or a new traveler along the road. Bunyan's frequent reminders of a framework offers readers practice in moving from a real world undergoing the process of secularization into an allegorical world that clings to a literalized sense of the sacred. Steering away from a pure allegory that would feature Christian's journey without authorial intrusion, Bunyan's frequent interruptions make it less likely that readers simply put down the story as belonging to another world, and follow Bunyan in providing physical anchors for the transformative quest. Adjusting readers to a twofold existence, Bunyan's interruptions simultaneously acknowledge the reality of a world becoming increasingly secularized and the ability to be in this secular world without being of it. As such, Bunyan also demonstrates how the opening of the secular age did not simply negate religion in a way that would require its return; instead, Bunyan's text shows how the secular required individuals to create new ways of experiencing religion from the very beginning.

Throughout, Bunyan encourages repeated readings that further the reader becoming sutured into Bunyan's dream world. At the conclusion of the book, Bunyan offers the following as a coy challenge to readers "Now reader, I have told my dream to thee, / See if thou canst interpret it to me / Or to thyself or neighbor..." ([1], p. 143) These lines not only reinforce Bunyan's material presence as an author and co-witness of the vision, but also encourage readers to engage in a deeper and more robust interaction with the text. Bunyan cedes absolute control over his world, explicitly empowering readers to create their own interpretations of events. Coming at the end of the story, this challenge requires re-readings, assembling its parts into meaningful wholes that would allow readers to become co-creators of the text—a more active role than merely bearing witness. The third line, incorporating readers and neighbors, allows the cloud of witness to expand beyond the author, creating a community of those who continue to regard the persistence of the spiritual. Both the repeated readings and the explicit request for the reader's interpretation of the text implicitly acknowledge the advent of secularization, as the need for familiarization, or a gap that makes interpretation necessary, would otherwise not exist.

This concluding framework also acknowledges the growing importance of the secular in Bunyan's admonition to "not be extreme in playing with the outside of his dream" ([1], p. 143) The "outside" clearly invokes the mundane world from which Bunyan (and readers) bear witness to Christian's quest for the Celestial City, and refers also to those material anchors whose personalities provide real world

cognates for the allegorical figures and places Bunyan describes. Bunyan desires that readers focus on the spiritual truths instead of the literal shadows, but not exclusively: the command concluding the second stanza, “Do thou the substance of my matter see?” ([1], p. 143) contains a doubled valence. Readers who understand “substance” and “matter” as figurative (following the suggestion of earlier lines) see “matter” as a conceptual issue, and “substance” as Bunyan’s proposed plan of navigating secularization through hopping from one perspective to the other, remaining split between two increasingly divergent worlds. The other interpretation—understanding “substance” and “matter” as referring to more particular, fleshly realities, find that these lines encourage readers to hold the whole text in tension. From a perspective grounded on the sacralized dimension, Bunyan encourages readers to attend to the fleshly anchors beyond the text: his matter, his substance, his body. Choosing terms so split in their import opens up a third perspective, one that sees that the importance of Bunyan’s text is neither the mundanity of the rationalized world nor the pilgrimage through the sacred landscape of the dream, but instead is the space that his readers would occupy, a space that holds the two worlds in tension, a space opened and enabled by the dawn of the secular.

4. Spiritual Economics and the Centrality of Vanity Fair

Mr. Worldly-Wiseman’s suburban paradise is not the only secular space in the text: Christian’s progress is marked by a series of confrontations with the secular. These interruptions of Christian’s progress illustrated a variety of ways that individuals might blend the secular and the sacred, and the importance of this book in mapping such options for readers offers a partial explanation for its continued popularity. Bunyan’s exposition provided a path for readers to follow through the slow transition into the secular age—this can be seen in the map provided in the 1778 London edition of Bunyan’s book. This map (Figure 1) gave readers a way to visualize the landscape that Bunyan describes in a narrativized way more reminiscent of earlier (Renaissance) cartography than what was actually in use at the time ([3], pp. 242, 246, 256). The trifold map’s spatial orientations blend spiritual and narrative concerns: like narratives, one reads it left to right; like the spiritual journey, the road “ascends” from top to bottom in each panel. Thus, the City of Destruction, where the pilgrim Christian begins his journey, lies in the bottom left-hand corner of the map, with the Celestial City resting at the upper right hand corner. The deviation of this map from the topography of Bedfordshire (and its nature as an earlier form of narrative cartography) can be seen when contrasting it from Albert Foster’s hand drawn view of the same landscape ([8], p. 19), which places the story in a single page, oriented to the north.

Of any site on the map, Vanity Fair has proven to be the most notable landmark on Christian’s journey, trumping even the Celestial City as the text’s enduring anchor in a secular age. Barry E. Horner notes that Robert White’s engraving *The Sleeping Portrait* was missing in the first edition of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* because the city had been marked as ‘Vanity’ instead of ‘Destruction’ ([11], p. iv). The map illustrates the importance of Vanity (and its Fair) for helping readers negotiate the secular world. Visually, the illustrator depicts its centrality by allowing Vanity—the most nakedly secular setting in Bunyan’s narrative—to dominate the center of the middle pane. Unlike the “Valley of the Shadow of Death”, a place lifted from the Hebrew Bible and literalized as a geographic depression within the narrative, and differing also from the “slough of despond,” which seems to reflect a local geography given a spiritual meaning, Vanity Fair is a cultural place whose meaning is to lack a

of this Fair are soonest to be found: here is the Britain Row, the French Row, the Italian Row, the Spanish Row, the German Row, where several sorts of vanities are to be sold.” ([1], p. 79). The extensive range of cultures and traditions, beginning with what is most local to Bunyan and expanding across the English Channel, allow the Fair to serve as a microcosm of the world at large, incorporating the general secular world (notably absent are spiritual centers such as Rome or Jerusalem) into the landscape of his dream. Vanity Fair—unlike most places Christian moves through on his journey—seems genuinely ignorant of its surrounding context, entirely and immanently consumed with questions of earthly goods and pleasures. The desire for profit provides a universal tongue that allow all to understand each other—and cause all present to *misunderstand* Christian and Faithful.

Although Christian has little difficulty conversing with others he meets along his path, in Vanity Fair “few could understand what [Christian and Faithful] said...they that kept the Fair, were the men of this world: so that from one end of the Fair to the other, they seemed barbarians each to the other” ([1], p. 80). Wholly focused on the prospect of business, the inhabitants of Vanity indict the pilgrims for being “*enemies to and disturbers of their trade*” ([1], p. 82), indicating the importance of commerce in the secular world. Vanity Fair is a notably peculiar space in the spiritual and allegorical topography of the rest of the text. Assuming that Vanity embodies the *telos* of the process of secularization in the total elimination of the sacred (unlike, for example, the more polite and friendly environs of Carnal-Policy), Bunyan uses Vanity Fair to warn against the possibility of secularization’s excesses, allowing it to synecdochally represent the whole of the surrounding world.

The fact that Bunyan allows Christian and Faithful to understand the inhabitants of Vanity Fair (although the inhabitants cannot understand the pilgrims) provides a small acknowledgment of theology’s debt to the language and theories of secular economics. Pastors would often rely on secular terminology to explain difficult concepts, and the vocabulary of the marketplace helped to illustrate concepts such as “covenants,” “sacrifice,” and “exchange” ([12], p. 167). More insidiously, however, the *logic* of secular rationalizations colored the rhetoric used to explain Christianity. Beyond the best-known example, Pascal’s wager, Christians in the early modern era became increasingly reliant on systems of cost and benefit familiar from a market economy. Elements of this infect *The Pilgrim’s Progress*: in addition to having Christian and Faithfull claim they “buy the truth” when strolling through Vanity Fair ([1], p. 80), Bunyan remains fixated on the term “profitable” throughout the text: he teases readers in the introduction by asking “Art thou for something rare, and profitable?” ([1], p. 8), and the Interpreter compels Christian to “see that which will be profitable” ([1], p. 28). The dangers of this standard manifest through By-Ends, from the town of Fair-Speech, who easily appropriates this language as he describes his old principles as “harmless and profitable” ([1], p. 89). Although profitability becomes emphasized, indicating the internalization of the market-logic of capitalism, Bunyan acknowledges his ambivalence about its appearances through allowing the term to be introduced in his framework outside the text, and to allow noble and ignoble characters alike to make use of it.

Investing in readers’ predisposition for profits, Bunyan seems to acknowledge that terms like “profit” and the larger systems they indicate refuse to be tamed by theological systems, but does not fully recognize the extent of the paradigm shift that such occasional use enabled. The promise of profit simultaneously provided the possibility of security and completely eliminated any pretense of guaranteed assurance. As Lori Branch argues, the Vanity Fair episode (at the center of the metaphysics of buying and selling) indicates how Bunyan attempts the “salvation of commodity culture,” finding

that Bunyan's text is "inherently secularizing" in part through Bunyan's effort to "reconcile religion to discourses of economics and mastery" ([13], pp. 84–85). This work of reconciliation results in placing the religious in terms of the secular, and the secular in terms of the religious: it becomes difficult to tell what type of thinking plays the dominant role. Bunyan clearly identifies and struggles with the meaning of secularism; however, living at the dawn of the secular age, the helpful distinctions that 21st century readers take for granted are not fixed. As Branch suggests, "the anxious, systematic spirituality of John Bunyan points toward" the "problematization of the divide between the secular and the religious" ([13], p. 88), and not its simple acceptance. In part, this is why I am persuaded by Taylor's reluctance to find the term "postsecular" useful, or to speak of the "return of religion." Instead, Taylor's focus on "the religious and secular possibilities the immanent frame allows and enables" ([5], p. 13) permits readers to see how similar Bunyan's struggle to define boundaries within an immanent frame (and each frame, from Apollyon to Vanity Fair to the dreamworld to Bunyan's dreaming narrator, seems oddly self-contained from within its own perspective) is to their own experiences.

To say that Bunyan desired the "salvation of commodity culture" is not to say that he was a fan of capitalism as an end in itself; indeed, I agree with Richard L. Greaves, who argues that "Bunyan was no fan of the developing capitalist economy because it was founded, in his view, on the acquisitive spirit," bolstering his point by interpreting the figure of Hold-the-world (who argued that "people can legitimately become (more) religious to enhance their business or trade") as part of Bunyan's satirical attack against "those, such as Wilkins, the former puritan and present bishop of Chester, who sought an accord between the capitalist spirit and religion" ([14], p. 255). Indeed, the dishonest use of religion as a means to the end of better business should be read as exactly opposite to Bunyan's hoped-for mode of reconciliation as a space where faith attains the certainty of a marketable object. As Branch attests, "[t]hough the text expresses disapproval of much that was evil about exchange in Bunyan's day, it never questions the analogy of the market projected onto Christianity and relationship with God" ([13], p. 84). Bunyan's valiant attempt to use secular logics toward religious ends shows both the possibilities afforded by creative (rather than critical) thought, and also his intuitive grasp of new theological benefits opened by the secular.

Bunyan's incorporation of Vanity Fair and its embrace of a capitalist value structure is a symptom of a larger cultural difficulty. Shepherding readers away from despair and despond, Bunyan ensures that this wholly secularized space is introduced into a mapped landscape that has a balanced (although ambivalent) appreciation for the sacred, one whose path leads toward a hidden place that offers the utter annihilation of the secular in an absolute embrace of sacrality. The landscape thereby illustrates a third method (after the dreamscape and the prospect of civil religion) that allows Bunyan's text to help readers cope with the sense of loss accompanying secularization: although within its framework the secular world seems all encompassing, believers are given to know that it rests within a domain far more vast and spreading, one that (even unknown to its residents) falls under the jurisdiction of the Lord of the Celestial City. Those who fail to see the value of the sacred, who have become so enframed by the secular as to remain deaf to sacred language, are condemned to embody an incredibly limited perspective, as the name of the first juror to try the pilgrims, Blind-Man, seems to indicate.

5. The Loss of Love in Bunyan's Supernatural Dreamworld

From the author's apology to his conclusion, Bunyan makes clear that he has accepted the standard of rationalization, a standard that influences his marriage of the sacred and secular within his dreamworld. This places Bunyan as a cultural (not philosophical) progenitor of what Michael Allen Gillespie calls "the origins of modernity," which "lie not in human self-assertion or in reason but in the great metaphysical and theological struggle that marked the end of the medieval world and that transformed Europe in the three hundred years that separate the medieval and the modern worlds" ([15], p. 12). Embracing the theological tradition he inherited through the medieval period, Bunyan emphasizes argumentation that justifies (or condemns) Christian's choices based on logic and appeals to the Biblical text. Ostensibly, the story demonstrates how rationalization can harmoniously blend the secular and the sacred—problematically, the way that it performs this bridge comes at the expense of love. Unlike the use of reason, which looks to how the mind can impose its stamp over the world (selecting points of identity and disregarding the necessity of difference, including material particularities), love prizes that which is particular, diving wholly into an intimate and immanent embrace of what becomes lost apart from that moment itself. Because Bunyan seemingly internalized the standards of rationalization, persuading his readers through the use of a calculative logic of profit and loss, he misses love's potential to instruct and inform concerning other possibilities for life. The tone of the book echoes this decision, focusing on questions of despair and loss instead of resonating with the experiences of joy and love.

Framed in terms of a calculated seduction, Bunyan's introduction mentions "love" only three times ("If that thou wilt not read, let it alone; Some love the meat, some love to pick the bone" ([1], p. 4), "Dost thou love picking-meat" ([1], p. 9)), in a secularized, mundane context that robs love of its powerful theological possibilities. This banalized use of love is echoed in the tone of the introduction, as Bunyan attempts to engage the reader's desires in a coy flirtation ("Art thou for something rare, and profitable?"), encouraging the reader's increasing proximity:

Would'st thou be in a dream, and yet not sleep?
 Wouldest thou lose thyself, and catch no harm
 And find thyself again without a charm?
 Would's't read thyself, and read thou know'st not what
 And yet know whether thou art blest or not,
 By reading the same lines? O then come hither,
 And lay my book, thy head and heart together. ([1], p. 9)

Bunyan's intimation of a liminal space (a sleepless dream, dissociation from self) and intonations of mastery ("read thyself") culminate in a literal "come hither" line, finishing with an image of Bunyan co-mingling with the reader. Although this is a comforting mode of escapism on the one hand, especially given Bunyan's guarantee that one "catch no harm," the charge of the final line suggests a mode of anonymous sexuality stripped of all emotional or theological properties of love.

Michael Davies' "Bunyan's Bawdy: Sex and Sexual Wordplay in the Writings of John Bunyan" argues that the erotics of Bunyan's text has a theological mission [16]. He suggests that Bunyan presupposes a world of sexual transgressions and fallenness that requires reformation in order to allow

readers to find their way toward God. Yet, even this understanding remains open to interpreting Bunyan as lacking in love: the notion of “transgressive” sexuality, originating in a secular or desacralized world that had fallen from God, ends with an embrace of God tainted by this correction. Rather than using a vision of love that allows readers to enjoy and appreciate embodiment and intimacy, Bunyan’s work seduces readers by invoking a debased carnality and “rescues” them through employing a disembodied corrective. Throughout, love is lost.

Correlating with the drive toward disembodied perspectives that informed cartography after the Renaissance, Bunyan’s systematic exclusion of the physical, material and embodied adheres both to the waxing culture of the seventeenth century and to Bunyan’s understanding of theology. However, instead of arguing for this necessity, Bunyan reinforces these assumptions through the inhabitants of his dreamworld. These figures are not exactly people, or human—little can be seen or said of their form. Instead, the allegorical nature of the text allows abstract notions, concepts, and ideas to engage in conversation. Mentions of bodies generally incorporate a mortification of the flesh. Christian wounds and is wounded in his battle with Apollyon—Christian’s wounds, however, are instantly and miraculously healed by a hand holding leaves from the tree of life. Faithful is flayed, stoned, and burned to ashes. Lot’s wife—as salt pillar—is an embodied warning against a lack of focus. At best, the body is ignored (for example, in figures such as Evangelist, who is able to transport (in seeming violation of physical laws) across Bunyan’s dream world). The beautiful bodies mentioned (Civility has a pretty form, and Talkative is at least attractive at a distance) belong to those who would delay Christian’s progress. The body is a hindrance to Christian personally: it causes him to stumble in the Slough of Despair, causes him to grow weary and sleep, and eventually brings him to the point of suicide.

Bunyan indirectly indicates the inferiority of the material in a second way, through positing anxiety and worry as physical instead of emotional or spiritual burdens. This initially occurs at the beginning of the story, as Bunyan first witnesses Christian as “a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden on his back” ([1], p. 11), and Christian later admits that the burden appeared “by reading this book in my hand” ([1], p. 19): he carries it until he comes to the Cross, when “his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back” ([1], p. 35). The materialization of negative qualities is echoed in the creation of the Slough of Despond, which Help explains is:

such a place as cannot be mended; it is the descent whither the scum and filth that attends conviction for sin doth continually run, and therefore it is called the Slough of Despond: for still as the sinner is awakened about his lost condition, there ariseth in his soul many fears, and doubts, and discouraging apprehensions, which all of them get together, and settle in this place; and this is the reason of the badness of this ground ([1], p. 17).

Whether the ground of the place is the materialized anxiety of pilgrims, or the ground is corrupted by the accumulated fears and doubts sloughed off from the pilgrims’ bodies is less relevant than the import: Bunyan indicates that material bodies are little more than the accumulation of spiritual maladies and thus are inadequate for the expression of love.

Coincident with the exclusion of love, beauty and the body—and coinciding with the framework of both the religious and the secular—is the absence of sexual intimacy. Traces of sexuality show up in

inferable form through the figures of Christian's family, but no hint of physical intimacy can be seen. Sexuality, indeed, is mentioned only as that to which one should, like Faithful, flee from with eyes closed.

The exclusion of love continues throughout the text of the story, within the frames of both author and dreamer, and includes the plight of the pilgrim, Christian, who moves toward the Celestial City. The "progress" of the Pilgrim is measured in terms of episodes, generally as he struggles. Although Bunyan includes physical obstacles (The Slough of Despond, Apollyon, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, Vanity Fair, the Giant Despair) that reflect more traditional narrative conventions of the time, the bulk of his story includes ideological or theological disputes that emerge through conversation (Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, Talkative, Ignorance), or Christian's embrace of instruction from edifying conversation partners whom he encounters (Evangelist, Interpreter, the Shepherd).

More general divisions in the book emerge through attending to Christian's companions, dividing the text into three parts: the first section has Christian travel alone, assisted by an evolving cast of helpers. After crossing through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, Christian meets with his first friend and fellow pilgrim, Faithful. Faithful's execution at the hands of the denizens of Vanity Fair concludes the second section. Faithful's faithfulness unto death gives hope to he who becomes Hopeful, who remains through the third section and completes the journey to the Celestial City with Christian. There is Faithful, there is Hopeful, and there is Christian (as opposed to the "Loveful" which one may otherwise expect). All three of these pilgrims received a new name during their pilgrimage. Christian is introduced as such—it is not until page 42 that the reader learns that his name at first was Graceless (a name which would seem to imply that Christian is now Graceful, keeping a parallel with the others). Graceless is also the name of the town from which Temporary (the neighbor of Turn-back who is taken to Hell) hails. A seeming counter to Graceless is Great-grace—a powerful figure said to dwell in the city of Good-confidence. Grace is also what Christ secretly adds to the fire of grace to thwart the devil's attempts to put it out. Love is human, grace is divine—but the very human Bunyan, like his allegorical figure Christian, neglects the former and searches for the latter.

The slippage between Graceless and Christian should not be overlooked—in some ways; it is the first clue to the shadow of anxiety that haunts Bunyan. *Grace Abounding*, Bunyan's spiritual autobiography, narrates the gap between salvation and redemption, between security and assurance, between grace and love. Bunyan can accept, and in many ways desire, his identity as Christian. His torments come from doubts concerning his self-conception as lacking grace sufficient, revealed through the intense introspection caused by having internalized a standard of rationality that demands a mode of verification or falsifiability inappropriate for that content. Scornful of embodiment, Bunyan's desires and drives for the external and heavenly allow him to leave love behind without recognizing the advantages of ways that love provides the type of assurance whose absence haunts him.

Although Bunyan does not choose to call Christian "Lovefull," he does allow versions of love to characterize other figures within the text. The first interaction with such a figure occurs at the Palace Beautiful, where Christian encounters Charity (a virgin who lives with her sisters, Prudence and Discernment)—Charity asks about his wife and family, whom Christian had left behind, and the conversation terminates with Charity assuring Christian that "thou hast delivered thy soul from their blood" ([1], p. 48). Here again, love is connected with divine forgiveness in a way that prizes the transcendent (soul) over and against the material (blood), prizing the sacred (divine) against secular (human) connections. The exclusion of a human love is not limited to that of family—the connections

that Christian has with all others are surprisingly void of any concern for their well-being, even a philotic or brotherly love. For example, while kindhearted toward his companions, Christian seems remarkably unshaken even by his friend Faithful's fatal farewell—Faithful is simply not mentioned by Christian for the rest of the text. This reflects Bunyan's orientation toward the future at the expense of the past, allowing past loves, ties and obligations to remain behind.

Bunyan incorporates love in a second way that reflects his understanding that a secularized world would debase and corrupt love's potential. This depiction of love most prominently appears through characters that assail Christian as he moves toward the Celestial City. Thus, "Mr. Love-lust" is one of the jurors who tries Christian and Faithful in Vanity Fair ([1], p. 85), while Mr. Money-Love, who hailed from Love-gain in the County of Coveting ([1], p. 89), interrupts Christian and Hopeful as they progress along the path. Both characters reflect an anxiety that "love" without God would inherently be directed toward illicit ends, although this anxiety clearly builds on Bunyan's choice to operate within rationalized parameters of profit and loss instead of assumptions more conducive to the gentle exchange of giving and receiving that flows in love. Problematically, with this choice, Bunyan wholly obviates the notion of a love that could invite the sacred into the secular world instead of merely corrupting it, one whose embodied form would provide physically grounded assurance. Eliminating all middle ground, Bunyan provides readers a skewed and inhuman form of love.

6. The Need for Love in a Secular World

Confronted with the seemingly irreconcilable poles of the secular and the sacred that were emerging in the seventeenth century, Bunyan chose to posit a marriage of them that acknowledged the place of the secular within a context that still acknowledged the sovereignty of the sacred. Cleverly, Bunyan conjoins the rival worldviews by creating a fantastic terrain that connects the secular and the sacred along their axes of similarities: a disdain for the physical and an embrace of the rational. Merging the secular and the sacred allows the story to operate in a world of meaning that follows protocols sacred to Christianity while affirming a logic familiar to the secular world of commerce. Through Bunyan's text, readers witness ways of navigating the terrain of the world as it shifts from assuming a transcendent anchor to inhabiting a self-positing, immanent realm.

The price of the marriage of these two ideological strains manifests symptomatically through the text's continued emphasis on despair and focus on a disembodied sense of grace: what both ideological systems neglect in their embrace of rationalization is an understanding of the very human need for love. Bunyan's overlay of the sacred and the secular works through a theological appropriation of commercial language, which prizes profit without loss or expense, and a cultural drive to grasp with certainty those components of human life that importantly remain *uncertain*. The variability of love is its secret: those who neuter this feature of love, desiring only what is known and predictable, reduce it to its least important and beautiful manifestations. Love challenges me to give at a loss without concern for profit and compels me to assist one who may never repay me. Each experience of and encounter with love is different. Love is particularized, localized, embodied: it changes as those embraced in love's relating alter.

The human experience of love remains uncontrolled and uncertain: our hearts seem concupiscently to orient us toward objects beyond ourselves that make us weak and vulnerable. Our bodies change in

response to the upchurning of the passionate grasp of love: we become stronger and weaker, susceptible to greater pleasures and greater pains than what had visited us previously. We fall into and out of love: what had previously infused and informed our world, endowing each touch and glimpse and smell with added potency, might suddenly disappear. Faith provides a preunderstanding that allows me to acknowledge that those who surround me possess a possibility for my enhancement, and hope orients and guides me toward those potential futures in which my beloved continues to dance with me, in a relation that allows us to retain our individuality but still persist as the sum of more than our two parts. Love, the greatest of these, embodies their juxtaposition in a passionate incarnation of the present: to say “I love you” performs this fusion in a way that cannot be reduced to chemicals and certainly cannot be proved. The absence of this uncertain, carnal logic of love in Bunyan’s world reflected and informed the secular imaginary as it developed out of the seventeenth century.

Although I am critical of Bunyan’s compromises in the construction of his parable, and rue the loss of love that informed his allegory—and much religious thinking through the centuries—this is, in large part, because the choice to separate religion from love in all of its forms (carnal, brotherly, parental, marital) has minimized the extent to which religion could play a useful role in defending us against the onset of an overly rationalized secularity. Shorn of its transcendental anchors that prevent the illusion that humans are the measure of all things, the subsequent, reduced worldview is one that resembles the Town of Vanity and its Fair. Our modern world seems ruled over by its lords: carnal delight, luxurious, desire, lechery, and having-greedy. These types of drives and delights are what remain of love once one attains absolute control and avoids sharing, or being in any way grasped by external forces. Consumerism, after all, provides the purchase of a good or pleasure that we own: this gives us the ability to control its use and the ability to eliminate it once it no longer becomes useful (or when something that attracts our desire distracts us). Ruled by these masters of war and convenience, we become surrounded by the jury of peers that Bunyan names: Mr. Blind-man, Mr. Nogood, Mr. Malice, Mr. Love-lust, Mr. Live-loose, Mr. Heady, Mr. High-mind, Mr. Enmity, Mr. Liar, Mr. Cruelty, Mr. Hate-light, and Mr. Implacable.

The outcome of a lack of reflection, added to a drive toward heady intellectualism and an inability to be satisfied, has led to our modern day technocivilization. Deprived of love, we allow enmity, cruelty and malice to construct how we employ our tools: in the 20th century, this emerged as Auschwitz. In his essay “Education after Auschwitz,” Theodor Adorno connects the absence of love and the possibility for something like Auschwitz occurring. He writes, “With this type, who tends to fetishize technology, we are concerned—baldly put, with people who cannot love...Those people are thoroughly cold: deep within them selves they must deny the possibility of love, must withdraw their love from other people initially, before it can even unfold. And whatever of the ability to love somehow survives in them they must expend on devices” ([17], pp. 200–201). These devices are the prosthetics that allow humans to grasp the world with empowered abstraction, increasing the drive to become alienated from the immediate and the embodied.

Adorno’s essay functions as a lamentation for the success of the standard of rationalization that, supplementing the sacred, successfully overtook it and converted the landscape into an immanent totalized world. He comments,

I do not want to preach love. I consider it futile to preach it; no one has the right to preach it since the lack of love, as I have already said, is a lack belonging to all people without exception as they exist today... One of the greatest impulses of Christianity, not immediately identical with its dogma, was to eradicate the coldness that permeates everything. But this attempt failed; surely because it did not reach into the societal order that produces and reproduces that coldness. Probably that warmth among people, which everyone longs for, has never been present at all, except during short periods and in very small groups, perhaps even among peaceful savages ([17], p. 202).

The recent discussions of secularism nuance Adorno's suspicions of Christianity, which was not, in any case, his primary point of orientation. As I have shown, Christianity's potential for eradicating coldness was lost as it welcomed into its structure the drive toward rationalization, becoming abstracted and alienated from its incarnated form. Bunyan's story illustrates how this theological option became diffused into the popular cultural imaginary.

Adorno notes that an exhortation to love relies upon the same ideological coldness that permits Auschwitz: it introduces into a relationship an alien quality that prohibits love's emergence. Love, Adorno explains, "is something immediate and in essence contradicts mediated relationships" ([17], p. 202). With this in mind, Bunyan's allegory can be read as a warning against the anxieties caused by becoming ensnared into any symbolic structure—whether one perpetuated by a book, or the distractions of Vanity. Internalizing a need for "progress" instead of attending to love's deepening warmth drives us into coldness and deprives us of our most intimate—and important—possibilities. Love invites us to relinquish the gifts of coldness and distance—maintaining control, regulating our relationships. In lieu of our loneliness, love can provide us with a rooted sense of assurance, locating us with another in an intimate moment. Although Bunyan may have intended that the civil religion touted by Mr. Worldly-Wiseman may have earned his reader's scorn, I suggest that we might hearken back to the value of having families stay close, in good neighborhoods. In a matured secular world, clinging to the value of proximity and maintaining a disinterest toward "progress" as a value may allow us to embrace more opportunities to engage in love, recovering some of the warmth lost long ago.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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