

## 'Tell All Men': Bunyan and the Gendering of Discourse

Despite his refusal to allow women to preach, and his creation of several female characters whose speech is associated with uncontrolled and threatening female sexuality, Bunyan also undermines the early modern equation of female silence, chastity, obedience, and domesticity. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, for instance, Christiana and Mercy speak to men other than their husbands, even to complete strangers, without endangering their physical chastity or spiritual purity. At the same time, Bunyan's men benefit from positive associations with feminine characteristics such as submission, but for them also transgressive speech is condemned as parallel to female promiscuity. Thus it is too simple to say, as does Tamsin Spargo, that 'the female characters of Bunyan's later works may be read as disrupting to varying degrees the discursive framework in which they are contained'.<sup>1</sup> Bunyan rejects the characterization of male speech as acceptable and female speech as unacceptable, instead considering all human words suspect unless they accurately mirror the Word of God. On the whole, he thinks men more capable of interpreting and speaking Scripture, yet both in his polemical writing and in his allegories, women as well as men are permitted – and sometimes encouraged – to speak.

Bunyan distrusts human speech in general. Thomas Luxon asserts that Bunyan insists on the experience of new birth, to which 'talking and words, even talking about or repeating the Word ... is precisely the barrier'.<sup>2</sup> Yet Bunyan's more frequent contrast is between the words of human beings and the Word of God: that is, the written Word of the Bible through which a reader may experience the author, Jesus the Word of God. In the first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), Christian repeatedly denigrates his own speech, referring Obstinate and Pliable to a more dependable source of information regarding eternal pleasures: 'I can better conceive of them with my mind, then speak of them with my tongue: But yet since you are desirous to know, I will read of them

in my Book'.<sup>3</sup> Human rhetoric may conceal and thus abet heresy; in *A Case of Conscience Resolved* (1683), Bunyan advises that 'they that pray in assemblies ... ought to labour to speak, not only with fervency of words, but with ... soundness of doctrine'.<sup>4</sup> In *Grace Abounding* (1666), he repeatedly condemns his own pre-conversion speech from childhood onward: 'I had but few equals ... for cursing, swearing, lying and blaspheming the holy Name of God' (p. 8). Believers should neither participate in nor heed 'idle talk', for 'evil communication corrupts good manners', he warns in his 1689 text *The Acceptable Sacrifice*.<sup>5</sup> Sins of the tongue may be associated with sexual transgression; Bunyan writes in *A Holy Life* (1684) that godless men and women alike may exhibit 'wanton behaviours, lascivious words, and tempting carriages'.<sup>6</sup> As Vera Camden asserts, language is Bunyan's 'central obsession', since for him language replaces the sacraments and clergy as the 'the channel of redemptive guidance', a channel which could be polluted by cursing and blasphemy.<sup>7</sup> Thus, unguarded speech is enough in itself to ensure damnation, according to *A Few Sighs from Hell* (1658), so that 'you that love your souls [should] look to your tongues, lest you bind your selves down so fast to hell with the sins of your tongues, that you will never be able to get loose again to all eternity. For by thy words thou shalt be condemned if thou have not a care of thy tongue'.<sup>8</sup>

While human words in general may not always reflect the Divine Word, Bunyan singles out women's words as particularly unreliable. He warns in *Christian Behaviour* (1663) that women must 'take heed of an idle, talking, or brangling tongue'.<sup>9</sup> In his *Case of Conscience*, he declares that the female members of his congregation, whether in separate or mixed-sex meetings, 'are forbidden to teach, yea to speak in the church of God', that they 'should also not be the mouth of the assembly'. As support, he asserts that Eve's sin was to 'step ... out of her place but to speak a good word for worship', and declares silence and shame to be parts of her punishment since 'twas the woman that at first the serpent made use of, and by whom he then overthrew the world'.<sup>10</sup> Even after making the mistake of entering into debate with the serpent, though, Eve might have been victorious if she had relied earlier on 'that which should have been her only stay and weapon; to wit, the express Word of God'.<sup>11</sup>

Bunyan may have feared the threat of real women speaking, although, as Spargo notes, he 'never acknowledges or responds to the contributions to this debate made by women'.<sup>12</sup> He may have dreaded competition, as Marilyn Luecke asserts, and thus have decided to 'impose ... silence on women in order to safeguard his own authority to preach'.<sup>13</sup> It is likely that he was also attempting to forestall criticism from the women who comprised the majority of his own congregation: 'I am like enough to run the *gantlet* among you, and to partake most smartly of the scourge of the tongues of some'.<sup>14</sup> Whatever the reason, Bunyan's good women tend to be those who remain in the domestic sphere, silent, chaste, and obedient; according to *Christian Behaviour*, for instance, wives should not 'be given to wander and gossip abroad ... Wives should be about their own husbands business at home: As the Apostle saith, Let them be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their husbands ... because otherwise the Word of God will be blasphemed'.<sup>15</sup>

Bunyan's experience of women's speech was not entirely negative, however, nor is Christopher Hill quite accurate in claiming that 'Bunyan's account of his second wife's intervention on his behalf with the judges is the only positive role given to a woman in all his writings'.<sup>16</sup> Bunyan's introduction to the Bedford congregation, as Hill admits, came from hearing the godly speech of three or four women: 'And me thought they spake as if joy did make them speak: they spake with such pleasantness of Scripture language, and with such appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me as if they had found a new world', Bunyan reports in *Grace Abounding* (p. 17).<sup>17</sup> It seems, as Michael Mullett has argued, that gender (especially combined with poverty) as a spiritual metaphor can take precedence over other social constructions of gender: these Bedford women represent the lowly in spirit, those without claim to human wisdom, so that 'women stood on the side of the truly favoured'.<sup>18</sup> In his criticism of Eve in *An Exposition on the Ten First Chapters of Genesis* (1692), Bunyan points out that 'although the Scripture doth lay a great blot upon women, and cautioneth man to beware of these fantastical and unstable spirits, yet it limiteth man in his censure: she is only then to be rejected and rebuked, when she doth things unworthy her place and calling. Such a thing may

happen, as that the woman, not the man, may be in the right (I mean, when both are godly,) but ordinarily it is otherwise'.<sup>19</sup>

Anne Laurence and Patricia Crawford have presented separate arguments that the early modern period allowed certain forms of female speech, even speech on religious topics. While women were rarely permitted to preach, Laurence notes, many Dissenting congregations required public oral testimony before granting membership, and women were known to have led prayer meetings in homes.<sup>20</sup> Crawford adds that even in the Established Church, 'women's voices were to be heard as part of the congregation's liturgical response and in the set words of a service, such as that of marriage. Certainly in private, women had a role in talking of Scripture, teaching their families and, with due deference, admonishing their husbands'.<sup>21</sup> A particular influence on Bunyan, as Juliet Dusinberre argues, was John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, with its reverent portrayals of Protestant women speaking out against oppression and heresy.<sup>22</sup> It is in this context, that of public testimonial to the Word of God, whatever the response, that we should consider the instance of Elizabeth Bunyan publicly pleading for her husband's release. According to Bunyan's account in *A Relation of the Imprisonment of Mr. John Bunyan* (frequently published with *Grace Abounding*), she insists that he 'preacheth nothing but the word of God'; argues that he 'cannot have justice' because he is poor; and repeatedly contradicts the justices, saying 'it is false' (pp. 129–33).

While 'Bunyan's second wife was herself articulate, resourceful and courageous', with 'that working knowledge of the law that it behoved the early modern English poor to possess as part of their survival equipment', Mullett points out that Bunyan 'may have briefed his wife, and tended to see her as his messenger'.<sup>23</sup> Bunyan introduces her speech as if the words were his own: 'I did, by my wife, present a petition to the Judges three times, that I might be heard' (p. 129). For him, the authorisation of a godly man may be the surest guarantee that a woman is speaking in accord with God's will. In his polemic writings such as *A Case of Conscience*, Bunyan consistently makes an exception to the prohibition against female speech for women who use the words of men approved by God: '*Miriam* and all the women did sing with the *words of the men* ... they did sing them *after the men*,

as taking them from their mouth'.<sup>24</sup> Thus if women were permitted to preach ('but that I think none will allow,' Bunyan interjects, since it would violate Paul's prohibition against women usurping authority over men), it would not be in a separate meeting but 'as Eve, before Adam, in the presence of the men,' since 'that would be the way best to correct miscarriages'.<sup>25</sup> In *Christian Behaviour*, Bunyan states that a wife who is 'under' her husband 'as the Church is under Christ' may speak, for in these circumstances 'she openeth her mouth in wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness'.<sup>26</sup> Women who are submissive to men, and properly supervised in their speaking, are not a threat but an asset to the family and the church.<sup>27</sup>

Bunyan's complex attitude toward female speech is reflected in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The scene in which Christian abandons his family has been deplored by critics; Lynn Veach Sadler, for instance, declares that 'no woman can forgive Christian's sticking his fingers in his ears and running away to avoid his wife's conversation'.<sup>28</sup> But Christian does not refuse to listen to his wife because she is a woman – her cries are joined by those of his sons and his (presumably male as well as female) neighbours – but because she would prevent his escape from the City of Destruction.<sup>29</sup> In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, salvation may be facilitated or hindered by speech: Christian's conviction of sin, expressed orally ('What shall I do to be saved?') attracts Evangelist and his godly counsel (p. 147). In acting on Evangelist's words, Christian also speaks, while shutting out the words of others (or perhaps better to shut them out): 'his wife and children ... began to cry after him to return, but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on crying, Life, Life, Eternal Life' (pp. 147–48). The situation may initially appear gendered – Christiana's words versus Evangelist's – but Christian's second major dilemma about words is whether to listen to Evangelist or to Mr. Worldly-Wiseman. Here again, he attempts to make his decision based on the content of the speech rather than characteristics of the speaker: Worldly-Wiseman asks, 'Wilt thou hearken to me, if I give thee counsel?' and Christian responds, 'If it be good, I will' (p. 153).

It is not Christiana but several minor female characters that represent the stereotypical relationship between sexuality and women's speech. For instance, Faithful has been tempted by the words of Wanton: 'You

cannot think', he reports to Christian, 'what a flattering tongue she had: she lay at me hard to turn aside with her, promising me all manner of content' (pp. 194–95). In the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1684), Madam Bubble offers her body to Standfast, who assents to Mr. Honest's description of her: 'Doth she not speak very smoothly, and give you a smile at the end of a sentence?' (p. 390). 'She is a great *gossiper*', Greatheart tells Standfast, 'a bold and impudent slut [who] will talk with any man' (p. 391). Although Standfast is tempted by Madam Bubble's offer, as Margaret Thickstun argues, he is not blamed: 'Because Bunyan locates sexual lust firmly within the female, Great-heart condemns Madam Bubble ... displacing his anger at lust onto the woman'.<sup>30</sup> The solution to sexual temptation is not, however, female silence, at least when the character tempted is a woman. When the Interpreter calls Mercy 'sweetheart', his tone (as S. J. Newman notes) makes her blush 'and for a while continue ... silent' (p. 308).<sup>31</sup> But Bunyan does not conclude with female silence, for the Interpreter responds to her blush, 'be not afraid, only believe, and speak thy mind' (p. 308). Proper speech, whether by a man or a woman, will halt a seduction.

Nor is problematic speech limited to women; in fact, male characters can speak as loosely and as temptingly as the worst female offenders. The 'very fair' words of Adam the first, of the town of Deceit, initially impress Faithful – but 'then it came burning hot into my mind, whatever he said, and however he flattered, when he got me home to his house, he would sell me for a slave. So I bid him forbear to talk' (pp. 195–96). Faithful also encounters Shame, who 'would be haunting of me, and continually whispering me in the ear, with some one or other of the infirmities that attend religion' (p. 199). Christian's experience in the Valley of the Shadow of Death is similar, when a fiend 'whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind ... he had not the discretion neither to stop his ears, nor to know from whence those blasphemies came' (pp. 190–91).<sup>32</sup>

Then Faithful and Christian are joined by Talkative, the character who does most to undermine the early modern equation between women and garrulity. Ignorant of his name, Faithful invites the man to join him in 'discoursing of things that are profitable'. And Talkative's verbal outpour

begins: 'To talk of things that are good, to me is very acceptable, with you or with any other ... For to speak the truth ... [many] chuse much rather to be speaking of things to no profit'. At first it appears that the two speak the same language. Faithful exclaims in evident delight, 'what things so worthy of the use of the tongue and mouth of men on earth, as are the things of the God of Heaven?' Talkative responds: 'I like you wonderful well, for your saying is full of conviction; and I will add, What thing so pleasant, and what so profitable, as to talk of the things of God' (p. 200). Faithful concurs even with his new acquaintance's assertion that 'a man may learn by *talk*' all about faith, responding without qualification, 'All this is true, and glad am I to hear these things from you'. The pair are in complete accord until Talkative claims that men cannot 'obtain the Kingdom of God' without learning of grace through discourse. Faithful rejoins, 'But by your leave, heavenly knowledge of these, is the gift of God; no man attaineth to them by humane industry, or only by the talk of them'. At this point, as Bunyan's marginal note explains, 'Christian makes a discovery of Talkative, telling Faithful who he was': that is, a man who 'will beguile with this tongue of his, twenty of them that know him not' (p. 201). Moreover, Christian continues, he hales from Prating-row, the son of Saywell, 'and notwithstanding his fine tongue, he is but a sorry fellow... Religion hath no place in his heart, or house, or conversation; all he hath lieth in his *tongue*, and his religion is to make a noise *therewith*' (p. 202).<sup>33</sup>

The vehemence with which Faithful upbraids Talkative underscores his sense of betrayal by one whose speech he had taken for sincere. In order to emphasize the severity of the fault, Faithful equates talkativeness with hypocrisy, and both with female sexual sin. He makes the latter connection not once but three times. First, those who 'cry out against sin in the pulpit, who yet can abide it well enough in the heart, and house, and conversation' are like Potiphar's wife, who 'cried out with a loud voice, as if she had been very holy; but she would willingly, notwithstanding that, have committed uncleanness with [Joseph]'. Second, such a person is like a mother who 'cries out against her child in her lap, when she calleth it slut, and naughty girl, and then falls to hugging and kissing it' (p. 205). Finally, Faithful directly addresses Talkative: 'The proverb is true of you, which is said of a whore; *to wit*, that she is a shame to all

women; so you are a shame to all professors' (p. 207). Since Bunyan and most of his contemporaries had forbidden women access to the pulpit, the hypocritical speakers are presumably male, but the comparisons are to women; 'slut' and 'naughty' are not necessarily sexual (since before the late nineteenth century a 'slut' could also be a dirty or untidy woman), but in this context can easily be read as such.<sup>34</sup> After the male 'whore' has left, concluding that Faithful is 'not fit to be discoursed with', Christian commends his less-experienced companion's words, which contrast with Talkative's: 'Your words and his lusts could not agree ... You did well to talk so plainly to him as you did ... for they are these *talkative* fools, whose religion is only in word ... that ... do stumble the Word' (pp. 207–8). While Talkative has enacted the role of the bad woman, one who gives any man access to her words and by implication her body, Faithful is like the good woman, one who speaks in the presence of a husband or pastor who can guide, correct, and approve her speech.

Vanity Fair is filled with additional (mis)speakers, in most cases explicitly male. The items for sale include 'false-swearers, and that of a blood-red colour', and 'swearing, lying, ... and what not, that tended to destroy the soul' (pp. 211, 250). Faithful is martyred after three men bear false witness against him; his speech, both as approved by Christian and as reported in the courtroom of Vanity Fair, contrasts greatly with that of the 'false-swearers'. One, Pickthank, alleges: 'This fellow I have known of a long time, and have heard him speak things that ought not to be spoke. For he hath railed on our noble Prince Beelzebub, and hath spoke contemptibly of his honourable friends' (p. 215). The jurors, including Mr. Lyar, condemn Faithful for his words, which (like his deeds and even his thoughts) violate the laws of Vanity Fair, an 'intolerable' situation (p. 217). Although Christian is able to leave Vanity Fair, he is unable to leave behind hypocritical speech, as he and his new companion, Hopeful, are promptly joined by Mr. By-ends of 'the town of Fair-speech'. By-ends's kindred include 'my Lord Fair-speech (from whose ancestors that town first took its name)' and 'the parson of our parish, Mr. Two-tongues' (pp. 218–19). In this instance false speaking is again associated with men, but also with 'elevated social status', as N. H. Keeble notes.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps Bunyan was thinking of his wife's experience arguing before privileged men on behalf of a poor man.

Near the end of the journey, Christian and Hopeful are warned by good shepherds against 'the flatterer', the word 'flatter' recalling Wanton and Adam the first (p. 238). Nevertheless, the pilgrims are taken captive by a black man disguised in a white robe, who is, they are told by the shining one who rescues them, 'Flatterer, a false apostle, that hath transformed himself into an angel of light'; they had not imagined, they say, 'that this fine-spoken man had been he'. After their capture, Christian reminds his companion: 'Did not the shepherds bid us beware of the flatterers? As is the saying of the wise man, so we have found it this day: A man that flattereth his neighbour, spreadeth a net for his feet'. Hopeful reminds Christian that faithfully adhering to a written Word would have saved them from the false words of the flatterer: 'They also gave us a note of directions about the way, for our more sure finding thereof: but therein we have also forgotten to read, and have not kept our selves from the paths of the destroyer. Here David was wiser than wee; for saith he, Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer' (p. 247). Later they identify Atheist as another flatterer, and Hopeful recalls the lesson they learned in their experience with the first: 'Cease, my Son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge' (p. 249).

In their journey in the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christiana and Mercy encounter numerous examples of misspeaking, in each case by a male character. The women see that Simple, Sloth and Presumption have been hanged for their verbal and other crimes: these men have persuaded others 'to turn out of the way and become as they', explains Greatheart, adding that 'they brought up an ill report of your Lord', and of his land and servants (p. 314). Those who, like Formality and Hypocrisy, take a byway around the Hill of Difficulty, answer the warnings of the godly, 'As for the Word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the King, we will not hearken unto thee; but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth out of our own mouths' (p. 316). The women see the stage on which Mistrust and Timorous 'were burned thorough the tongue with an hot iron, for endeavouring to hinder Christian in his journey', and Mercy responds by recalling that her Lord has said, 'what shall be done unto thee thou false tongue?' (p. 318).

Mercy may be opposed to her suitor Brisk, a word Bunyan uses in *Grace Abounding* to characterize his speech prior to true conversion: at the time when he overheard the discourse of the Bedford women, he was a 'brisk talker ... in the matters of religion' (p. 16).<sup>36</sup> When Brisk sees that Mercy is serious about her pilgrimage, he leaves, whereupon Prudence remarks to Mercy that 'he will raise up an ill report of thee' (p. 326). After they resume their journey, Greatheart battles the giant Maull, who 'did use to spoyle young pilgrims with sophistry' (p. 340). The women also learn, from Mr. Honest, about Mr. Selfwill, who pretended to be a pilgrim, and 'neither cared for man, nor argument, nor yet example' (p. 350). Later, they see Heedless and Too-bold asleep in an enchanted arbor; these men, says Greatheart, talk in their sleep and 'say any thing; but their words are not governed, either by faith or reason. There is an *incoherencie* in their words *now*, as there was before' (p. 388).

In contrast to the many male misspeakers of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, men like Christian and Greatheart speak well, guiding their companions, and the words of Evangelist are prophetic. But some of the women also speak godly words, and listen with discernment to the words of others. Mercy chooses to accompany Christiana after determining 'within her self again, I will yet have more talk with this Christiana, and if I find truth and life in what she shall say, my self with my heart shall also go with her' (p. 289). Discretion judges Christian's talk before allowing him admittance, and she is assisted by Prudence, Piety, and Charity, 'who after a little more discourse with him, had him in to the family' (p. 176). Although these women, unlike Christiana and Mercy, are confined to the domestic sphere, they play an active role in guarding access to it, which is appropriate if one considers this analogous to chaste women guarding access to their persons. Yet they do not stop at guarding the chastity of the home, but continue on into instruction: while waiting for refreshment for their guest, the four women catechize Christian further, particularly inquiring if he had asked God to bless his attempts to persuade his wife and children to join the pilgrimage (p. 180). After his stay in their house, they go with him on his way for a bit, 'reiterating their former discourses' (p. 184).

As Discretion, Prudence, Piety, and Charity guard their home through speech, so Christiana and Mercy cry aloud against a direct threat

to their chastity: 'they both *shrieked* out, and cryed Murder, murder: and so put themselves under those laws that are provided for the protection of women' (pp. 298–99). It is true, as Margaret Soenser Breen argues, that this response recalls Christian's reaction to the friends and family who would prevent his journey, while 'the vision of progress that she achieves is the opposite of his. "We shall neither hear nor regard, nor yield to what you shall ask", she announces. Even so, she cannot of herself prevent their assault and, with it, the corruption of her soul'.<sup>37</sup> Breen also accurately notes that Christiana and Mercy are blamed for not having sought protection: 'By not having acquired a male guide to accompany her, Christiana has endangered her salvation. The attempted rape is the side effect of her own folly'.<sup>38</sup> That the two women have 'put themselves under those laws that are provided for the protection of women' is approved, however; and this approval is further reinforced by the marginal gloss pointing to the book of Deuteronomy, part of God's written Word. Moreover, the response to the cry for aid indicates that assistance is provided not merely because the women have obeyed divine law, but also because the people at the gate recognize 'Christiana's tongue' (p. 299).<sup>39</sup> On at least this one occasion, silence is expressly forbidden to women, and speech equated with godliness. The strongly preferred situation, for Bunyan, is for women to be directly supervised by men, but as long as women call for male aid when needed, and rely on the Word of God, no ultimate harm can befall them.

Bunyan's metaphor of the female Christian (the Christiana) as pilgrim almost inevitably places him in conflict with the cultural norm of domestic confinement for women. The use of this metaphor does not oblige him to allow Christiana and Mercy speak to strange men during their journey, however, nor to portray such extra-domestic speech in a positive light. Yet he announces his intention to do both in his preface to 'the Second Part of the Pilgrim', in which he commands Christiana to speak beyond her own home: 'Go, then, I say, tell all men who thou art, / Say, I am Christiana' (p. 278). Indeed, Christiana and Mercy reveal themselves to several men. For instance, when the women meet the Keeper of the Gate, who greets them with a kiss of pardon, Mercy 'fell to the ground on her face before him and worshipped, and said, let my Lord accept of the sacrifice of praise which I now offer unto him, with

the calves of my lips' (pp. 295–96). Although Mercy recognizes the man at the gate as her Lord, she and Christiana accept Gaius's invitation without such an excuse: 'while supper is making ready, if you please, let us entertain one another with some good discourse' (p. 353). Gaius is willing not only to talk with women, but also to 'speak on behalf of women, to take away their reproach ... They were women ... that brought tidings first to his disciples that he was risen from the dead. Women therefore are highly favoured, and shew by these things that they are sharers with us in the grace of life' (p. 355).<sup>40</sup> The male disciples benefited from listening to women; similarly, Prudence urges Christiana's sons to listen to a woman even though they have evidently reached the age at which boys were thought to be in need of more advanced (i.e., male) instruction: 'diligently give ear to what good talk you shall hear from others, for for your sakes do they speak good things ... You must still harken to your mother, for she can learn you more' (p. 325).

Another view of Christiana and Mercy, one asserted by Louise Schleiner, is as depictions of 'what [Bunyan] saw as the female side of any good pilgrim's character – the side that could be 'ravished' by the Lord, the side showing compassion, gentleness, humility, and a happy willingness to be helped as well as to help and achieve'.<sup>41</sup> Schleiner reads *The Pilgrim's Progress* as Bunyan's 'creat[ion] for himself and his first readers [of] a deeply satisfying, class-specific, and male-centered experience of power and validation', a text which 'appropriate[s] the feminine ... for a plebeian male-dominated spirituality and ideology'.<sup>42</sup> In contrast to this male appropriation of the female, Dusinberre sees women as 'the natural heirs of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a book which authorises the search for language and a voice'.<sup>43</sup> Female readers (the March sisters in *Little Women*, for instance) may indeed interpret the book as authorisation to speak and to journey spiritually, and male readers may see themselves in Christiana and Mercy, but I would argue that validating believers as women or as men is coincidental to Bunyan's primary focus: the individual's relationship with God. In portraying this relationship, Bunyan depicts God chiefly as male, despite the Interpreter's hermaphroditic representation of Jesus as mother, and the believer as female, since subordinate and passively receptive to God's grace. As Camden demonstrates, Bunyan found much to embrace in Luther's writ-

ings, including the metaphor of 'the mind of the believer [as] Christ's bride, assuming the feminine posture.'<sup>44</sup> For both women and men, then, ungodly speech is akin to female promiscuity, culturally more taboo than male extramarital sexual behaviour. Since words can be the conduit for salvation as well as damnation, righteous speech is acceptable, even from a woman addressing a male stranger. Such speech must be authorised either directly by God, as in the metaphorical journey of Christiana's progress, or via godly men, as in Bunyan's polemical writings.

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### Notes

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- 1 Tamsin Spargo, *The Writing of John Bunyan* (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 1997), p. 95.
- 2 Thomas H. Luxon, *Literal Figures: Puritan Allegory and the Reformation Crisis in Representation* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 157.
- 3 John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, ed. Roger Sharrock (London: Oxford UP, 1966), p. 149. See also Bunyan's *A Few Sighs from Hell*, in *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan* (henceforth *Misc. Works*), vol. 1, ed. T. L. Underwood and Roger Sharrock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 349: 'I am God, and not man, and my word is immutable, unchangeable ... for the Scriptures cannot be broken'. All subsequent references to *Grace Abounding* and *The Pilgrim's Progress* are included in parentheses in the text.
- 4 *Misc. Works*, vol. 4, ed. T. L. Underwood (1989), p. 306.
- 5 *Misc. Works*, vol. 12, ed. W. R. Owens (1994), p. 66.
- 6 *Misc. Works*, vol. 9, ed. R. L. Greaves (1981), p. 282.
- 7 Camden, 'Blasphemy and the Problem of the Self in *Grace Abounding*', *Bunyan Studies*, 1 (1989), 5–21 (pp. 5–6).
- 8 *Misc. Works*, vol. 1, p. 288.
- 9 *Misc. Works*, vol. 3, ed. J. Sears McGee (1987), p. 33.
- 10 *Misc. Works*, vol. 4, pp. 306, 324. See also Bunyan's *Exposition on the Ten First Chapters of Genesis*, in *Misc. Works*, vol. 12, p. 128.
- 11 *Misc. Works*, vol. 4, p. 129.
- 12 Spargo, p. 78.

- 13 Marilyn Serraino Luecke, "'God hath made no difference such as men would": Margaret Fell and the Politics of Women's Speech', *Bunyan Studies*, 7 (1997), 73–95 (p. 90).
- 14 *Misc. Works*, vol. 4, p. 296. According to Dorothy P. Ludlow, 'Shaking Patriarchy's Foundations: Sectarian Women in England, 1641–1700', in *Triumph Over Silence: Women in Protestant History*, ed. Richard L. Greaves (Westport and London: Greenwood, 1985), pp. 93–123 (p. 108), from 1673 to 1693 Bunyan's congregation had twice as many female as male members, and eight of the twelve founding members were women. See also Christopher Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious, and Factioned People: John Bunyan and his Church 1628–1688* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 297; Michael Mullett, *John Bunyan in Context* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1997), p. 51.
- 15 *Misc. Works*, vol. 3, p. 33.
- 16 Hill, *Turbulent*, p. 302. Hill also points out that 'we often take at face value statements [such as those by Bunyan] of the necessary subordination of women in seventeenth-century literature', and ignore the contradictory evidence of Bunyan's wife taking 'a very unwomanly initiative' and arguing for his release from prison. See *A Nation of Change and Novelty: Radical Politics, Religion and Literature in Seventeenth-Century England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 53–54.
- 17 Hill, *Turbulent*, pp. 296–97.
- 18 Mullett, p. 29. See also Margaret Thickstun, *Fictions of the Feminine: Puritan Doctrine and the Representation of Women* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1988), p. 88: 'Bunyan is more interested in the female experience of marital subordination as a metaphor for male spirituality than he is in either marriage or female spirituality for its own sake'.
- 19 *Misc. Works*, vol. 12, pp. 148–49.
- 20 Anne Laurence, *Women in England 1500–1760: A Social History* (London: Phoenix, 1994), p. 205.
- 21 Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England 1500–1720* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 145.
- 22 Juliet Dusinberre, 'Bunyan and Virginia Woolf: A History and a Language of Their Own', *Bunyan Studies*, 5 (1994), 15–46.
- 23 Mullett, p. 82.
- 24 *Misc. Works*, vol. 4, p. 311.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 307.
- 26 *Misc. Works*, vol. 3, p. 33.
- 27 It is important that the words of men be used; as Margaret Soenser Breen argues in 'Christiana's Rudeness: Spiritual Authority in *The Pilgrim's Progress*', *Bunyan Studies*, 7 (1997), 96–111, Bunyan sees women as misreaders in need of male instruction. See also N. H. Keeble, "'Here is her Glory, even to be under Him": The Feminine in the Thought and Work of John Bunyan', in *John Bunyan and His England, 1628–88*, ed. Anne Laurence, W. R. Owens, and Stuart Sim (London and Ronceverte: Hambledon, 1990), pp. 131–47 (p. 147): for Bunyan, women are 'persons in need of especially solicitous ministerial care and guidance'.

- 28 Lynn Veach Sadler, *John Bunyan* (Boston: Twayne, 1979), p. 109.
- 29 As Keeble points out in *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), p. 239, Christian abandons his family under duress and in anguish, and that by doing so, he achieves their salvation as well as his own: 'By refusing to put creaturely love before love to God, Christian secures the salvation of his family: they follow him'.
- 30 Thickstun, p. 104.
- 31 S. J. Newman, "Bunyan's Solidness," in *The Pilgrim's Progress: Critical and Historical Views*, ed. Vincent Newey (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1980), pp. 225–50 (p. 240).
- 32 These passages parallel Bunyan's self-condemnation in *Grace Abounding* (see Camden, note 7 especially pp. 5–14).
- 33 Mullet asserts that Talkative represents discourse without action, and although speech is important, 'the work's central metaphor, that of the journey, is one of vigorous activity' (p. 195).
- 34 The *OED* gives the sentence from Bunyan as an example of 'slut' used playfully, 'or without serious imputation of bad qualities'.
- 35 Keeble, *Literary Culture*, p. 241.
- 36 Sadler suggests that 'Bunyan perhaps thought of Mercy in connection with the Christ-centered stages of conversion that oppose the "brisk" works of the man-centered moral stage' (p. 111).
- 37 Breen, "The Sexed Pilgrim's Progress", *Studies in English Literature*, 32 (1992), 443–60 (p. 451).
- 38 Breen, p. 451. Similarly, near the end of their journey, the women and children, 'who both of feet and heart were but tender', are still in particular need of male words – 'the encouraging words of he that led in the front [Greatheart], and of him that brought them up behind [Valiant-for-truth]' – as the pilgrims 'feel for one another, by words; for they walked not by sight' through a dark mist (*The Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 386).
- 39 See also the incident in which Mnason recognizes Greatheart's voice and opens his door to the pilgrims (p. 366).
- 40 Mullett asks us to note that 'their role is described in the past tense' (p. 247) – 'they were women' – but Gaius's invitation to co-ed conversation ('let us entertain one another') and conclusion ('Women therefore are highly favoured') connect past events with the present and ongoing status of women.
- 41 Louise Schleiner, 'Gendered Journeys in *The Faerie Queene* and *Pilgrim's Progress*', in *Women and the Journey: The Female Travel Experience*, ed. Bonnie Frederick and Susan H. McLeod (Pullman, WA: Washington State UP, 1993), pp. 145–65 (p. 160). Schleiner notes the 'hermaphroditic' spirituality that results (pp. 161–63); see also Thickstun, p. 104.
- 42 Schleiner, pp. 156, 164.
- 43 Dusinberre, p. 27.
- 44 Camden, "'Most Fit for a Wounded Conscience": The Place of Luther's "Commentary on Galatians" in *Grace Abounding*', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 50 (1997), 819–49 (p. 840).