

## Chapter Sixteen

### Christian Enters into Battle with Apollyon

#### A. Apollyon Encountered and Described.

NOW *Christian* had not gone far in this *Valley of Humiliation* before he was severely tested, for he noticed a very foul fiend coming over the field to meet him; his name was *Apollyon* [*Destroyer*].<sup>1</sup> At this *Christian* became afraid and immediately pondered whether he ought to retreat or stand his ground. But on further consideration he realized that he had no armor on his back, and therefore to expose himself there in fleeing would probably give this foe the advantage with his use of piercing darts.<sup>2</sup> So he determined to risk confrontation with this enemy. For he further thought, "If I only had in mind the saving of my life, then it would still be best to stand my ground."

So he continued on, and *Apollyon* met him. Now this monster was exceedingly hideous to behold; he was clothed with scales like a fish of which he was most proud; he had wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, and out of his belly belched forth fire and smoke through a mouth like that of a lion.<sup>3</sup>

It is significant that whereas *Christian* resided at the Palace Beautiful for no more than four days, subsequently in Part Two, his wife *Christiana* with the four boys and *Mercy*, stay for about a month.<sup>4</sup> In descending to the *Valley of Humiliation*, *Christiana* avoids any slips so that the newly appointed guide *Great-heart* comments:

We need not to be so afraid of this *Valley*, for here is nothing to hurt us, unless we procure it to ourselves. It is true that *Christian* did here meet with *Apollyon*, with whom he had also a sore combat; but that fray was the fruit of those slips that he got in his going down the hill; . . . It is the best and most fruitful piece of ground in all these parts. . . . Behold how green this valley is, also how beautiful with lilies! I have also known many laboring men that have got good estates in this *Valley of Humiliation*; for "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (*Jas. 4:6*).<sup>5</sup>

Thus *Christian's* confrontation with *Apollyon* is a result of his need for humility that is, to some degree, lacking in his pilgrimage.

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. 9:11.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 6:16.

<sup>3</sup> Job 41:15-17, 20-21; Dan. 7:5; I Pet. 5:8; Rev. 9:17; 12:3-17; 13:2.

<sup>4</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, III, p. 199.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, III, pp. 205-206.

1. His name, meaning "Destroyer," is revealed in Revelation 9:11.

In Revelation 9:1-11, this "angel of the abyss" is commander of a host of hideous locusts which most likely represents assailing devils. Yet Apollyon himself is but a subordinate of Satan, for at the end of this contest Christian describes him as a captain under fiendish "Great Beelzebub."<sup>6</sup>

2. His terrifying appearance causes Christian to fear.

Possibly Christian had carelessly boasted of his seeming invincibility as he pondered his newly acquired armor. But as his opponent comes into view, the process of humiliation commences with a terrifying shock.

- a. Christian is discouraged from fleeing.

His thought of turning to flee immediately makes him sensitive to the vulnerability of his unprotected back. Fiery darts would be certain to find this exposed target and bring about his fall. Hence, he realizes that his safest course is to face the enemy head-on.

- b. Apollyon's hideous features are described.

Of course the physical ugliness and animal ferocity speak of the greater horror of his spiritual grotesqueness. While Bunyan may have been stimulated at this point by the imagery discovered in his earlier reading of story book fables, yet it cannot be doubted that the following characteristics were drawn from biblical representations of Satan and his infernal world.

- (1) His hideous or "dreadful and terrifying" (Dan. 7:7) appearance identifies him as an unnatural monster who intends to conquer by fear.
- (2) His fish-like scales declare a proud defense that is not easily penetrated (job 41:15-17).
- (3) His wings as a dragon speak of mobility, which allow him to roam throughout the four corners of the earth (Rev. 12:3-17).
- (4) His bear's feet are so ponderously strong that it is difficult for him to be upset (Rev. 13:2).
- (5) His fiery breath coming from his evil belly speaks of his desire to consume and destroy (job 41:20-21).
- (6) His mouth as a lion describes his savage and devouring appetite that is not easily satisfied or restrained (Rev. 13:2).

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

### 3. Application.

Thus Satan is presented as a serious and implacable foe, a foul fiend, a hellish tyrant. In earthly warfare, to underestimate the enemy is to court defeat. Hence, to treat the wiles and subtlety of Satan lightly (II Cor. 11:14-15), as though his ways and strategy were easily recognized and overcome, is to play the fool.

## B. Apollyon Woos Christian with Dialogue and Guile.

To begin with, this commander of Satan restrains his capacity to subdue with brute force that concentrates upon assailing the flesh. Rather, his initial tactic is to argue and convince within the arena of the soul.

### 1. He interrogates Christian with contempt.

When he drew near to *Christian*, he looked down upon him with a contemptuous, sneering expression, and then commenced to question him.

His disdainful attitude towards Christian, as a former subject, indicates his true temperament as a harsh employer. How different is the attitude of the Good Shepherd when he loses one of his sheep (Luke 15:3-7).



Christian is assailed by Apollyon

## 2. He challenges Christian's change of allegiance.

APOLLYON: From where have you come, and where are you going?

CHRISTIAN: I have come from that place of all evil, the *City of Destruction*, and am heading toward the *City of Zion*.

APOLLYON: So from this I conclude that you are one of my subjects since the whole of that region belongs to me; I am its prince and god!<sup>7</sup> This being true, then how is it that you have run away from your king? Were it not for the fact that my plan is for you to serve me further, I would, right now, strike you to the ground with one smashing blow.

CHRISTIAN: It is true that I was born in your territories, but your employment was hard; and your wages were such that a man could not properly live on them since the wages of sin is death.<sup>8</sup> Therefore when I came to adulthood, I did what other thoughtful people ought to do, and that is seek for better employment.

APOLLYON: You understand that no prince worthy of the name will easily release his subjects; and so neither will I let you go at this time. But since you have complained of your duties and salary, let me encourage you to return; I personally promise that every attempt will be made by our government to improve your wages.<sup>9</sup>

CHRISTIAN: But I have yielded my loyalty to another, even to the *King* of princes; so in all fairness, how can I possibly return to you?

No sovereign will easily yield up his subjects, especially to an avowed foe. Hence, to faithfully evangelize is to threaten Satan's kingdom and stimulate his anger.

## a. Christian has forsaken the City of Destruction.

He is bold to tell Apollyon to his face that his territory, "the City of Destruction," is "the place of all evil" and that he much prefers the holy "City of Zion." But such an attitude of rebuke was also the manner of Christ (Matt. 16:23; 17:18).

## b. Apollyon yet claims Christian as his subject.

He knows of Christian's earlier devoted service and worship, as well as his subsequent defection to the Lord of the Hill. But he still needs workers for his infernal work; so he forbears from crushing this rebel in an instant. Thus he makes his case.

<sup>7</sup> John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; II Cor. 4:4.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. 6:23.

<sup>9</sup> Apollyon's flattery.

(1) By citizenship.

You acknowledged my dominion, obeyed my laws, promoted my cause, received my hospitality, and actively entered into the life of our devilish society.

(2) By employment.

You received my wages for services ably rendered, and it is only your skills in this regard that restrain me from slaying you. But this threat is a lie, for Apollyon has no such power over authentic pilgrims (Job 2:6; John 10:28-29).

c. Christian repudiates Apollyon's proposal.

He acknowledges the truth of much that Apollyon recounts, though with strong feelings of remorse.

(1) His employment was harsh.

The job requirements were oppressive while the wages did not allow a person to live (Rom. 6:23). No wonder then that an alternative employer/employee relationship was sought.

(2) His dominion has ended.

Another, who is mightier, now receives Christian's full allegiance. He is "the King of Princes" (Hos. 8:10), and there can be no turning back.

d. Apollyon offers improved conditions.

He is prepared to review his terms of employment. But what attraction is there in the compensation of greater destruction and an increase in the quality of death?

## 3. He questions the worth of trials along the way.

APOLLYON: You have done that which the proverb describes, namely, "exchanged a bad for a worse."<sup>10</sup> Though it is quite common for those who profess themselves to be his servants, after a while, to slip away from his employment and again return to me. Do this and I assure you that all will be well.

CHRISTIAN: But I have given him my faith and sworn allegiance; so how then can I go back on my word and not be hanged as a traitor?

APOLLYON: You did the very same thing to me! Nevertheless, I am willing to let the past be forgotten if you will simply turn once more and go back to the *City of Destruction*.<sup>11</sup>

CHRISTIAN: What I promised you then was in my nonage [as *an immature youth*]; and besides this, I regard my *Prince*, under whose banner I now stand, as able to absolve me of your charges; and even further, he is able to pardon whatever I did in serving you. And besides all this, oh you destroying *Apollyon*, to be perfectly truthful, I like his employment, his wages, his servants, his government, his company and country infinitely more than yours. Therefore, stop trying to change my mind and leave me alone; I am the *Lord's* servant and I am determined to follow him.

APOLLYON: That is all very well; but consider what it will be like when your spirit is low and at the same time you have much to encounter in the way you are going. You are aware that, for the most part, his servants come to a wretched end because they are transgressors against me and my ways. How many of them there are who have been shamefully put to death! And furthermore, while you count his employment better than mine, yet he has never come from his heavenly residence to rescue any of his servants out of our hands. On the other hand, all the world well knows that I have, so many times, used my power and fraudulent schemes to deliver those who have faithfully served me; even when they were captured by he and his followers, still I have rescued them, and so I will also deliver you.

CHRISTIAN: His present restraint in delivering them is for the purpose of testing their love, that is proving whether they will be loyal to him to the end. And as for the sorry end that you declare is their destiny, why they are assured of receiving future glory. In fact they do not expect present deliverance; rather they are content to wait for their glory in the future, and then they shall certainly have it when their *Prince* comes in glory along with the angels.<sup>12</sup>

Even if conditions in the City of Destruction have not been perfect, yet they are much worse immediately along the way ahead. His appeal is now to reason and certain items of undeniable evidence.

<sup>10</sup> Apollyon undervalues Christ's service.

<sup>11</sup> Apollyon pretends to be merciful.

<sup>12</sup> Matt. 25:31; II Thess. 1:7.

a. Apollyon describes some future prospects.

He is a great discourager, and especially with regard to the reporting of the failures and trials of other pilgrims.

(1) Under the King of Princes.

Note that the appeal here is to consensus and personal satisfaction, not righteousness and truth.

(a) The common cooling of faith.

Many have followed the King for a while only to return to the City of Destruction (John 6:66-68). This is a wise rather than a shameful and traitorous turnabout. So it is probably that Christian will likewise act this way.

(b) The likelihood of a shameful death.

When at a low ebb in his spirit and depressed, then Christian is likely to meet with terror and death, as, have so many others. Besides, the King never seems to rescue his subjects; they always appear to suffer an ill end.

(2) Under his administration.

Note that the appeal here is to acceptance and protection within the realm of this present evil world.

(a) A considerate reception. .

He is willing to be magnanimous and overlook Christian's defection if he will but defect again back to the City of Destruction. How kindly is the tone of this deceptive proposition.

(b) A promise of support.

He is universally renowned for the deliverance of his subjects "by power or fraud," even those who have become temporarily captive to the King. His servants call, and unholy help is immediately dispatched!

b. Christian replies with unwavering faith.

His instruction received at the Palace Beautiful now proves to have been worthwhile, for some weighty challenges have now been thrust at him. He now also demonstrates the priorities of Patience.

- (1) His new allegiance is firm.

He has vowed to be subject, through faith, to his new King and will not be a traitor. His earlier subjection to Apollyon was as a minor in his "none-age" or irresponsible adolescence. Hence, he has no responsibility to return. Furthermore, his new Prince is able to absolve him of any guilt regarding his former unholy alliance.

- (2) His new employment is superior.

As God the Son, having been tempted, directly rebuked Satan (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10), specifically regarding his uncompromising loyalty to God the Father, so Christian boldly affirms before Apollyon his unswerving devotion to his new Prince: "I like his service, his wages, his servants, his government, his company, and country better than thine" (Matt. 16:26).

- (3) His ultimate deliverance shall be glorious.

He agrees that their Prince often withholds deliverance in this present age for the purpose of testing the love of his pilgrims (I Pet. 1:6-7). Yet those same pilgrims know that their ultimate end will be glorious when their Prince comes for them surrounded with radiant angels (II Thess. 1:4-10).

4. He describes Christian's unfaithfulness to date.

APOLLYON: But you have already been unfaithful in serving your new *Lord*, so how is it possible for you to receive any wages from him?

CHRISTIAN: Tell me, oh *Apollyon*, in what ways have I been unfaithful to him?

APOLLYON: Very soon after leaving the *City of Destruction*, you were quickly discouraged when you almost drowned in the *Slough of Despond*. You made several wrong attempts to be rid of your burden, whereas you should have waited until your *Prince* relieved you of it himself. Through shameful oversleeping, you lost a very precious personal possession; also you were nearly persuaded to turn back at the sight of those fierce lions; and when you converse, as you travel, of what you have heard and seen, your inward desire is for personal glory with regard to everything that you say or do.<sup>13</sup>

CHRISTIAN: All that you say is true; in fact there is much more that you have left out. But the *Prince* who I serve and honor is very merciful and most willing to forgive;<sup>14</sup> but besides this, these misdemeanors were committed in your territory where I was educated in them; and as a consequence I have grieved over them and repented of ever doing such things. Furthermore, I have received a full pardon regarding these crimes from my *Prince*.

<sup>13</sup> Zech. 3:1-5; Rev. 12:10.

<sup>14</sup> Ps. 86:5.

Here, as “the accuser of our brethren” (Rev. 12:10-11), Apollyon plays one of his most effective roles. Night and day his taunting darts frequently wound and produce great pain. The pilgrim’s feeble protests are shouted down with mocking charges of hypocrisy and failure.

a. Apollyon accurately describes Christian’s failings in detail.

He dredges up that which the pilgrim seems to have put behind him. The further suggestion is that such behavior undoubtedly merits unemployment by the King of Princes.

(1) His sinking to near despair in the Slough of Despond.

He failed to be on the alert and was incapable of rescuing himself.

(2) His attempt to be loosed of his burden by Mr. Legality.

He failed to heed the advice of Evangelist and his book, and yielded to Mr. Worldly-Wiseman.

(3) His slothful sleep on the Hill Difficulty.

He failed to avoid self-indulgence with the result that he lost both time and his sealed Roll.

(4) His thought of returning at the sight of the lions.

He failed to remain steadfast before threatening opposition and would have returned but for the beckoning porter ahead.

(5) His continual thoughts of vainglory.

He failed to acknowledge that his progress thus far was wholly due to his Prince. Rather, he congratulated himself for his accumulated attainments. At this point, we especially notice Apollyon’s ability to be aware of the inner musings of the pilgrim’s heart.

b. Christian confesses his sin yet stands his ground.

In *The Work of Jesus Christ as an Advocate* based upon I John 2:1, Bunyan begins this publication by explaining in what sense it is true that genuine Christian’s sin. Then he warns:

For Satan doth not only tempt the godly man to sin, but, having prevailed with him, and made him guilty, he packs away to the court, to God the judge of all; and there addresses himself to accuse that man, and to lay to his charge the heinousness of his offence, pleading against him the law that he has broken, the light against which he did it, and the like. . . . What, then, should the sinner, if he could come there, do at

this bar to plead? Nothing; nothing for his own advantage. But now comes in his mercy - he has an Advocate to plead his cause . . . Jesus Christ the righteous.<sup>15</sup>

Christian now pleads this same Advocate.

- (1) He agrees with Apollyon's accusations.

Christian's honesty in acknowledging the excess of his sin is similar to that of Martin Luther:

When I go to bed, the Devil is always waiting for me. When he begins to plague me, I give him this answer: 'Devil, I must sleep. That's God's command, 'Work by day. Sleep by night. So go away.' If that doesn't work and he brings out a catalog of sins, I say, 'Yes, old fellow, I know all about it. And I know some more you have overlooked. Here are a few extra. Put them down.' If he still won't quit and presses me hard and accuses me as a sinner, I scorn him and say, 'Physician, heal thyself.'<sup>16</sup>

- (2) He claims the mercy of his Prince.

His new allegiance offers forgiveness (I John 1:8-10) through intercession (Heb. 7:25), not crushing accusation (Zech. 3:1). During that period of spiritual turbulence which immediately followed Bunyan's conversion, he recounts in *Grace Abounding* several encounters with the accusatory Satan. Refer to Paragraphs 200-201, 215 for examples of this intense dialogue.<sup>17</sup>

- (3) He declares his genuine repentance.

As a youth in the City of Destruction, he "suckt" or "sucked" in the polluting disease of that corrupt society. It still lingers with him, but now he groans over its every manifestation. Further, he not only loathes periodic recurrence of this infection, but also delights in the cleansing word of his Prince (John 13:10; 15:3), and the hope of consummate transformation (Rom. 8:23; II Cor. 5:1-4).

### C. Apollyon Assails Christian with Rage and Onslaught.

The obvious change in Apollyon's strategy at this point betrays a failure to conquer Christian in the arena of his mind with rational discussion. The contest now takes on a new direction and concentrates upon trials that are more directly aggressive, incorporating sensual and carnal elements, and thus evokes intense passion. Jesus Christ suffered a similar variation in Satan's tactics; compare his temptations in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11) with the agony that encompassed his Passion Week trials and crucifixion (Heb. 5:7-8). The believer is likewise confronted with temptations that are designed to suit his peculiar weaknesses, whether they are either mental or carnal in nature (Heb. 12:1; I John 2:16).

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<sup>15</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, I, 154-156.

<sup>16</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand*, p. 284.

<sup>17</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, I, §§ 200-201, 215, pp. 31-43.

1. He roars at Christian with fierce scorn.

APOLLYON: (In a furious rage) I am an enemy of this *Prince* of yours: I hate his person, his laws, and his people: for this reason I have purposely come out here to oppose you.

CHRISTIAN: *Apollyon*, be very careful what you are doing, for I am in the *King's* highway, that is the way of holiness;<sup>18</sup> so watch yourself.

His earlier passivity was a charade; his smooth cloak of dialogue falls away to reveal speech that is aggressively evil. He brazenly declares his “anti-Christ” nature and loathing of Christian’s Prince, his laws and people. Furthermore, he has specifically come to challenge this pilgrim. But Christian bravely declares that he stands in “the highway of holiness” (Is. 35:8), and thus inherits the protection of he who built such a straight road. He lays down the gauntlet on behalf of his Prince.

2. He arrogantly attacks with defiance in the way.

APOLLYON: (Now defiantly astride the whole width of the way) I am void of fear in this matter, so prepare yourself to die, for I swear by my infernal den [*of iniquity*] that you shall go no further; here I will spill your soul!

At this *Apollyon* was quick to throw a flaming dart directly at his breast; but *Christian* used the shield that was in his hand and deflected it, and so avoided this danger. Then in response, *Christian* drew his sword since he now realized it was time to stir himself. But *Apollyon* swiftly hurled a hail of darts that, notwithstanding all the skill that *Christian* could muster to avoid, yet inflicted wounds on his head as well as his hand and foot.<sup>19</sup> Now this assault caused *Christian* to retreat a little, so that *Apollyon* pressed more forcefully; yet *Christian* again took courage and resisted as courageously as he could. This agonizing combat extended beyond half a day, even until *Christian* was almost exhausted. For you should know that *Christian*, on account of his wounds, inevitably grew weaker and weaker.

Apollyon takes up the gauntlet by straddling (“strodled”) himself across “the highway of holiness.” His militant challenge, “I am void of fear in this matter, prepare thy self to dye. . . . here will I spill thy soul,” is not to be confused with melodrama. Rather, it is drama of chilling reality!

- a. His central thrust is toward Christian’s breast.

He aims at the thorax region, which incorporates the chest and abdomen, where vital organs are protected by “the breastplate of [practical, not imputed]

<sup>18</sup> Num. 20:17-19; 21:22; Deut. 2:27; Isa. 35:8; 40:3.

<sup>19</sup> Christian is wounded in his understanding [head], faith [hand], and conversation [foot]. Lev. 8:23-24.

righteousness” (Eph. 6:14; cf. Is. 59:15-18; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 4:24; 5:1, 9; Works, Vol. 11, p. 5). The “flaming dart” (Eph. 6:16) is an arrow dipped in pitch and set alight. It is intended to ignite combustible material, to bring pride to the boil, to cause lust to burn, to make anger rage, to enflame jealousy, to fire up sinful speculation and thought (II Cor. 10:3-6).

(1) Christian defends with the shield of faith.

It is really “the shield of faith in Christ,” a safe hiding place that blunts and extinguishes fiery missiles (Rom. 5:2). It is “justifying faith” in the face of sin’s onslaught (Rom. 8:33-34). It is trust in God’s protection while incendiary shells burst all around. Thomas Goodwin adds: “When the soul is battered and tossed in the waves of humiliation, it is faith that climbs to the top of the mast, and spies Christ out to get on board.”<sup>20</sup>

(2) Christian offensively draws his sword.

It is like a Roman short sword that is suitable for quick thrusting at close quarters, having two sharp edges (Heb. 4:12). It is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17), that is the “rhēma” (Greek) of God, which must be applied to specific situations. While it is good to stand before the enemy and not retreat, yet progress can only be made when the sword of God’s Word is used offensively so that the enemy is forced to yield his obstructing stance (Jas. 4:7).

b. His unrelenting assault gains ground.

Bunyan’s portrayal of sanctification, here as with the whole pilgrim journey, sharply contrasts with the more modern emphasis of spiritual growth supposedly being attained through passive faith. Bishop J. C. Ryle clearly explains the difference:

Is it wise to teach believers that they ought not to think so much of fighting and struggling against sin, but ought rather to “yield themselves to God,” and be passive in the hands of Christ? . . . I doubt it. A holy violence, a conflict, a warfare, a fight, a soldier’s life, a wrestling, are spoken of [in the New Testament] as characteristic of the true Christian. . . . If Christian in Pilgrim’s Progress simply “yielded himself” to God, and never fought, or struggled, or wrestled, I have read the famous allegory in vain.<sup>21</sup>

(1) Christian receives a hail of darts.

When assailed with the Word, Apollyon responds savagely, and possibly with the ancient taunt, “Has God said?” (Gen. 3:1). His shower of skeptical arrows, each one being crafted by destructive liberal devils, seemed almost

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Goodwin, *Works*, VIII, p. 462.

<sup>21</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Holiness*, pp. xvi-xvii.

overwhelming. Yet as Christiana later passed this way, she gladly recognised on the ground “some of the Shivers of Apollyon’s Broken Darts.”<sup>22</sup>

(2) Christian receives several wounds.

Since his head is wounded, had he properly donned his “helmet of salvation” (Eph. 6:17)? Since his hand is wounded, did he lose his grip on his sword (Eph. 6:17)? Since his foot is wounded, were his gospel shoes damaged (Eph. 6:15)? Kelman adds: “Temptation has got at his thoughts, his deeds, and his walk.”<sup>23</sup>

(3) Christian retreats with growing weakness.

The conflict is prolonged, for half a day, while Christian doggedly resists with diminishing strength due to his wounds. He courageously revives, yet falters more frequently. Thus Apollyon, sensing greater weariness in his opponent, presses the staggering pilgrim back.

(a) Imprisoned Bunyan in retreat.

Though a preacher with a growing reputation, yet Bunyan relates in *Grace Abounding* (Paragraph 333) his further conflict with Satan while imprisoned:

I was once above all the rest [of my afflictions] in a very sad and low condition for many weeks; at which time also I being but a young prisoner, and not acquainted with the laws, had this lay much upon my spirit, That my imprisonment might end at the gallows for aught that I could tell. Now, therefore, Satan laid hard at me to beat me out of heart, by suggesting thus unto me, But how if when you come indeed to die, you should be in this condition; that is, as not to savour the things of God, nor to have any evidence upon your soul for a better state hereafter? For indeed at that time all the things of God were hid from my soul.<sup>24</sup>

(b) Application.

Yet today, while there has been some emphasis upon demon possession and devilish phenomena, nevertheless this perspective has not been cast in Bunyan’s terms of the stalwart believer wrestling with doubt and personal corruption. More often we presently hear, in glib terms, of Satan being readily defeated or cast out, while sin is portrayed more as a self-image maladjustment or relational imperfection. Admittance of being spiritually wounded, of stumbling, of humiliation, of retreat because of satanic combat and wrestling, may have scriptural warrant (I

<sup>22</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, III, p. 208.

<sup>23</sup> John Kelman, *The Road*, I, p. 137.

<sup>24</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, I, p. 49.

Cor. 10:12; 11 Cor. 4:7-11; Eph. 6:12; I Tim. 6:12), but it is not popular in our achievement oriented society which has so infiltrated the church.

3. He advances further until Christian gains the initiative.

Then *Apollyon*, recognizing his opportunity, began to press closer upon *Christian* and, now wrestling with him, heavily threw him to the ground. As a result, *Christian's* sword flew out of his hand. Then *Apollyon* gleefully exclaimed, "I am sure of you now," and immediately he drew close intending to inflict a mortal wound. At this point *Christian* began to despair of staying alive.<sup>25</sup> But, as *God* would have it, while *Apollyon* was preparing his final blow so as to destroy this good man, yet *Christian* was enabled to nimbly stretch out his hand and regain a grip on his sword. At the same time he cried out, "Do not rejoice against me, oh my implacable enemy, for when I fall, I shall yet arise."<sup>26</sup> Then he gave *Apollyon* a deadly thrust which caused him to draw back as if he had received a fatal wound. Now in perceiving this, *Christian* moved in upon him while declaring, "Even so, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."<sup>27</sup> As a result, *Apollyon* quickly spread out his dragon's wings and fled away so that *Christian* saw him no more.<sup>28</sup>

Satan delights in close combat, so that he seizes the opportunity to wrestle this enemy pilgrim to the ground. As Gurnall comments:

When the enemy hath hold of one there is no declining, but either he must resist manfully, or fall shamefully at his enemy's foot. Satan comes close up, and gets within the Christian, takes his hold of his very flesh and corrupt nature, and by this shakes him.<sup>29</sup>

Sadly, *Christian* suffers a "dreadful fall," a yielding to temptation close to his breast (Ps. 37:23-24).

a. *Christian* loses his sword in weakness.

It is his meditation upon his fall that chiefly weakens his grip upon his sword. Guilt, in the recipient of grace, is a terrible quencher of thirst for the Word of God. Only the well trained soldier of Christ determines not to let go. He clings to Scripture just as a sick person resolves to continue taking prescribed, health-giving medicine.

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<sup>25</sup> II Cor. 1:8.

<sup>26</sup> Mic. 7:8.

<sup>27</sup> Rom. 8:37.

<sup>28</sup> Jas. 4:7.

<sup>29</sup> William Gurnall, *The Christian In Complete Armor*, I, p.114.

## (1) Apollyon rejoices.

His exclamation, "I am sure of thee now," is born of experience. Christian has lost his confidence in the Word and use of the Word. His heart is no longer being replenished with fresh servings of spiritual nutrition, nor is he emboldened to go on the offensive. Gurnall explains the needed corrective attitude:

This was David's preservative. 'Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee,' (Ps. 119:11). It was not the Bible in his hand to read it; nor the word on his tongue to speak of it, nor in his head to get a notional knowledge of it; but the hiding it in his heart, that he found effectual against sin. It is not meat in the dish, but [in the] stomach, that nourisheth; not physic [medication] in the glass, but taken into the body, that cleanses.<sup>30</sup>

## (2) Christian despairs.

He is "afflicted, burdened excessively beyond his strength, under the sentence of death," forgetful that it is "God who raises the dead, who delivers from so



Christian loses his sword

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., II, p. 269.

great a peril” (II Cor. 1:8-10). He feels forsaken even as did David (Ps. 22:1-2; cf. Ps. 10: 1). He neglects the means of grace because he feels beyond the help of grace. Indeed, the location of this contest was just beyond “Forgetful-Green” in a narrow passage of the Valley.<sup>31</sup>

(3) God intervenes.

“But as God would have it,” is a declaration of the sovereignty of grace mediated through Michael the archangel (Jude 9). However, the reviving of Christians heart so that he might cleave afresh to the Word of truth is attributed by Bunyan to God’s bestowal, not man’s self-enlightenment or self-bestowal (Ps. 94:17-19). Just when Apollyon is about to give a killing thrust, the power of grace enables Christian to regain his sword and conquer (Rom. 5:21; 1 Cor. 15:57). In *Grace Abounding*, Bunyan recounts numerous instances where near despair was dispelled through the intervention in his mind of Scripture.<sup>32</sup>

(4) Christian rejoices.

He is reanimated with the recovery of his sword because “this is my comfort in my affliction, that Thy word has revived me” (Ps. 119:50). He is stirred to shout with militant jubilation: “Rejoice not against me, O mine Enemy! when I fall, I shall arise” (Mic. 7:8). Now the Word of God gives wounded pilgrim encouragement and hope (Rom. 15:4).

b. Apollyon is given a deadly thrust and retreats.

It is fatuous to suppose that Bunyan’s understanding of Scripture as being effectual against Apollyon could be associated with more modern approaches to the authority of the Bible. Limited inspiration, such as is incorporated in moderate evangelicalism, neo-orthodoxy, or the many faces of liberalism, would undoubtedly receive his censure as much as did subjective Quakerism in his day. With regard to the overall shallowness that pervades so much of contemporary church ministry, Bunyan would unquestionably agree with the apt comment of Gurnall:

The word of God is too sacred a thing, and preaching too solemn a work, to be toyed and played with, as is the usage of some, who make a sermon nothing but matter of wit, and to flaunt it forth in a garish discourse. What is this to the business of preaching? Their sermon it too like a child’s baby [doll], from which if you take the dressing, the rest is worth nothing. Unpin this story, take of that gaudy phrase, and nothing is left in the discourse. If we mean to do good, we must come not only in word, but in power. Satan budes not for a thousand such quibs and whitcracks.<sup>33</sup>

However, Christian here did cause Apollyon to “budge” and flee since his only resort was to the earnest wielding of the sword of the Word of God.

<sup>31</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, III, p. 207.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, I, §§ 143-144, 192, 194, 198, 202, 206, 213, 229, pp. 23, 30-33, 35-36.

<sup>33</sup> Gurnall, *Christian In Complete Armor*, II, p. 286.

- (1) He receives a fatal blow.

Like his Prince (Matt. 4:1-11), Christian deeply wounds the enemy with the Word of God and not the words of men. He then claims victory on behalf of his Prince (Rom. 8:37).

- (2) He withdraws seriously wounded.

Like his Captain Beelzebub, Apollyon flees the power of the Word of God so powerfully ministered by the resistant Christian (Jas. 4:7). He retires, as was the case when repudiated by Christ (Matt. 4:11), to snare pilgrims who are not so well equipped and faithful.

#### D. Christian Gives Thanks and Recuperates

Surely the over-confidence that caused Christian to earlier slip, having left the Palace Beautiful, has now been corrected. He is no less victorious, but he is more humble and trusting “through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37).

1. Bunyan reflects as an observer upon this battle.

Now unless any man had seen and heard the intensity of this combat as I did, he could not possibly imagine the yelling and hideous roaring of *Apollyon*, as well as his dragon-like manner of speaking. On the other hand, what sighs and groans there were that burst forth from *Christian's* heart. During the whole encounter I never saw him give so much as one pleasant look, that is until he was aware of his wounding of *Apollyon* with his two-edged sword;<sup>34</sup> but then he smiled broadly and at the same time looked upward. However, on the whole, this was the most dreadful sight that I had ever seen.

As narrator of his dream, Bunyan conveys the intense reality of this incident by adding, as he occasionally does, a commentary interlude.

- a. Apollyon furiously yelled, roared, screamed.

This was hellish war involving angelic participation concerning “the commandments of God and . . . the testimony of Jesus” (Rev.12:7-9, 13-17).

- b. Christian fought with deadly seriousness.

There was no jocular repartee in Apollyon's presence, but rather sober respect after the manner of Michael the archangel when he disputed with the devil concerning the body of Moses (Jude 9). Christian's only smile was upward toward heaven rather than outward before men.

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<sup>34</sup> Heb. 4:12.

## 2. Christian gives thanks in prayer for his deliverance.

So when the battle was over, *Christian* declared, "I will here give thanks to him who has delivered me out of the mouth of the lion, that is against *Apollyon*;"<sup>35</sup> and so he spoke with gratitude as follows:

Great *Beelzebub*, the captain of this fiend,  
 Designed my ruin; therefore to this end  
 He sent him harnessed out, and he with rage  
 That hellish was, did fiercely me engage.  
 But blessed *Michael* helped me,<sup>36</sup> and I  
 By dint [*blow*] of sword did quickly make him fly.  
 Therefore to him let me give lasting praise,

And thank and bless his holy name always. He has been rescued from the lion's mouth (Ps. 22:21), though his adversary remains alive to fight again. From Part Two we learn that *Apollyon* has retired to the more terrifying valley ahead, no doubt I so as to arrange a different type of ambush.<sup>37</sup>

Christian gives thanks  
 for his victory



<sup>35</sup> II Tim. 4:17.

<sup>36</sup> Dan. 10:13, 21; Rev. 12:7-9.

<sup>37</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, III, p. 208.

- a. By way of angelic assistance.

Michael the archangel, with his hosts (Rev. 12:7), enabled Christian to overcome the diabolical plan of Apollyon's captain, "Great Beelzebub." Earlier Protestant commentators identified Michael with the preincarnate Christ (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1; Rev. 12:7; cf. Calvin, *A Commentary On Daniel*, Vol. II, pp. 369-373), and this appears to be Bunyan's opinion here.

- b. By way of his two-edged sword.

As David so skillfully used his sling to slay the giant Goliath and yet declared that "the battle is the Lord's" (I Sam. 17:47), so Christian deftly used his sword and yet gave all praise in his victory to his Prince. As Luther writes:

See how much he [God] has been able to accomplish through me, though I did no more than pray and preach. The Word did it all. Had I wished I might have started a conflagration at Worms. But while I sat still and drank beer with Philip and Amsdorf, God dealt the papacy a mighty blow.<sup>38</sup>

3. Christian recovers through providential means of grace.

Then there came to *Christian* a hand in which were some of the leaves of the *Tree of Life*, and taking these he applied them to the wounds that he had received in the battle; as a result he was immediately healed.<sup>39</sup> He also sat down at that same place to eat bread and drink from the bottle that had earlier been given to him. So being refreshed, he prepared himself for moving forward in his journey. Now his sword was already drawn in his hand, for he said, "I do not know if some other enemy may be near at hand."<sup>40</sup> Even so, he did not meet with any further opposition from *Apollyon*, that is throughout the remainder of this valley.

He has not gained the victory unscathed, for the wounds to his conscience need the application of ointment and dressing (Ps. 147:1-3), and his weakened condition needs nourishment (Is. 40:29).

- a. His wounds are healed.

A sovereign hand provides leaves from the Tree of Life (Rev.22:1-2). Their cleansing application brings immediate healing, that is the closing up of wounds so that they cease to sting.

<sup>38</sup> Bainton, *Here I Stand*, p. 166.

<sup>39</sup> Rev. 22:2.

<sup>40</sup> Eph. 5:15.

b. His body is refreshed.

He feeds upon the bread and wine earlier provided by his friends at the Palace Beautiful. Remembrance of the wounds of his Prince for his sin brings reassurance and strengthening. So he finds Christ's flesh and blood, that is his atonement, to be "true food, and . . . true drink" (John 6:54-56).

c. His sword remains drawn.

This pilgrim has matured as a soldier, for his sword remains purposely drawn and at the ready having become stained with the blood of Apollyon. He has entered into spiritual manhood and thus is better prepared to meet further assaults. So he presses on, now walking far more circumspectly (Eph. 5:15). He leaves behind, not only shivers of Apollyon's broken darts, but also his own spilt blood, disturbed ground, and split stones, which his family will wonder at when they later pass by.<sup>41</sup>



Christian is healed by leaves from the Tree of Life

<sup>41</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, III, p. 208.