

John Bunyan (1628-1688), *Pilgrim's Progress*

Pilgrim's Progress (1678), an allegory, takes the form of a dream about the Christian's progress through the world to salvation.

The dreamer or narrator describes Christian's pilgrimage to the Heavenly City. Christian meets various allegorical persons: some, like Talkative and Ignorance, tempt him away from salvation; others, like Hope and Evangelist, support and direct him to the true way. Christian successfully passes through spiritual stages and experiences, such as the Slough of Despond, the Valley of Humiliation, and the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Accompanied by Faithful, he comes to Vanity Fair; there Faithful is slain but Christian escapes.

Bunyan's description of Vanity Fair follows.

Then I saw in my dream, that, when they were got out of the wilderness, they presently saw a town before them, and the name of that town is Vanity; and at the town there is a fair kept, called Vanity Fair. It is kept all the year long. It beareth the name of Vanity Fair, because the town where it is kept is lighter than vanity, and also because all that is there sold, or that cometh thither, is vanity; as is the saying of the Wise, "All that cometh is vanity" (Eccles. 1; 2:11, 17; Isa. 40:17).

This fair is no new-erected business, but a thing of ancient standing. I will show you the original of it.

Almost five thousand years ago, there were pilgrims walking to the Celestial City, as these two honest persons are; and Beelzebub, Apollyon, and Legion, with their companions, perceiving by the path that the pilgrims made that their way to the city lay through this town of Vanity, they contrived here to set up a fair; a fair wherein should be sold all sorts of vanity, and that it should last all the year long. Therefore at this fair are all such merchandise sold as houses, lands, trades, places, honors, preferments, titles, countries, kingdoms, lusts, pleasures, and delights of all sorts, as whores, bawds, wives, husbands, children, masters, servants, lives, blood, bodies, souls, silver, gold, pearls, precious stones, and what not.

And, moreover, at this fair there are at all times to be seen jugglings, cheats, games, plays, fools, apes, knaves, and rogues, and that of every kind.

Here are to be seen, too, and that for nothing, thefts, murders, adulteries, false swearers, and that of a blood-red color.

And, as in other fairs of less moment there are several rows and streets under their proper names, where such and such wares are vended; so here likewise you have the proper places, rows, streets (namely, countries and kingdoms) where the wares of this fair are soonest to be found. Here are the Britain Row, the French Row, the Italian Row, the Spanish Row, the German Row, where several sorts of vanities are to be sold. But, as in other fairs some one commodity is as the chief of all the fair, so the ware of Rome and her merchandise are greatly promoted in this fair; only our English nation, with some others, have taken dislike thereat.

Now, as I said, the way to the Celestial City lies just through this town where this lusty fair is kept; and he that would go to the city, and yet not go through this town, "must needs go out of the world" (Cor.5:10.2). The Prince of princes Himself, when here, went through this town to His own country, and that upon a fair day, too; yea, and as I think, it was Beelzebub, the chief lord of this fair, that invited Him to buy of his vanities; yea, would have made Him lord of the fair, would He but have done him reverence as He went through the town. Yea, because He was such a person of honor, Beelzebub had Him from street to street, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a little time, that he might, if possible, allure that Blessed One to cheapen and buy some of his vanities; but He had no mind to the merchandise, and therefore left the town without laying out so much as one farthing upon these vanities (Matt. 4:8-10; Luke 4:5-8). This fair, therefore, is an ancient thing of long standing, and a very great fair.