

ST ANTHOLIN'S LECTURESHIP CHARITY LECTURE
1997

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS AND
CONTEMPORARY
EVANGELICAL PIETY

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Pilgrim's Progress And Contemporary Evangelical Piety
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John Bunyan (1684)

Photograph: Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery

I. Introduction

With the rise and subsequent demise of the Utopian aspirations of the Commonwealth, the mood of the Puritans changed from that of warfaring to wayfaring. The Christian Commonwealth had failed. The Act of Uniformity of 1662 saw the eviction of some of the best theological minds from the Established Church. Among these were two thousand Puritans who were deprived of their livings. Those, such as John Bunyan, who continued to preach, were to find themselves in prison for holding 'non-conformist' worship services. For the writer of *The Pilgrim's Progress from this World to that which is to Come*, the famous Christian classic, it involved incarcerations from 1660-72, and again from 1676-7, with occasional remissions. That the concept of the Christian life as a pilgrimage should so capture the pious minds of those who first read Bunyan's famous work should not surprise us. This was a traumatic reversal for the Puritans from Commonwealth to Restoration both ideologically and personally, for those who had fought for, and temporarily enjoyed life in a 'Christian' nation.

2. Putting Pilgrim's Progress in Context

This great classic was written in the context of the imprisonment of 'that illiterate tinker prate' as Charles II pejoratively described Bunyan to John Owen.¹ While it used a particular theological concept and was part of a literary genre, it captured the hearts of many in its day because, as we have already noted, it reflected a particular moment in Puritan history.

2.1. *Pilgrimage*

Because *Pilgrim's Progress* became a classic and the most read book apart from the Bible, it can easily be overlooked that the image of pilgrimage which Bunyan so effectively used had its roots in Roman Catholicism. From the time of the *Canterbury Tales* in 1387 we learn that, with the arrival of the month of April, 'thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages.' They were an essential image and a pious act of the Christian life by which indulgences were secured. Chaucer's work shows this to be so for all walks of life. By the sixteenth century the English idea of pilgrimage had changed. No longer was it 'from every shires end of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende, the hooly blisful martir for to seke.'² Popular Puritan preachers were not averse to making use of what was a 'popish' theme to express important aspects of their piety and practice. Christopher Hill has demonstrated that the theme of pilgrimage in the early

¹ The former Dean of Christ Church and Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University replied, 'Please, your majesty, could I possess that tinker's abilities for preaching, I would gladly relinquish all my learning.'

² G. Chaucer, 'General Prologue,' *The Canterbury Tales*, II.12, 15-8.

seventeenth century became a ‘common-place.’³ He suggests that there was a reason for this—‘The idea of abandoning all for Christ, including one’s own family, had especial relevance to the mobile world of vagrant soldiers and ex-soldiers of the 1640’s and 1650’s.’⁴ This may provide a partial explanation of why this portrayal of the Christian life as a pilgrimage struck a chord in the heart of the pious Puritan—but there were other reasons as well.

It must not be forgotten that the sixteenth century had already baptised this theme into the piety of the Reformation—S. Batman, *The Travayled Pilgrim* (1569), and W. Bronup, *St Peter’s Path to the Joyes of Heaven* (1598) both wrote on this theme. More importantly, Bunyan’s contemporaries also found this concept of pilgrimage a very congenial theme. W. Denny wrote *The Pilgrim’s Passe to the Land of the Living* in 1653, and V. Powell, *A Christian Pilgrimage in the Bird in the Cage, Chirping* was published in 1661 while he also was in prison. The Latitudinarian attempted take-over of the theme by S. Patrick in 1664 in his *The Parable of the Pilgrim*, written to show the superiority of the Established Church, shows how popular this perception of the Christian life had become.

Tracing the antecedents of Bunyan’s great work, or putting it in its historical context, does not in any way denigrate the importance and originality of Bunyan’s distinctive and lasting contribution to Christian spirituality. We know that John Calvin was influenced by the *Devotio Moderna* of Thomas à Kempis through the Augustinian order, although he did not endorse aspects of the theological framework which gave rise to it. In the same way, John Owen was himself an inheritor of

³ C. Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious and Factious People: John Bunyan and his Church* (Oxford, OUP, 1989) 204-6.

⁴ *Ibid.* 202.

Augustine's doctrine of human sinfulness and divine grace and Calvin's work on mortification.⁵ Theological reflection seldom arises *de novo*.

Given the commitment of the Puritans to framing their discussion in Biblical categories, it may come as a surprise to learn that the concepts of 'pilgrim' and 'pilgrimage' were not technically Biblical ones. The Puritans themselves may not have believed that to be the case, for William Tyndale had translated the term *παρεπιδήμους* in 1 Peter 2:11 as 'pilgrem' and the King James Version followed his rendering, but not his spelling.⁶ This also happened in Hebrews 11:13 where *ξένοι καὶ παρεπίδημοί* as a self description of Christians was translated as 'strangers and pilgrims.' In the Old Testament in Genesis 47:9, Exodus 6:4 and Psalm 119:54, 'pilgrimage' was the word supplied. However, the two terms in Greek do not describe someone who is on the move. On the contrary, the Biblical words (which are drawn from legal terminology) describe one's status as a person who is sojourning in a place as a resident alien.⁷ He or she does not possess local citizenship but is nevertheless domicile in a city. The Biblical concept of the

⁵ R.C. Gleason, *John Calvin and John Owen on Mortification: A Comparative Study of Reformed Spirituality*, Studies in Church History (Berlin and New York, P. Lang, 1995).

⁶ The translators were not the first nor the last to mistake the concept of pilgrimage for sojourning. See D.J. Estes, *From Patriarch to Pilgrim: The Development of the Biblical Figure of Abraham and its Contribution to the Christian Metaphor of Spiritual Pilgrimage*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1988. For a discussion of the theme in the second to the fifth centuries AD see 'Abraham and Spiritual Pilgrimage in the Early Christian Literature' in chapter 6 of this dissertation.

⁷ The K.J.V. and R.V. translated the latter term *παρεπιδήμους*, as pilgrim. For a discussion of the use of these terms see M. M. Chin, 'A Heavenly Home for the Homeless: Aliens and Strangers in 1 Peter,' Tyndale Bulletin 42.1 (1991) 96-112.

Christian life is not stated in terms of a pilgrimage to heaven, but rather is described as that of a person residing in this world, but not really belonging to it, waiting here for the grace that shall be revealed at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13).

‘Pilgrimage’ as a theme of Biblical theology with a journey to the Promised Land (or Zion) and an Exodus and return from Babylonian Exile, is not a Biblical construct, for the theme of salvation has not been unfolded thus.⁸

2.2. *Progress*

What did Bunyan mean by progress? It had nothing to do with the Council of Trent’s formulation of a concept of an ‘increase in justification,’⁹ nor had it anything to do with progress in holiness which can be erroneously seen as the meaning of the doctrine of sanctification.¹⁰ The progress to which Bunyan refers was not an upward one in terms of becoming a better Christian, but rather a description of the experiences and difficulties of being in the midst of turbulent as well as tranquil periods, or—as the writer of Ecclesiastes designates them—‘the seasons of life’ (3:1-15). Bunyan’s work, then, is not a reflection on the Christian life in terms of progressive improvement. Rather, in his own inimitable style, it is about the trials and temptations that the Christian can expect to face—and inevitably faces—as he or she lives in this world before departing from it. It is about being resilient in the face of ‘all disaster,’ not being deflected from being a pilgrim, and knowing that, at the end, the celestial gates

⁸ O. Lutand, *Des Deux revolutions d’Angleterre: Documents politiques, sociaux religieux* (Paris, 1978) 80.

⁹ Decree on Justification, chapter 10, the Sixth Session of the Council of Trent.

¹⁰ For an extremely important discussion of this doctrine which rejects the idea of sanctification as progress in holiness or a process see D. Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament theology of sanctification and holiness*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Leicester: IVP, 1995).

will open. The Christian life is about the ‘tribulations’ which we can expect to experience and which were promised by Jesus Himself.

Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* was not strictly a discussion of the Christian life from the theological perspective of 1 Peter or any other New Testament book. They have an overarching eschatological framework in which the Christian life is to be seen, i.e., as eschatological sojourning and not progressive pilgrimage. Bunyan’s theology draws upon the theme of a coming judgement as the basis for repentance, but the hope of Christ’s second coming to the Christian does not really feature; rather he discusses the Christian’s journey towards heaven.

John Bunyan himself anticipated that portraying the Christian life as he did in his allegory would draw critics. He therefore took the initiative and produced an Apology which is set forth as the beginning of his book and in which he seeks to answer them. He records that when he showed his finished work to others opinions were divided.

Some said, John, print it; others said, Not so:
Some said, It might do good; others said, No.

In hindsight it was good that he ignored the negative advice and it was printed for, as a Christian classic, it has done much good. Of the method adopted he also felt it necessary to defend his approach by citing Biblical precedents.

The Prophets used much by metaphors
To set forth Truth; Yea, who so considers
Christ, his Apostles too, shall plainly see,
That Truths to this day in such Mantles be.

In seeking to put *Pilgrim’s Progress* in its social and theological context, one sees that it represented a radical theological departure from the idea of going on pilgrimages in order to

secure indulgences.¹¹ This seventeenth century concept was embraced partly as a reaction to the failed millenarianism of the Commonwealth. It is therefore in part a reflection of the uncertain times in which he, and those who were ejected from the Established Church, lived and sought to integrate a Christian understanding of what had happened to those who, in the Restoration, had been made outsiders. Wayfaring had become a dominant theme of the rejected. One of the abiding legacies of *Pilgrim's Progress* is that it epitomised a Biblical perspective which brought home the fact that problems and difficulties, trials and temptations were, and always will be, part and parcel of what it means to be a Christian in any generation.

3. Putting Evangelical Piety in Context

Unlike thirty or forty years ago, *Pilgrim's Progress* is no longer a best seller in Christian bookshops. The choice of editions available is now limited. True, there have been some excellent children's editions, and this reflects that those most unlikely to appreciate the full impact of the work, i.e., young children, are seen as the most appropriate audience by publishers. Why is it that *Pilgrim's Progress* no longer strikes a chord in contemporary piety, and one seldom hears it commended as a book to young Christians? In theological colleges it can no longer be assumed that allusions to some of the great characters in John Bunyan's work would be understood. It does not appear on the list of those Christian classics that ought to be read—even for discussions of 'spiritual formation' or 'spirituality.'

It is suggested that one of the reasons for this rests in a very substantial sea change in Western society which began at

¹¹ On twentieth century Roman Catholic teaching on them, see the *Apostolic Constitution on the Revision of Indulgences*, Second Vatican Council.

the turn of the century and has gained force at important stages. Just as the collapse of the Commonwealth gave rise to a wayfaring theology, so too, in this present century, there have been secular changes which have quietly affected the perception of the Christian life at the end of this second millennium.

It could be said that it began with a play that was considered scandalous in its own day—J.M. Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*—and which at one time was banned in England and America. Reading it at the *end* of the century one might wonder what the fuss was all about. It made hedonism respectable—although it had long operated under the surface of Victorian values. In the 1920's psychological hedonism became a fashionable explanation of human behaviour, but it was also commended, i.e., one ought to avoid pain and pursue those things that are pleasurable. What was an explanation of human behaviour became a 'scientific' base for conduct. It was left until after the Second World War for Hugh Hefner to promote the hedonistic lifestyle. This came in the form of a soft core pornographic magazine which, next to the *Readers Digest*, sold more copies from the 1950's to the 1970's than any other magazine. Its popularity rested not only in the voyeurism, but also in the lifestyle it presented. This glossy magazine even had a religious editor who, within the context of hedonism, was able to dispense advice and to provide a religious justification for the playboy's philosophy. While Walter Lippman argued that the pursuit of happiness was a most unhappy pursuit, Hugh Hefner not only ran his 'bunny' clubs as an extension of the playboy's world, but strongly defended his playboy's philosophy in a series of articles in the magazine in the late 1960's. Aspects of his arguments were reminiscent of the Greek philosophical hedonism but it was his treatment of women as 'objects' that was to draw intense flak, especially in the rising tide of feminism. It is interesting to note that some Asian countries banned *Playboy Magazine* and in the 1960's and 1970's the question asked by customs officers in such countries was

whether or not the traveller was carrying a copy of *Playboy Magazine*. While this drew derision from some who wrongly assumed that it was because of its pornography, it was not the point at issue. Rather it was that some Asian governments recognised the pernicious philosophy this magazine packaged with such style—it was a philosophy in which individual happiness was to be secured at the expense of responsibilities.

This growing tide of hedonism did not end with the collapse of Heffner’s clubs or a drop in circulation because of more hard core pornographic publications. Rather the pursuit of happiness in more affluent times post war was to move onto the political scene with promises of the ‘feel good’ factor to the acquisitive spirit.

The Christian church itself was not unaffected, although the doctrine of hedonism tended to present itself more in the calculated guise of Greek philosophical hedonism which argued that one should pursue one’s own happiness, but never beyond certain boundaries, for then it ceases to be happiness. Its quiet infiltration through the subliminal programming of men and women via the media, etc. meant that for many Christians the Biblical concept of ‘joy’ came to be equated with ‘happiness.’¹² Aspects of church services and Christian books were meant to meet this need for ‘happiness’ or a ‘feel good’ factor about oneself and being a Christian. Such a feeling was thought to be appropriate for evangelical Christians within their denomination or the Christian scene generally. Many Christian parents articulate their hopes for their children not in terms of their contribution to the Kingdom of God in its widest Biblical

¹² The word for ‘happiness’ or ‘pleasure,’ ἡδονή which transliterates as *hedone*, is condemned in the New Testament (Luke 8.14, Titus 3.3, James 4.1.3, 2 Peter 2.13), but the concept of ‘joy’ as one of the fruits of the Spirit is not.

understanding, but rather in the categories of the good life with an appropriate spouse who shares similar Christian values and aspirations. In some circles the Christian life is seen more as a Mediterranean stopover before the final destination for which tickets are underwritten by the gilt-edged security of the death of Christ. Perceptions of the Christian life and evangelical piety in particular, are more at the mercy of trends in the secular world than we would care to own.

One of the acid tests of our contemporary piety is the place that Biblical words and concepts such as ‘discipleship,’ ‘cross bearing,’ ‘denying oneself and ‘losing one’s life’ play in our vocabulary or even our perceptions of the Christian life. These are clearly the conditions upon which Jesus offered discipleship in his ‘if any man would come after me’ teaching in Mark 8:34. Suffering and adversity are not seen as something of a disaster in the Christian life.

3.1. *‘Preserve the gold’*

In the conclusion to his *Pilgrim’s Progress* Bunyan expresses the belief that although what he had written was ‘a dream,’ yet it would be ‘helpful to an honest mind.’ He was also a humble enough writer to invite an assessment of his work.

What of my dross thou findest there, be bold
To throw away, but yet preserve the gold.
What if my gold be wrapped up in ore?
None throws away the apple for the core.

Attention has already been drawn to a particular theological deficiency in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, namely the absence of the New Testament’s expectation of the second coming of Christ to the sojourning Christian. One cannot be too critical for it is a Biblical perspective that is all too lacking in contemporary evangelical theology and affects our piety. If that is ‘the dross,’ one would not want to throw away ‘the gold’ from this great Christian classic, for it is necessary for those who stand as

Evangelicals in the Puritan tradition to be self-critical of aspects of contemporary evangelical practice and piety. Some of these will occupy the remainder of this lecture. There are four important areas—Scripture, judgement, mortification and death which, if they appear to be rather sterile issues in our brave new world, may point to the problem of our spirituality, namely that we are more the subjects of our secular culture than we would care to recognise. That we could be so should not surprise us for we live in an age unprecedented for its speed of media communication and sophistication for the subliminal transformation of human values and wants. Hopefully an examination of these four vital areas of Christian teaching will whet the appetite to re-read *Pilgrim's Progress* and compel us to ask whether the insights of Bunyan are solely a reflection of his own situation. Was he a wise pastor who laid hold of Biblical truths which have in some cases become obscured not by our subsequent skills in Biblical and theological discussions but by the spirit of our own age?

Firstly, note the breadth of Scripture cited by Bunyan. He does not construct his view of the Christian life upon a smattering of New Testament texts, nor a single text such as Romans 7:25, nor indeed from the New Testament alone. Of the three hundred and forty-nine texts cited by Bunyan there are one hundred and fifty-seven drawn from twenty books from the Old Testament canon. The Psalms predominate containing the highest number of citations, followed closely by Isaiah and Proverbs which feature as many times in this work as do the books of Matthew, Hebrews and the Revelation.¹³ This reflects not only Bunyan's intimate knowledge of the Bible, but also his theological commitment to the use of the whole of it as the

¹³ Psalms 25, Isaiah 23, Proverbs 21, Revelation 24, Matthew 23 and Hebrews 23. The only books he omitted are Joshua, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, Lamentations, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Haggai.

Word of God. From this, contemporary evangelical theological practice could learn much. Our worship today is often dominated by music in many forms—hymns, and more recently repetitive spiritual songs—and unlike the church in the first or the seventeenth century, the reading of Psalms (and sometimes Scripture in general) finds little or no place in teaching and admonishing the congregation (Colossians 3:16). For Bunyan the theology of the Psalms (indeed of all the Old Testament books) was central to his understanding of the Christian life. He did not give notional assent to them as Holy Scripture, or simply ignore them as possessing no abiding truth, but were merely part of the economy of salvation. One voice spoke from the two Testaments. The Old Testament was not first draft and the New the final, definitive edition.

Secondly, we note that his preaching of the gospel to Christians was not framed in terms of its present benefits. Its motivation was to flee from the coming judgement of God upon the inhabitants of the city of destruction. His Christian theology had yet to be subjected to the powerful onslaught of the secular utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and others whose emphasis was on the greatest happiness for the greatest number in this life. This later philosophical shift meant a change in the theory of justice propounded by William Paley who held to the Biblical view of retributive justice—that it was not inappropriate for God to hold every person accountable for his works. Bentham’s shift to ‘remedial’ justice has

proved historically momentous. For the Benthamite view had and still has a wide currency. With it comes a difficulty in understanding the wisdom and justice of the cross. Surely it is immoral for God to judge and punish, rather than to educate and rehabilitate...And if there is a world to come

beyond this present one how can God be just if such a world provides no opportunity for reform.¹⁴

These questions which arose from the philosophical move from Paley to Bentham were felt keenly by the Victorians and still pose a difficulty even for some contemporary evangelicals in the proclamation of the New Testament's presentation of the gospel in our own day and generation. That it does so means that

the Christian communicator seeking to spread the gospel of the cross to societies greatly affected by secular utilitarianism would need to be aware of the historical change that has taken place in the understanding of justice from retribution to reform, that makes the traditional doctrines of the cross and the wrath of God so conceptually problematical and morally unappealing to so many...¹⁵

There is perhaps something of an unnecessary embarrassment on the part of contemporary gospel proclamation which fails to take account of the fact that, on the day of judgement, each will agree with the verdict for 'one's own conscience will either excuse or accuse' (Romans 2:15-16). The view that the pleading of an able QC might well be able to secure another verdict based on the promise of reform, or that there will be no such moment of accountability, will be seen to be foolish. Today's evangelist might have been somewhat coy to have called upon Bunyan's Christian to flee the coming judgement as the reason for embracing the gospel of grace, or that Jesus delivers from the wrath to come those who turn from idols to serve the true and living God (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Repentance, not reform, was Bunyan's Biblical gospel.

¹⁴ See G. Cole, 'Utilitarianism and the eclipse of the theistic sanction,' *Tyndale Bulletin* 42.2 (1991) 226-44 and citation on p. 243.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 244.

Thirdly, Bunyan reminds us, as did his predecessors and his contemporaries, that the Christian life is a fight and that the one battle that has to be fought constantly is that within our hearts. One of the most chilling and salutary descriptions comes from the chapter on 'The Interpreter's House' where a Christian is held in bondage to his lusts to which he has yielded. This has resulted in his being trapped in 'despair in an iron cage.' The imagery might not appeal but the problem of denying all that cries out day by day to be satisfied immediately remains. In contemporary reflection on the Christian life there seems to be little, or no, place for what the Puritans called mortification. In 1656 Bunyan's contemporary, John Owen, preached a series of sermons in the declining days of the Commonwealth *On the Mortification of Sin in Believers* to young undergraduates in his charge at Christ Church. The vulgarity of the Restoration comedies and their conscious parodying of Biblical virtues shows with what lightening speed the ethical shift to permissiveness had taken place. Bunyan discussed 'passion' over against 'patience' where the former is portrayed by its demand for immediate satisfaction but was self-deceived, being left with nothing but rags. Having pointed out the futility for the Christian of caving into his wants, he looks at the example of one who as a good believer had set out on the same path for the Celestial city as Christian, with the same quiet confidence and joy that he would arrive at his destination, but was now a man of despair who was entrapped by his own actions in 'the passions, pleasures and advantages of this world' and from which he is now unable to escape. In citing passages such as Hebrews 6:6 and 10:26-9, Bunyan gives full weight to the enormous dangers that self-indulgence creates. In our age it is somewhat unfashionable in preaching to face head on the warning passages of Hebrews because of their theological untidiness for some and their unpalatable implications for a more open approach by Christians to 'freedom' and their 'unhappy search for happiness.' The playboys' theology is more alive than we

would care to acknowledge and even Hugh Heffner in his old age could give more than notional assent to its validity without thought for its consequences. The Puritans firmly believed that a crucial aspect of the work of the Spirit was the help given in the fight against indwelling sin which no longer has absolute dominion in the life of the Christian but, on the other hand, requires the daily commitment of the Christian to engage in a healthy battle against its ravages. The reminder of Colossians 3:5-14 that certain things must be put to death, other things must be put off, and in their place new things must be put on, has become somewhat alien to evangelical piety.

All young preachers affirm to young and old alike, believers and unbelievers that they are not afraid to die. As life proceeds, the thought and possible pain of death modifies their confidence. In latter years even Dr. Billy Graham has publicly confessed that the thought of death itself is not relished. Is this simply a capitulation to the great concern to speak of the Christian life solely in terms of its present benefits and to ignore, like the rest of society, the reality of the coffin?

It is the mark of the great pastoral insight of John Bunyan that in his final chapter, 'The Land of Beulah, the Fords of the River, At-Home,' the end of the pilgrimage is no jolly jaunt to the gates of the celestial city. It reflects the wisdom and experience of those Christians who have in the final stages of life 'hesitated' at the gates of death. 'Was there no other way to those gates?' Christian was to ask. 'Only for Enoch and Elijah and those who are there when the last trumpet sounds,' is the reply. Perhaps in that hour the immediate thought of Christ's return is a straw to clutch on to, but not the lively hope that it ought to have been as the mainspring throughout life as the Scriptures teach. Christian experienced a great conflict at the hour of death when we read how his mind is filled with horror and his heart with dread as he recalls the sins he has committed both before and since he has become a Christian. It may come

as a shock to the reader that Christian needs the encouragement of Hopeful at that moment when, in the words of Wordsworth, he is 'putting out to sea.' It should not surprise us that at that moment we will feel the need for the forgiveness of Christ as much then, if not more so, than we feel the necessity of it today. That hesitation and the recollection of the past life of the Christian should throw him or her daily on the promised clemency of Christ secured through His death and passion. Perhaps it shows us that at times Evangelical piety is in danger of feeling, and even teaching, that it has passed beyond Calvary to Pentecost for the cross has done its work, and that the Spirit must now do His. While that is partially true, there is the deep need to stir up our minds to the continual remembrance of the inestimable benefits given to us by the Judge of all men who has been judged in our place.

While the children's song that 'Heaven is a wonderful place' is true, those who stand this side of heaven have to remind ourselves that we have not yet entered into our rest. We cannot live as if there is no need to make our calling and election sure. We are to deny ourselves, taking up our cross and following the One who set down the conditions alone upon which any person could follow Him.

In *Pilgrim's Progress* we rightly asked what part the Bible and external circumstances played in the moulding of Bunyan's piety. If the concept of pilgrimage was 'the principle metaphor running through Puritan spirituality' as Hambrick-Stowe suggested,¹⁶ what is that which contemporary evangelicalism has embraced? For the Puritans the Christian life was a joyful and serious business which demanded their daily thought and on which they continually saw the need to

¹⁶ C. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1982) 54.

concentrate their energies. This work by ‘that illiterate tinker prate’ has been a formative part of our spiritual heritage. Its removal from the shelf of recommended Christian classics¹⁷ should warn us that its message of struggle and discipleship may indicate a serious deficiency in the articulation of our contemporary Evangelical piety and lifestyle which may have more to do with the ethos of our age than a reflection of a Biblical portrayal of it. This great Christian classic does provide a helpful yardstick for measuring our own understanding of the Christian life.

Evangelical scholarship, both Biblical and theological, has earned its right to speak in academic forums, and has reached a level of sophistication comparable to that of the Puritans with their exegetical commentaries and theological works. It would be a foolish Christian generation indeed which failed to give a hearing to important ancestors by refusing to read the ‘Puritan School of Divinity’ before joining with the secular world in the perfunctory dismissal of it. In 1616 it was the wisdom of Richard Vane, the parish of St Antholin and other far-sighted parishioners that the contribution of the Puritan divines should not be lost, and that though dead, they should yet speak to future generations. It was the prudence of some of our own generation that the lectures should be revived lest those who ignore the theological wisdom of the past should be doomed to fall into the very errors that the Puritans saw and sought to correct.

¹⁷ It is readily available, even on the Internet for those Christians who ‘surf’ it.

ST. ANTHOLIN'S LECTURESHIP CHARITY LECTURES

In or about 1560 the parish of St. Antholin, now absorbed into what is the parish of St Mary-le-Bow in Cheapside and St Mary Alderbury, within the Cordwainer's Ward in the City of London, came into the possession of certain estates known as the "Lecturer's Estates." These were, it is believed, purchased with funds collected at or shortly after the date of the Reformation for the endowment of lectures of the Puritanical School of Divinity.

The first mention of the charity was an indenture, dated 24 June 1616, made between Richard Vane of the first part, the churchwardens of the parish of St. Antholin of the second part, and certain parishioners of the said parish of the third part.

Over the centuries the funds were not always used for the stated purpose, and in the first part of the nineteenth century a scheme was drawn up which revived the lectureship, which was to consist of forty lectures to be given three times a year on the Puritan School of Divinity, the lecturer to receive one guinea per lecture. A further onerous requirement was that the lecturer had to be a beneficed Anglican, living within one mile of the Mansion House in the City of London.

Under such conditions the lectureship fell into disuse a long time ago, and it was not until 1987 that moves were put in hand with the Charity Commissioners to update the scheme. The first lecture under the new scheme was given in 1991.

George Cassidy

Archdeacon of London

Chairman of the St Antholin's Lectureship Charity Trustees

Trustees: The Venerable George Cassidy

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ST. ANTHOLIN'S LECTURESHIP CHARITY LECTURES

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