



THE DISTRIBUTED AUTHORITY OF AN AUTHOR:
A TYPOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF JOHN BUNYAN'S
THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

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The Distributed Authority of an Author: A Typographical Study of John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress

Synopsis:

This presentation aims to reveal the making of the *The Pilgrim's Progress* through a typographical analysis, and by doing so, facilitate the study of the text without its inflated aura. The typography of the original text, such as the use of italicization, margin, and font, will be carefully examined alongside the book's modern edition and sequel.

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“Author” is cognate with “Authority” derived from a Latin verb, *augere*. The etymology means “to increase, augment, strengthen that which is already in existence,” and from its Latin variant *auctor* with various derivative, the word author took the meaning of “one who gives meaning” (Donovan, Fjellestad, and Lundén 2). *Auctor* also denoted a person who engaged in the field of law in Roman times, and *auctoritas*, which later became authority, signified his security in the profession with the same origin of *augere* (4). However, despite the same root of the words, English authors did not have much authority until the eighteenth century when authors’ rights went through enactment with Statute of Anne, the first Copyright Act in 1709. Before then, according to Stephen B. Dobranski, “a member of the Stationers’ Company who obtained a text by any means could secure legal ownership by publishing it in print or entering in the Stationers’ Register --with or without the author’s approval” (6). Mark Rose stated that even after the statute, “polite authors rarely sought or received payment for their writings, and those who did generally sold their manuscripts outright to booksellers,” and only some authors like Daniel Defoe and Joseph Addison argued for authors’ rights (119).

Unlike the authors of the 17th century with meager authority, printers had major right to their works. After the mid-1600s, authors could earn money from their books but it not only was a pittance for their labor, but was paid only once when they sold it except that they achieved great fame (Feather, *Copyright* 521). Printers of the time were assumed to act as

booksellers, binders, and sometimes publishers, and once they bought an author's book, they had the ultimate right to it (Feather, *The British* 234). Author's authority thus was mere romanticism created later and almost every element but the contents of a book of those days depended on a printer's decision, and authorial intention should be studied in relation with other persons concerned (McGann 97). This tendency also applies to religious books. These books accounted for 50 percent of the printed ones in England (Green and Peters 67), and printers supposedly determined the organization of the books including John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), even the constituent parts that current readers may think as the author's choice.

John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* stands out as one of the prominent books in the literary and religious field. Long considered as a bestseller second only to the Bible, it has been translated into more than 200 languages, adapted for film, opera, musicals and children's books, and its moral and literary value as well as religious one have been highly appreciated. Samuel Johnson once said that "[Bunyan's] *Pilgrim's Progress* has great merit, both for invention, imagination, and the conduct of the story; and it has had the best evidence of its merit, the general and continued approbation of mankind. Few books, I believe, have had a more extensive sale" (Boswell 326). Coleridge praised that "it is, in my conviction, the best *Summa Theologiae Evangelicae* ever produced by a writer not miraculously inspired." (Corrigan 172). Such status obviously results from the excellence of the piece. On the other hand, the making of the book also contributed to its present position which has stood the test of time for more than 300 years.

In order to look into the making of the Bunyan's book, it is necessary to investigate its physical bibliography, the study of the material text in terms of its signs, from which the intent of an author can be analyzed outside the contents. In the case of the 17th century books, they easily confuse modern readers who count them embodiment of the author's unique idea.

For example, people of nowadays may take granted that the page layout or the usage of the margin in *The Pilgrim's Progress* came from Bunyan's idea, but it is more likely that printers exercised more leverage on such matters especially in its first edition, considering the author's marginal authority. In *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, D. F. McKenzie mentions,

. . . in some cases significantly informative readings may be recovered from typographic signs as well as verbal ones, that these are relevant to editorial decisions about the manner in which one might reproduce a text, and that a reading of such bibliographical signs may seriously shape our judgment of an author's work. (18)

Therefore, comprehending books of those days require readers or researchers to cut out what was not an author's intent through this typographic approach.

Typography can be defined as the arrangement of a written text, and its study object comprises the title pages, prefaces, marginal notes, page layout, punctuation, capitalization, italicization, and the font of letters. Among the typographic analysis, *The Pilgrim's Progress* has typical and atypical characteristics. The former example can be found in the title page composition and the emphasis with capitalization and italicization. In the title page, various fonts and sizes are used, differently by an order of importance. It includes the title and subtitle with an overall explanation, the name of the author, and the printer and bookseller's name, Nathaniel Ponder with the published location. As for the capitalization and italicization, the common trait of those days was the lack of firmly established orthographic standard during its formation; that is, they reflect the author's choice presumably under the printer's influence. In this book, Bunyan italicizes characters' names and their speech, and this functions for readers to easily recognize them despite the allegoric names and the absence of quotation marks. He capitalizes the words to emphasize, mainly nouns when they convey the

biblical meanings, and they also correspond to the point where can be verbally stressed given his consideration of rhythm for hearing the text (Owen xli).

Meanwhile, the distinguished feature of *The Pilgrim's Progress* appears in its usage of blackletter type and marginal notes. Having begun from calligraphy in medieval Europe, blackletter was used especially in Germany for manuscript books (Williams). Its oldest books printed in the typeface are the 42-line Bible published by Johannes Gutenberg who introduced printing in the West. English people also used the blackletter, particularly in the Bible. After its usage in the first one, Great bible (1539), the subsequent ones before 18th century, Geneva Bible (1557), The Bishop's Bible (1568), and King James Version (1611), followed the tradition. The bookseller and printer of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Nathaniel Ponder also used the style at the top of the pages in some books he issued. The title of a chapter in the case of John Owen's *The Reason of Faith* (1677), and the booktitle of Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which was published a year later than Owen's book, are the examples, and taking their genre as Christian books into account, it can be assumed that the printer deliberately used the letter to bring up the image of the Bible. According to Gerald Egan, although black letter gradually disappeared throughout 17th century, superseded by Roman type, it originally had "legitimacy" partly due to its ecclesiastical associations". Therefore, blackletters at the top of the page could signify the printer's try to impliedly stress the divinity of the books, and other contemporaneous printers of famous authors such as Defoe's, Hobbes's or Milton's did not usually attempted.

In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, another characteristic associated with the Bible is its marginal notes. Authors (or printers) often used the margin, and Thomas Hobbes, for instance, also wrote them to give the subject of a paragraph in his *Leviathan* (1651). The marginal notes in *The Pilgrim's Progress* also function in that way, but they conduct one more significant role: referring to biblical texts indicated by a star, a cross, or an alphabet. For

instance, page 8 and 9 of the first edition are one of the densest margins filled with biblical references. Here, the protagonist Christian answers his neighbor Pliable's questions who has been briefly persuaded to go with Christian, and his explanation is grounded on the words of the Bible which the margins notes related verses from it.

Chr. There is an *endless Kingdom to be Inhabit, and everlasting life to be given us; that we may Inhabit that Kingdom for ever. (* Isa. 45. 17. John 10. 27, 28, 29.)

Pli. *Well said, and what else?*

Chr. There are Crowns of Glory to be given us; +and Garments that will make us shine like the Sun in the Firmament of Heaven. (+ 2 Tim. 4. 8. Rev. 3. 4. Matth. 13.)

Pli. *This is excellent; And what else?*

Chr. There shall be no more crying, *nor sorrow; For he that is owner of the place, will wipe all tears from our eyes. (*Isa. 25. 8. Rev. 7. 16, 17. Chap. 21. 4.)

Just Before this page, Pliable asks if Christian believes the words of his Book (the Bible) are true. Christian affirms its truth based on the fact that its maker cannot lie, and the margin for the line also refers to Titus 1:2 which says "In hope of eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." These marginal notes thus prove that the author bases this work on the Bible, but on the other hand, they sometimes render it expose to a risk factor; even if Christian is convinced of the Book as his own conviction, the margin could indicate that he believes the words of the Bible because the words say so like a circular reasoning fallacy.

At any rate, the strategy embedded in the margin connects with authority. The interesting point is that the intertextual form also comes from the Bible. The Bibles of those days all retained the format to aid the readers to approach the words that closely link to each other from more extensive view. Therefore, by underlining the basis of *The Pilgrim's Progress* through the reference and the format, readers can naturally accept it as that of the

same root with the Bible. Kathleen M. Swaim points out the attribute of the margin that produces authority:

. . . the most striking visual feature of *Pilgrim's Progress*, its marginal glossing, provides a strategy for taking advantage of Puritan uncertainty, self-consciousness, and biblical allegiance, and also for keeping the reading process itself fluid and therefore open to progressive insights. Glosses guide, regulate, and ensure proper interpretation of the actions and doctrines they accompany and highlight. Bunyan borrows the device from the Bible to pressure his readers to practice the compounded reading he himself found so enriching. (80-81)

In addition to this controlling effect, Swaim also indicates instructive but somewhat arbitrary usage of the margin.

The glosses of *Pilgrim's Progress* are not a reliable index to the content they attend. . . . We expect glosses to encapsulate memorable instruction . . . [but he] sometimes cited the Bible excessively, sometimes--when such citation is called for--not at all; sometimes he errs in both extremes in the same paragraph. (81)

She positively concludes with this point which eventually, she believes, assists the fulfillment of the Puritan goals through intertextuality. Nevertheless, the lack of exhaustiveness of the margin she mentions denotes its oozing humanity shadowed by its divinity. In other words, the marginal notes display the most human traits mixed with the human intention to dignify the Bunyan's book, ironically with the authority of the Bible.

The important point is that the decision over the page layout did not belong to the author's authority but Ponder's. This concerns with the marketing strategy, and so it cannot be solely Bunyan's idea in the 17th century when authors' had little authority under its practical owner, printers. *The Pilgrim's Progress* of the present time has its own authority as a widely read book, praised and renowned, while the edition of the 17th century needed to

form its own authority which can be added onto its distinction as a text. The authority was of utmost importance even compared to the entertaining aspect in that half of the whole readers consumed religious books, loyal to divine authority. Hence, the marginal notes of *The Pilgrim's Progress* demonstrate the book's connection with divinity, and at the same time, they exhibit its involvement with humanity.

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A Typographical Study of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*

John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* has had impregnable renown for both its wide readership, second to the bible, and the author's ingenuity as one of the first English novelist. Nevertheless, it is necessary to differentiate its proper value from its constructed one so that it can be fairly appreciated either as a literary text or as a spiritual one. This presentation aims to reveal the making of the *The Pilgrim's Progress* through a typographical analysis, and by doing so, facilitate the study of the text without its inflated aura. The typography of the original text, such as the use of italicization, margin, and font, will be carefully examined alongside the book's modern edition and sequel.

The 17th century was the beginning stage for the printing industry, and authority over a material text did not usually belong to the author but to the printer and the publisher. Within this historical context, Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* was published as analogous with the Bible in terms of its graphical composition in a text, presumably under the printer and the publisher's influence. This typographic connection with the bible served as an effective marketing strategy that won the readers' trust and interest. *The Pilgrim's Progress* not only borrowed from the Bible's authority but eventually gained a status and legitimacy that succeeded it.

Key Words: John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, typography, the Bible, authority