

period. Dissent is a relative term that could be, and indeed was, turned on its head under the right political circumstances.

Though the contributors successfully underscore the diversity of non-conformity, the volume would have been well served by offering a more pointed engagement with the dissimilarities, tensions, contradictions, and fissiparous tendencies within Dissent. Necessarily, this series treats the various Dissenting groups as of a piece in terms of their relationship with the national church and the post-Reformation political scene. Even still, especially with regard to soteriological orientation, many of the Dissenting groups were more likely to find common cause with the established church than with each other. John Coffey's chapter, "The Bible and Theology," offers an excellent start in this direction, noting the "centrifugal effect" of disagreements over biblical interpretation, and their ability to cast off Dissenters into "rival factions" (377). However practicable it may be, it must be acknowledged that strange bedfellows are created when Baptists and Quakers, or Ranters and post-1662 Presbyterians, are considered together. Nevertheless, the contributions in this volume ably sketch how similarly situated these groups were in the period and, though distinct, how porous were the borders of their respective communities of believers.

Finally, it has to be noted that this volume is punctuated with a number of typographical errors. Although this is understandable to a point, given the magnitude of the contributions and the breadth of the subject matter, it does make for distracting reading at times and is incommensurate with the volume's substantive heft. This concern notwithstanding, the editor and the contributors have put together a wonderful collection of essays that are a credit to the field and will serve casual students and committed scholars alike for a long time to come.

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Davies, Michael and W. R. Owens, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of John Bunyan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

In August 2015, the British newspaper *The Guardian* released its list of 100 best novels written in English. At the top of the list lay a book from about 350 years ago entitled *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. This book etched Bunyan's place in English literary history. However, his life and works extended far beyond the one title for which he is often remembered.

John Bunyan's life spanned an enormously consequential period of English history including a civil war, the execution of the king, an interregnum, and a restoration of the monarchy. Bunyan was born just after the ascension of King Charles and he died right before the glorious revolution of William and Mary. His life included tragic personal loss, a decade of imprisonment, and a reputation for preaching so renowned that it reached into the upper echelons of society. In addition to preaching, Bunyan authored around sixty different titles that cemented his legacy.

Given Bunyan's unique life and his consequential literary legacy, one may be surprised to find that Bunyan is not the subject of any recent and thorough handbook, companion, or other similar edited volume. *The Oxford Handbook on John Bunyan* fills this lacuna. With contributions from roughly forty different scholars, spanning almost 700 pages and covering topics as diverse as Bunyan's theology and his reception in the eighteenth-century British empire, the handbook is a monumental achievement that will serve as a touchstone for years to come.

The handbook is divided into four sections, each with about ten different articles. The first section, entitled *Contexts*, lays out details about Bunyan's life, his world, and contemporaneous events happening in England. Readers of this review may be particularly interested in Anne Dunan-Page's fascinating history of Bunyan's Bedford congregation and its ecclesiastical practices. Dunan-Page examines the church book of the Bedford congregation to look at how individuals joined the church and how the church functioned. Dunan-Page concludes her essay by pointing out that much work remains to be done on this topic as "a full history of the Bedford congregation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is still to be written" (68). Dewey D. Wallace Jr's essay on Bunyan's theology situates Bunyan as a Baptist and Independent who is nonetheless in the broader Protestant Reformation tradition. In a few of the essays in the first section, the authors repeatedly focus on Bunyan's position as a religious dissenter on the wrong side of the political-religious establishment.

The second section, entitled *Works*, contains a number of chapters dedicated to major works of Bunyan, including *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, and *The Holy War*. In addition, different authors tackle works from a particular period or a topic such as writings on the church or posthumously published works. Ken Simpson's essay entitled "'The Desired Countrey': Bunyan's Writings on the Church in the 1670s" may be of particular interest due to its juxtaposition of themes on doctrine, piety, and practice. Simpson elucidates Bunyan's

doctrine of the visible and invisible church and the controversies Bunyan participated in surrounding the practice of so-called open communion (222–23). Further, Simpson traces Bunyan's important distinction between essentials of faith and "externals" or "things indifferent" (225).

The third section, entitled *Directions in Criticism*, contains the works of authors who apply different critical lenses to the corpus of Bunyan. For example, Stuart Sim discusses the relationship between Bunyan, post-structuralism, and postmodernism. Similarly, Lori Branch writes an essay on Bunyan and a case for post-secular criticism. Branch offers a post-modernist lens as an important view on students of Bunyan and the politics of his era.

The fourth and final section, entitled *Journeys*, tracks the reception of John Bunyan and his work. For example, Cynthia Wall outlines the influence Bunyan had on the early novel. Isabel Rivers traces debates about the transformation of the reception of *Pilgrim's Progress* during the evangelical revivals of the eighteenth century. Sylvia Brown discusses the role of the British empire in the dissemination and reception of John Bunyan's works.

While there is much to commend and appreciate about *The Oxford Handbook of John Bunyan*, two items deserve particular attention. First, the essays strike an admirable yet difficult to achieve balance between primary sources and secondary scholarship. Essays contain extensive engagement with primary sources, yet they also engage with pertinent secondary scholarship without flooding the text with quotations from academics. Second, the handbook boasts an impressive breadth of contributors and topics. Authors include literary specialists, historians, and theologians from a diverse background. Nonetheless, while the handbook covers a broad range of topics, a disproportionate amount of space is devoted to literary aspects of Bunyan or critical appropriations of his works instead of exploring his theological and pastoral concerns.

The essays in *The Oxford Handbook of John Bunyan* are widely accessible and do not require much preexisting knowledge. The handbook is a must-have for any serious scholar of Bunyan and contains essays that will be useful conversation partners for a variety of scholars, pastors, and interested laypeople.

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