

**CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHY.  
LIVES OF BUNYAN,  
HENRY, AND HALL**

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**JAMES HAMILTON**

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HENRY, AND HALL**





J. Bunyan

L. P. Bunyan

JOHN BUNYAN IN PRISON

*John Bunyan*

Christian Biography.

LIVES  
OF  
BUNYAN, HENRY, AND HALL.

BY  
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## LIFE OF BUNYAN.

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**AFTER** the pleasant sketches of pens so graceful as Southey's and Montgomery's; after the elaborate biography of Mr. Philip, whose researches have left few desiderata for any subsequent devotee; indeed, after Bunyan's own graphic and characteristic narrative, the task on which we are now entering is one which, as we would have courted it the less, so we feel that we have peculiar facilities for performing it. Our main object is to give a simple and coherent account of a most unusual man—and then we should like to turn to some instructive purpose the peculiarities of his singular history, and no less singular works.

**JOHN BUNYAN** was born at Elstow, near Bedford, in 1628. His father was a brazier or tinker, and brought up his son as a craftsman of like occupation. There is no evidence for the gipsy origin of the house of Bunyan; and though extremely poor, John's father gave his son such an education as

poor men could then obtain for their children. He was sent to school and taught to read and write.

There has been some needless controversy regarding Bunyan's early days. Some have too readily taken for granted that he was in all respects a reprobate; and others—the chief of whom is Dr. Southey—have laboured to show that there was little in the lad which any would censure, save the righteous overmuch. The truth is, that considering his rank of life, his conduct was not flagitious; for he never was a drunkard, a libertine, or a lover of sanguinary sports; and the profanity and Sabbath-breaking and heart-atheism which afterwards preyed on his awakened conscience, are unhappily too frequent to make their perpetrator conspicuous. The thing which gave Bunyan any notoriety in the days of his ungodliness, and which made him afterwards appear to himself such a monster of iniquity, was the energy which he put into all his doings. He had a zeal for idle play and an enthusiasm in mischief, which were the perverse manifestations of a forceful character, and which may have well entitled him to Southey's epithet—"a blackguard." The reader need not go far to see young Bunyan. Perhaps there is near your dwelling an Elstow—a quiet hamlet of some fifty houses sprinkled about in the picturesque confusion, and with the easy amplitude of space, which gives an old English village its look of leisure and longevity. And it is now verging to the close of the summer's day.



The daws are taking short excursions from the steeple, and tamer fowls have gone home from the darkening and dewy green. But old Bunyan's donkey is still browsing there, and yonder is old Bunyan's self—the brawny trumper dispread on the settle, retailing to the more clownish residents tap-room wit and roadside news. However, it is young Bunyan you wish to see. Yonder he is, the noisiest of the party, playing pitch-and-toss—that one with the shaggy eyebrows, whose entire soul is ascending in the twirling penny—grim enough to be the blacksmith's apprentice, but his singed garments hanging round him with a lank and idle freedom which scorns indentures; his energetic movements and authoritative vociferations at once bespeaking the ragamuffin ringleader. The penny has come down with the wrong side uppermost, and the loud execration at once bewrays young Badman. You have only to remember that it is Sabbath evening, and you witness a scene often enacted on Elstow green two hundred years ago.

The strong depraving element in Bunyan's character was *ungodliness*. He walked according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and conscious of his own rebellion, he said unto God, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." The only restraining influence of which he then felt the power, was terror. His days were often gloomy through forebodings of the wrath to come;

and his nights were scared with visions, which the boisterous diversions and adventures of his waking-day could not always dispel. He would dream that the last day had come, and that the quaking earth was opening its mouth to let him down to hell; or he would find himself in the grasp of fiends, who were dragging him powerless away. And musing over these terrors of the night, yet feeling that he could not abandon his sins, in his despair of heaven his anxious fancy would suggest to him all sorts of strange desires. He would wish that there had been no hell at all; or that, if he must needs go thither, he might be a devil, "supposing they were only tormentors, and I would rather be a tormentor than tormented myself."

These were the fears of his childhood. As he grew older, he grew harder. He experienced some remarkable providences, but they neither startled nor melted him. He once fell into the sea, and another time out of a boat into Bedford river, and either time had a narrow escape from drowning. One day in the field with a companion, an adder glided across their path. Bunyan's ready switch stunned it in a moment; but with characteristic daring, he forced open the creature's mouth, and plucked out the sting—a foolhardiness which, as he himself observes, might, but for God's mercy, have brought him to his end. In the civil war he was "drawn" as a soldier to go to the siege of Leicester; but when ready to set out, a comrade

sought leave to take his place. Bunyan consented. His companion went to Leicester, and, standing sentry, was shot through the head, and died. These interpositions made no impression on him at the time.

He married very early: "And my mercy was to light upon a wife, whose father was counted godly. This woman and I, though we came together as poor as poor might be—not having so much household stuff as a dish or spoon betwixt us, yet this she had for her portion, 'The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven,' and 'The Practice of Piety,' which her father had left her when he died. In these two books I would sometimes read with her, wherein I also found some things that were somewhat pleasing to me. She also would be often telling of me what a godly man her father was, and what a strict and holy life he lived in his days, both in word and deeds. Wherefore these books, with the relation, though they did not reach my heart to awaken it about my soul and sinful state, yet they did beget within me some desires to reform my vicious life, and fall in very eagerly with the religion of the times—to wit, to go to church twice a-day, and that, too, with the foremost; and there should very devoutly both say and sing as others did, yet retaining my wicked life. But, withal, I was so overrun with the spirit of superstition, that I adored, and that with great devotion, even all things—the high-place, priest, clerk, vestment, ser-