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**Isabel Hofmeyr: The Portable Bunyan**

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## INTRODUCTION

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### **Portable Texts**

#### **Bunyan, Translation, and Transnationality**

On 31 October 1847, the *John Williams*, a ship of the London Missionary Society (LMS), left Gravesend for the Pacific Islands from whence it had come. Its cargo included five thousand Bibles and four thousand copies of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in Tahitian.<sup>1</sup> Like other such mission ships, the *John Williams* had been funded by the pennies and shillings of Sunday school subscriptions and had become a huge media spectacle. It was but one of the many international propaganda exercises at which mission organizations excelled.<sup>2</sup>

This picture of *The Pilgrim's Progress* as part of an international web is an appropriate one. Written in the wake of the English Revolution, the Puritan classic had spread across the Protestant Atlantic as its persecuted readers fled (or were transported) to Europe, North America, and the Caribbean. Its next major international fillip came courtesy of the Protestant mission movement, whose adherents, recruited from across the Atlantic, propagated their most beloved book wherever they went. By the late 1700s, it had reached India and by the early 1800s, Africa. Yet, some two hundred years later, this avowedly international image of *The Pilgrim's Progress* has been turned inside out. Once a book of the world, it has become a book of England. Today Bunyan is remembered as a supremely English icon, and his most famous work is still studied as the progenitor of the English novel. Roger Sharrock best exemplifies this pervasive trend of analysis in his introduction to the Penguin edition of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He begins by acknowledging Bunyan's transnational presence, but this idea is then severed from the "real" Bunyan who is local, Puritan, and, above all, English.<sup>3</sup>

Sharrock's vision of Bunyan is avowedly national and it is this viewpoint that has dominated academic study of Bunyan.<sup>4</sup> The story of Bunyan as a transnational writer has attracted almost no serious scholarly research. With the signal exception of Tamsin Spargo's work, the career of Bunyan's work outside Britain has generally only been explored by antiquarian or evangelically related investigation.<sup>5</sup> There are some cases, like David Smith's *Bunyan in America*, where the influence of *The Pilgrim's Progress* outside Britain is seriously assessed.<sup>6</sup> Such studies, however, make no attempt to link that international circulation back to Britain or to inquire what it might imply for Bunyan's standing in England. The two topics—Bunyan in Britain and Bunyan “abroad”—remain sundered areas of inquiry.

In a situation where global integration has enfeebled national boundaries and where literary studies is increasingly postcolonial in orientation, this division today in the terrain of Bunyan scholarship is peculiar. Virtually every other major figure in the British canon, like Shakespeare, Milton, Austen, or Dickens, has been subject to reinterpretations that consider them in a transnational rather than simply a national domain. Similarly, readings of the novel as a form shaped in empire are now commonplace. As a writer translated into some two hundred languages worldwide, Bunyan's claims to such a reevaluation are even stronger and more pressing.<sup>7</sup> Yet, studies of Bunyan remain resolutely local.

This book attempts to reintegrate the divided terrain of scholarship on *The Pilgrim's Progress*, firstly, by reinserting Bunyan back into a transnational landscape and, secondly, by asking what the implications of such a move might be in theoretical and literary historical terms. This story is primarily explored in the context of Bunyan's circulation in Africa—the scene of eighty translations.<sup>8</sup> The narrative unfolds in three parts. The first section traces how *The Pilgrim's Progress* entered the continent as part of the evangelical Protestant mission movement. The second section examines how the book traveled into various African societies and how it was changed by the intellectual and literary traditions into which it migrated. The third section narrates how the African (and wider mission imperial) circulation of Bunyan changed his standing back in England.

This book, then, is an investigation of how a particular text was translated and circulated throughout much of the African continent (and indeed most of the Protestant world). Given its dissemination across so many different languages, societies, and intellectual contexts, *The Pilgrim's Progress* can be considered as an early example of a translingual

mass text (leaving aside, of course, the sacred books of world religions). In telling the story of its dissemination, this book asks how this one text came (or at least appeared) to be translatable across such a vast realm. Its theoretical agenda aligns three domains—translatability and its limits; the material and social practices of translation; and circulation. The argument woven around these items is set out below—first in summary and then in extended detail.

My argument commences with translatability, an *a priori* assumption in the Protestant mission world. Driven by universalistic theories of language and evangelical ardor, mission organizations held that any and every text with the “right” message was translatable. The mission domain consequently presents an instructive instance through which to approach issues of translatability. Their presuppositions of translatability understood as a linguistic feasibility produced a flurry of texts. Yet, what became of those texts? Did they prove intelligible or meaningful to their new audiences? Did they prove as translatable to their readers as they did to their producers and under what circumstances?

One long-standing route for answering such questions has been to consider factors internal to the translated text and to speculate on what orders of understanding its linguistic and stylistic choices do or do not enable. More recently, however, translation theorists have widened their frame of inquiry to pose prior questions about how ideas of equivalence or nonequivalence come into being. As Lydia Liu asks, “Can the achieved or contested reciprocity of languages be plotted as the outcome of a given economy of historical exchange?”<sup>9</sup> Attention to these economies of exchange with their “struggles over the commensurability or reciprocity of meanings as values” may generate crisper insights into problems of intellectual and cultural translatability. Such an analysis, as Liu points out, would involve capturing the “radical historicity” and contingency of how such climates of intelligibility (or nonintelligibility) are created.<sup>10</sup>

In investigating this set of issues, this book suggests two related lines of inquiry. The first examines the broad context of ideas and discourses that made translation thinkable to both Protestant missionaries and African converts. Evangelical enthusiasm certainly played a critical role in propagating translation; however, translation alone could never ensure intellectual portability. Instead, this book focuses on how shared ideas of literacy as miraculous agent and books as magical objects grew up as a field of discourse between missionary and convert. These ideas were driven, on the one hand, by mission evangelical theories of language

by which texts are empowered to seize and convert those they encounter, and, on the other, by African attempts to embed the new technology of print into a sacred domain where it became a vehicle for ancestral revelation. This field of discourse furnished an apparently shared set of motivations for undertaking translation, but one broad enough to provide a semblance of shared objectives while allowing for differing agendas to be pursued.

This book's second line of inquiry is to focus sustained attention on the material and social practices of translation itself. It argues that the social relationships, fields of power, methods of working, and technologies of production associated with translation are critical sites for understanding whether, and what kinds of, notions of equivalence might come into being. The basic unit of production in the mission arena was a "first-language" convert and a "second-language" missionary.<sup>11</sup> This intimate nexus became a crucial domain in which ideas of comparison and translatability were produced. This "production unit" consequently forms one of the themes of analysis in this book and brings into focus how texts were selected for translation, how the work of translation proceeded, how these translated texts were produced, and for whom and in what forums they were distributed. Once we take this as our analytical field, we are forced to describe much more precisely how, and in what form, texts are circulated; how they are translated, taught, and read; and how their meanings are determined, not prior to their circulation but in the social arenas of their dissemination.

The "methodological fetishism" of keeping our eye on the textual object is also extended to the question of circulation, and it directs our attention to the material routes of circulation along which texts were funneled. Both the actual and the imagined limits of circulation allow us to speculate on the forms of publicness that translated texts bring into being. What kinds of imaginaries, for example, coalesce when texts circulate across language boundaries? These forms of virtual solidarity can in turn throw light on the broader questions of how decisions around equivalence or nonequivalence are ceded or withheld.

The final segment of the argument concerns the limits of translatability. Under what circumstances did the text not prove portable? Under what conditions was it consciously rejected? Or, in what conjunctures did it simply evaporate? In addressing this cluster of questions, this book suggests that while these conditions are always contingent, they can usefully be thought of in relation to the role of African intellectual brokerage. It is such intellectual formations, and their internal debates between

leader and led, that play a critical role in whether translated texts find acceptance or whether they are cast aside as politically tainted, as meaningless, or as unintelligible. Such instances of conscious political rejection generally spell the end of a translated text's life, although its outline can linger, often as an irritant against which arguments are framed. In such instances, the text can find a short-lived and spectral translatability. Yet, not all instances of untranslatability derive from rejection. Often a translated text disappears, either through boredom or, in some instances, by evaporating into nearly identical narrative forms where the translated text ceases to be itself. In such instances, untranslatability is brought about not by too little commensurability, but rather by too much.

The remainder of the introduction spells out this argument in more detail before turning to consider its implication for the literary historiography of Bunyan. The introduction concludes with comments on the geographical and historical scope of the book, its research procedures and sources, and an overview of chapters.

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## Translatability

The question of why *The Pilgrim's Progress* appeared so translatable or "universal" has long attracted speculation but produced little sustained research. This armchair surmise has produced two orders of answer: the first concerns itself with features internal to the text, the second with factors external to it, namely the imperial context in which it was disseminated. In the first line of argument, certain themes in the text are nominated as assuring its successes. For nineteenth-century Protestants, this secret ingredient was Bunyan's evangelical message; for those involved in English literature as a discipline, it was the book's enactment of a "universal" human nature. More recently, Christopher Hill has mooted that it is the text's political radicalism that attracts audiences in colonized societies.<sup>12</sup> The second line of argument moves outside the text and posits Bunyan's universality as being tied up with a relentless imperialism via whose structures a text like *The Pilgrim's Progress* is disseminated in order to "control non-Western, non-Christian subjects."<sup>13</sup>

Both lines of argument have limited validity. In some instances, the generic and episodic features of the text did play a part in winning popular audiences for the text. However, as the case studies in this book demonstrate, the sections of the text so foregrounded are different from

those nominated by casual speculation and can only be brought to light via a serious engagement with the African intellectual formations into which such segments were enfolded.

The arguments about imperialism as an enabler of the text likewise have some salience: empire furnished a crucial context for missions and hence conditions for the text to be propagated in translated form. Furthermore, in disseminating this, one of their key ideological documents, missionaries invested extraordinary amounts of determination, labor, capital, and technology. These mechanisms were reinforced by an array of distributive institutions: mission schools and bookshops; mission-run literary, debating, and dramatic societies; journals and newspapers; and literature bureaus (joint mission/colonial state institutions set up to promote “appropriate” vernacular literatures). As sections of this book demonstrate, this mission doggedness resulted in environments saturated with *The Pilgrim’s Progress* in at least two and sometimes three languages. The investment in the text also occasioned a determination to make it “catch on” at all costs. As one mission publisher observed, “It sometimes takes three to five years for a new book to become known so that people ask for it.”<sup>14</sup>

Yet, at the same time, this explanation of mission and imperial doggedness is partial in several regards. Most obviously, it conflates the colonial state, white-settler interest, and missions and treats these as identical. Hence, white-settler appropriations of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* in English (in which the story was frequently fashioned as an imperial allegory) are construed as similar to the translated versions sponsored by mission organizations.<sup>15</sup> Most importantly, however, such interpretations assume that missionaries (backed by imperial compulsion) can determine the field of debate for the audiences they encounter, a proposition that scholarship on missions has consistently disproved.<sup>16</sup> Instead, as this latter research demonstrates, mission agendas are always curtailed by the circumstances into which they are inserted. In relation specifically to mission translation, this scholarship has started to sketch a picture of how such constraints played themselves out in the contradictory processes of vernacularizing Christianity and of fashioning theological equivalences across languages. Birgit Meyer, for example, examines the field of biblical translation that took shape between Ewe Protestant and North German Pietist in Ghana. She focuses on the symbiosis between the witchcraft beliefs of the former and the devil theology of the latter and how these interactions registered themselves in the translation choices made for key terms in the Scriptures, such as “devil,” “holy spirit,” and “God.” The

semantic fields of these terms allowed Ewe-speakers and German missionaries to operate in an apparently shared field of understanding while continuing to attribute power to older beliefs like witchcraft by energetically disavowing them. Vicente Rafael's study of Spanish Jesuit interactions with Tagalog societies in seventeenth-century Philippines foregrounds ideas on language, signification, and translation as a primary domain for grasping the complicit contestations that characterize Christian colonialism. As he demonstrates, both Spaniard and Tagalog had "something else in mind" in the process of conversion—for the Jesuits, it was the universalization of a hierarchical Christian order; for Tagalog-speakers, it was an attempt to "manage" Christianity by keeping it at arm's length. For many Tagalog, the new religion was treated like a troublesome and unbidden spirit that required fitful appeasement. The result was "conversion in a state of distraction" and an almost absent-minded filtering and dismembering of Jesuit texts, producing a social order "premised not on consensus between ruler and ruled but on the fragmentation and hermeneutic displacement of the very basis of consensus: language."<sup>17</sup> Meyer and Rafael demonstrate that in two mission locations, the intellectual traditions of mission and convert jointly produced a semantic "haze," a field of strategic misreading that enabled a form of translation to become possible.

This book extends Meyer's and Rafael's lines of argument by examining the shared fields of discourse that Protestant mission and convert, in their early stages of interaction, bring into being around literacy as a miraculous technology and books as magical objects. For missions, this perception was driven by evangelical theories of language and conversion that entail magical notions of textual agency, since language is seen as a primary vehicle through which conversion (a form of magical transformation) occurs. For Africans, the perception was driven less by the novelty of the technology than by its embedding in existing understandings of the sacred. These allowed a new form of communication to be harnessed to speak to existing spiritual and ancestral worlds. It also allowed a bypassing of mission authorities since the technology was seen to come from God or the ancestors rather than the mission colonial world. Both traditions of interpretation, to some extent, construed the book as a magical object and, in this apparent agreement, could construct a discourse field that validated the propagation and translation of further texts, while simultaneously pursuing different agendas.

This intellectual convergence is captured as well in the term the "white man's fetish," which was used to describe books in general. The



book can hence be seen as similar in its operation to the workings of the “fetish” as outlined by Pietz.<sup>18</sup> As he demonstrates, the term emerged from the trading entrepôts on the West African coast and became a way of managing contradictory ideas of value and of making trade possible. The operations of the “white man’s fetish” can be understood in an analogous way. The term became a way of managing contradictory orders of value, this time in relation to the spiritual realm, and generated a field of discourse and meaning through which translation became possible.

One claim of this book is that *The Pilgrim’s Progress* functioned as a privileged “fetish.” This capacity derived from three features. The first was the emotional and compulsive power with which Protestant missionaries invested the text. Particularly for Nonconformist missionaries, it was a book of extraordinary appeal that had long been scripted into their theology and their conversion narratives.<sup>19</sup> Because of its power, and because it summarized the key message of evangelical Protestantism, the book was widely treated as a substitute for the Scriptures themselves. This latter attribute gave the text its second “fetish”-like property, namely its ambiguity. As a near-Bible, it was both secular and sacred; serious and pleasurable; fictional yet also “true.” Its form as an allegory extended these ambiguous possibilities: it could support divergent interpretations while still apparently remaining the same book. Thirdly, the book has a structure that lends itself relatively easily to translation. It is episodic and could be translated serially as a sequence of freestanding installments. The text has little realistic detail. Its topography is vague and biblical in orientation and presents few impediments to translation.

For Protestant missions, there was consequently both a will and a way to translate the text and to disseminate it widely. As an object that had wrought their own conversion, missionaries imagined the text doing likewise to others and dispelling the darkness of heathendom. For African Christians working under constrained and supervised circumstances, the text offered a number of opportunities for experimentation. Not only was it an arena of allegorical possibility but its illustrations and the dramatic reenactments of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, which were routinely staged, provided a landscape in which converts could “try on” different characters and plot lines. For those in the mission domain wishing to produce their own writing in English or African languages or both, the story—one of the few semi-secular texts used by evangelical missionaries—offered a compendium of generic potentialities to explore and greater opportunities for intertextual rescripting than the Bible whose integrity was fiercely policed.<sup>20</sup> In these ways, Bunyan’s text could become an ob-

ject authorizing transactions while also absorbing the contradictory meanings generated in the mission domain.

In relation to mission translation, this book attempts to draw attention to evangelicalism, a topic that has been widely studied but whose implications for translation have not been fully grasped. Historically, the phenomenon has been extensively discussed as a major factor in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century emergence of the Protestant mission movement. Likewise, its theological meaning as a doctrine of salvation by faith rather than by good works or the sacrament has been much debated. Also well understood are the phenomenological manifestations of evangelicalism that entail a particular style of conversion: a burdensome awareness of sin is followed by an overwhelmingly emotional experience of conversion.<sup>21</sup> Less understood, however, are evangelical ideas about language, text, and translation.

These are, of course, shaped by the compelling imperatives of proselytization. Not only was each Protestant obliged to preach the word and save souls but in some schools of thought this activity also served to hasten the second coming: when the word had been preached to all nations, Jesus was to return to earth. An individual's textual practice could consequently have millennial implications. Working in such pressing contexts, it became imperative to broadcast the word as widely as possible. Consequently, there was considerable technological and media inventiveness on the part of mission organizations that sought to render their messages as physical objects in order to extend their reach. These objects, in turn, could become proxy agents or prosthetic missionaries, "noiseless messengers" who could extend the missionary's range and penetrate into regions where missionaries themselves could not go.<sup>22</sup> The propaganda prerogatives attendant on foreign missions provided an additional incentive to making texts material. Audiences back home were often skeptical of, if not opposed to, foreign missions, whom they thought should stay put and attend to the "heathen" at home. Crusades of persuasion were hence required and one object often deployed in such campaigns was the translated text. Bibles, hymnbooks, tracts, and copies of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in foreign languages routinely formed part of missionary exhibitions and publicity. Home viewers generally knew the original of the translated texts well and could sustain the illusion that readers across the world imbibed the "same" message as they did.

Underlying these evangelical practices was a view of reading (and implicitly a theory of language) that invested texts with the capacity to seize and entirely transform those whom they addressed. This point is

worth stressing as several current understandings of mission translation have highlighted only its universalistic assumptions in terms of which any language is a transparent and inert medium through which God's truth could shine. In such analyses, missionaries are portrayed as naive in their translation practices.<sup>23</sup> By holding that equivalence and translatability were divinely ordained and hence possible, a universalistic view of language was undoubtedly important in fueling the frenzied translation activity of Protestant missions. However, in order for these translated texts to be effective in the world, one required a supplementary theory of textual compulsion that conferred agency on texts to capture those they encountered. Mission translation in effect mobilized both theories—those of transparency and those of capture—in order to function and to sustain the belief that texts could cross languages and cultures so as to bring the “same” form of belief and consciousness into being. Or, put another way, such textual theories sought to propagate a “transnationally translatable monoculture.”<sup>24</sup> In part, of course, missionaries failed in this intention as the message they bore was rescripted by its recipients. Overall, however, the mission project in Africa had a fair degree of success in propagating itself, a process that depended, in part, as Lamin Sanneh has argued, on the strategies of translation that it evolved.<sup>25</sup>

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### **Translation as Material and Social Practice**

As an exercise in evangelization, mission translation is shaped by a cluster of constraints that confer on it certain distinctive attributes. Firstly, as the purpose of translation is to recruit followers, missionaries constantly experiment with different textual configurations to see what will communicate best with the audiences they encounter. Secondly, as most missionaries are second-language speakers, they are dependent on first-language converts with whom they work closely. Thirdly, mission translation is always an avowedly transnational and transcontinental activity shaped, on the one hand, “at home” by the parent body's denominational objectives and funding capacities, and, on the other, “abroad” by the interaction of mission and convert. Each of these constraints prompts certain characteristic ways of working, patterns of funding, sets of social relationships, and material textual forms that together create both limits and possibilities for how translated texts will be interpreted.

As the first and second points indicate, mission translation is a system heavily dependent on convert audiences and expertise. African Christian thinking can consequently imprint itself on the final translated products at a number of junctures. The first of these relates to the broad parameters in which Christianity itself came to be understood. As a wealth of research has demonstrated, the tenets of the religion found differing degrees of acceptance in the continent. The doctrine of original sin, for example, with its presupposition of an unwilled, universal condition of evil, was often sidestepped by African Christians in favor of a more social understanding of sin. Other concepts, notably that of a supreme being, already existed and hence found general acceptance. So, too, did the idea of God having a son. Despite this being a novel notion, it generated an extensive African Christology in which the figure of Christ is reworked, generally as an intermediary rather than a son.<sup>26</sup> As this book demonstrates, these templates, often shaped in the “labor process” of translation itself, furnish a critical context for considering any translated text in the mission world. They consequently provide important boundaries when considering the translatability of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, a text heavily steeped in Protestant doctrine.

A second node at which African Christian thinking could intervene was in determining the material shape, form, and content of the translated text. The exigencies of proselytization mean that texts have to be experimentally disseminated in bits and pieces and in a variety of media (image, illustration, photograph, postcard, magic lantern slide, pageant, sermon, hymn). Popular taste consequently registers itself in how these media are configured. As chapter 8 shows, the decision of which European illustrations to include in mission editions was at times influenced by converts. The conventions employed in Africanized illustrations likewise reflected the opinions of African Christians. Equally, the segments of the book that proved most durable were determined by convert opinion. In short, popular judgment has a decisive impact on whether translated forms become portable.

It is also important to underline that mission methods of producing translation seldom involved a solo translator. As we have seen, the basic working unit comprised a second-language missionary and first-language convert. Virtually all mission translation was hammered out in such pairs. These “couples” worked long hours, were locked in tense and often intimate relations of dependence, and produced a style of translation that was coauthored. Adding further complexity was the convention

of translation by committee, particularly in relation to anything biblical where doctrinal and theological questions had to be negotiated among the home organization, the members of the mission, the Bible Society, and mission colleagues from other denominations in the region.

This complexity of operation meant that any mission translation was shaped in a web of negotiation, disagreement, and contradiction. Mission translation is hence less about the “technologies of colonial domination” than about opening up fields of maneuver.<sup>27</sup> The possibilities for such maneuver were further enabled and limited by the complex linguistic landscape against which translation unfolded in Africa. Such arenas not infrequently involved more than one African language and more than one European language—a feature of the linguistic landscape routinely obscured by the idea that colonial encounters entailed two “sides” and hence, it is unquestioningly assumed, only two languages. Many precolonial African societies were “multilingual,” a word that cannot fully capture the complex linguistic and dialect layering of a world where languages in the modern and strictly demarcated sense did not exist. Languages also overlay other forms of social status, such as royal and commoner, slave and free, indigene and latecomer. Into this complex linguistic landscape came missionaries, speaking different languages, and colonial forces of occupation, often speaking yet others. In these unequal arenas, missionaries claimed the right to “own” and codify African languages, turning them into the orthographical and grammatical subordinates of European languages. However, this domination did not prevent the linguistic domain from persisting as a critical political forum in which Africans continued their multiple battles against mission, colonial state, and their precolonial enemies. In such an environment, having one’s language chosen for codification by missions could give one an edge over one’s social betters (who sometimes spoke another language). It could also mean elevation into a “tribe,” a form of social organization through which one could win recognition and some resources from the colonial state.<sup>28</sup> The cost, however, was a mission-made language not always fully recognizable to its speakers and a world of racially supervised literary and cultural production. Language politics in and around the mission provided a landscape of both possibility and constraint within which African Christians had to try and position themselves.

The case studies in this book seek to understand the translation process as wrought in such intricacies and complexities. One such instance, narrated in chapter 3, involves a minority language community, the Kele, on the Upper Congo and their interaction with the British Bap-

tists. Kele was one of at least a dozen languages in the vicinity and was chosen by missionaries in order to “protect” its speakers from the ravages of modernity. In the process of translating Bunyan, Kele Protestants played a role in conferring a particular shape and form on an abridged translation of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. In this version, the theological explanations regarding original sin with which the story is larded were generally left out. This configuration of the text bears the imprint of Kele Protestant opinion. Firstly, in bypassing the sections on original sin, readers could sidestep this Protestant doctrine that proved untranslatable across most of Africa. They could also “prime” the story to make it more amenable to interpretation by removing the distracting second-guessing of the author who violates his own allegorical procedures by explaining what episodes mean. Through the translation process, the story is “cleaned up” and made more amenable to Kele interpretation.

Adding to this complex translingual environment was a third characteristic of mission translation, namely its transnational and transcontinental orientation. This arose both from the globalizing ambitions of Protestantism as an evangelical religion and from the sprawling transcontinental infrastructure (of committees, printers, warehouses, transport routes, and so on) that mission organizations established to support translation. These imperatives tend to produce Protestant texts that carry both an international mode of address (implicitly addressed to all actual and potential believers throughout the world) and more local agendas shaped in the individual nodes of the international network.

In traveling through these various circuits, a text like *The Pilgrim’s Progress* accumulated traces of its prior journeys. In some cases, such signs could be the language/s into or from which it was translated. In other cases, it could be an introduction giving something of the text’s history. In yet others, the text’s illustrations could betoken its prior paths: African and African American editions, for example, showed black characters and so indicated that the text had acquired new “personnel” on its travels.

These various traces and reminders in turn conferred on the text a capacity to enable imaginative international addressivity. Put another way, it allowed people to think, read, and write *as if* they were addressing a vast international Protestant public (even if in reality they only reached a limited actual or potential audience). *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, as a virtual international text, functioned as a set of “backdrops” against which one could imaginatively project oneself into an international arena.

Such texts acquire a layering that is important to their perceived

translatability. The case studies in this book provide instances of this process by which different groups used this “doubleness” for a variety of political objectives. The novelist, Thomas Mofolo, for example, engages with *The Pilgrim’s Progress* to rescript local ideas of masculinity by entering a broad debate on Protestantism, gender, and empire. The middle-class African mission elite frequently turned to Bunyan to articulate anti-colonial and, at times, antimission ideologies not only to themselves, white settlers, and the colonial state but also to an international audience. In the case of the Kongo translation in northern Angola, African mission notables used the opportunity opened by photographic illustrations of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* to project themselves (as characters in the images) and, implicitly, their local ethnic micropolitics into an international arena, thereby passing around and over the Portuguese colonial state.

A focus on translation, then, requires us to grapple with the organization and implications of intellectual labor across the empire. This approach proves useful in putting into practice recent revisionist readings of empire. These posit empire as an intellectually integrated zone, instead of a divided terrain of “center” and “periphery.” The imperial arena is a complex force field in which circuits of influence travel in more than one direction. How to put such a vision into practice is, however, by no means self-evident. In essence, we are required to understand how events are made in different places at the same time. Such an approach necessitates a multi-sited methodology that can provide both breadth and depth. We are obliged to have a broad canvas, but, equally, each point on that canvas must have sufficient depth to plumb the local intellectual formations underlying that node. One also needs a method of telling the story that captures the movement in and between these various nodes. Given these difficulties, the temptation is often to adopt a proscenium approach where narration focuses primarily on one site. Ideas, influences, or intellectual currents from elsewhere feature, but only in walk-on parts. Such situations can be characterized by what Dipesh Chakrabarty terms “asymmetrical knowledge.”<sup>29</sup> In this scenario, most scholars’ knowledge weighs in at the metropolitan end of things with the local being read—if at all—only at the level of elite culture. The intellectual hinterlands informing this elite cultural production seldom come into focus. Attention to themes of translation can provide one route into solving these problems by forcing our attention on to intellectual production in varying sites and among an extensive cast of players. Such a framework also directs us to think about questions of textual circulation.

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## Circulation

With regard to questions of circulation, this book suggests that our task is twofold: firstly, we have to uncover empirically the complexity of circuits along which texts are marshaled and, secondly, we need to ask what the theoretical import of such journeys might be. In order to address the first point, we have to keep our eye on the text as a material object. This procedure is necessary in order to bring to light the intricate circuits along which texts are funneled rather than the routes we imagine or anticipate they might traverse. One such presupposition is that texts tread predictable paths, namely from “Europe” to “Africa,” “north” to “south,” “metropole” to “colony.” With regard to *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, the commonsense temptation is to imagine the text traveling this route, diffusing outwards from the imperial center to the furthest reaches of empire, with apparently little consequence for the context from which it emanated.

Instead of this “center”/“periphery” model, we place Bunyan’s text in the broader space of the mission empire and trace its circuits within it. These routes along which the texts travel are varied. The text, for example, often travels “side-ways” between African languages. It loops back to the metropolis. It follows diasporic trajectories. In some cases, it travels between heaven and earth. This book attempts both to bring the empirical complexities of these textual journeys into view and to ask what their theoretical import may be. What difference might such empirical information make analytically? What significance might we divine from the routes along which texts migrate?

One answer to this question comes from Michael Warner’s recent work on publics and counterpublics.<sup>30</sup> For him, questions of circulation, both real and imagined, lie at the very heart of how publics come into being, how they think about themselves, and hence how they script social imaginaries, in turn the template on behalf of which much social and political action is taken. For Warner, it is the limits and pathways of circulation that are critical. How these are imagined become the sinews around which publics take shape. A key methodological move in such an equation is to pay close attention to how texts dramatize the limits of their circulation. In Warner’s words, “From the concrete experience of a world in which available forms circulate, one projects a public. . . . This performative ability depends, however, on that object’s being not entirely fictitious—not postulated merely, but recognized as a real path for the circulation of discourse. That path is then treated as a social entity.”<sup>31</sup>



One purpose of this book, in tracing the routes along which *The Pilgrim's Progress* was guided, is to bring into focus a variety of forms of publicness that these circuits make visible. Some of these are well known and have long been discussed in nationalist and diasporic analyses of Africa. These include the political congregations of the African mission elite, the crisscrossed diasporic networks of the black Atlantic, and the messianic worlds of popular African Christianity. The analysis offered here examines the role that one particular text performed in the discourse fields of these publics and how the text furnished intellectual and performative arenas in which these groups could workshop versions of themselves.

Yet, at the same time, this analysis also insists, in opposition to much of the nationalist historiography on Africa, that such groups spoke not only to themselves or their oppressors but equally to a worldwide public, albeit a type that has largely fallen from view. As we have seen, Protestant texts are always transcontinental in their mode of address, speaking implicitly to all actual and potential believers, even if such believers cannot understand the language in which the text is written. In looking at how such texts dramatize the limits of their circulation, we can detect the cosmic arena in which African Protestants placed themselves. Such arenas provided novel horizons against which forms of selfhood could be rehearsed to produce new modes of publicness. One of these, mentioned earlier, was a public sphere that straddled heaven and earth. In this divine order, texts circulated between this world and the next and in some instances, were produced in heaven and made their way to earth. In such an ancestral economy, the dead are interpellated retrospectively, via the mechanisms of print culture, as “honorary” members of modernity. The technologies of modernity, in this case print and literacy, are likewise made ancestral and are seen to emanate not from colonially aligned missions but from the spiritual realms of “tradition.” As one boundary of projected textual circulation, the ancestral world represents a novel cosmic imaginary marked in part by the languages in which the ancestors are deemed to be competent. In most cases, the dead read and write in a named African language, but in some cases, they appear to be polyglot, able to deal with documents in any language. As Rafael remarks, paradise can “mark the end of translation” and so provide the threshold for a new imaginative formation.<sup>32</sup>

Another type of public was signaled by texts that are translated “sideways” between African languages, rather than moving, as the commonsense view would expect, from a europhone to an afrophone lan-

guage. Such “lateral” moves were often registered in the introduction to editions that spelled out the African languages through which the text had already traversed and hence the African intellectual circuits and formations in which it had been inducted. In the few cases where *The Pilgrim’s Progress* was translated solo by an African, the book became ensconced in the printed and oral literary culture of the language as well as in popular taste and perception. Such popularity had in part to do with the superior quality of translation, done by a first-language speaker, but also with the implied circulation of the text, which was seen to have been thoroughly “baptized” in the literary and intellectual traditions of the language. In some cases, the text even appears to enter its print version from a prior oral existence in an African language. The preface to the Zulu version of 1868, for example, states: “Here it is, then, the book of Christian. You have heard others talk of his existence, and that he has his own book . . .”<sup>33</sup>

In this quotation, the idea of the book occupies a para-literate zone in which texts become multimedia and multilingual portfolios. In such understandings, texts are configured across the printed and the spoken, image and text, and, at times, heaven and earth. This “portfolio” understanding of texts in turn inaugurates and forms part of an extensive field of African popular cultural production which plaits together intellectual traditions, media, genres, and languages in novel ways, as Karin Barber’s seminal work has demonstrated. These formations in turn play a critical role in convening sub-elite reading, writing, and interpretive formations whose outlines are beginning to be traced by scholars like Barber and Stephanie Newell.<sup>34</sup> As much of this book demonstrates, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* often functioned as a text around which models of reading, writing, and interpretive practices were negotiated. Its history can hence throw some light on the intricate ways in which African reading formations, both popular and otherwise, take shape. The history of Bunyan’s text in Africa, often the model of what a book might or could be, likewise starts to throw some light on what a history of the book in Africa might look like. This book’s contribution to that as-yet-unwritten story is to highlight the extraordinary possibilities that emerged from a situation in which print technology, for much of the nineteenth century at least, was mediated by the mission domain. As already indicated, this conjuncture of circumstances produced a realm of miraculous literacy in which the potentialities of the book (and hence how its history might be written) were grasped in novel and distinctive ways.

As a text that crossed so many languages and served so many

purposes, *The Pilgrim's Progress* came to function as a portmanteau text. In this guise, the book can be seen as an archive in which various intellectual positions could be billeted. As the case studies in this book illustrate, the text provided a shared landscape and set of reference points around and in which debates could be rehearsed. Whether these were about “progress,” modernity, masculinity, the nature of heaven, the political possibilities of the diaspora, or the workings of a transcontinental Protestant arena, they were enfolded in readers’ idea of the story. These interpretations were also supplemented by knowledge (which obviously varied from reader to reader) that one was encountering a text that had been “baptized” in a range of domains. As this book demonstrates, these were far-flung and as diverse as Jamaican slavery, the struggles of the Eastern Cape African elite in South Africa, and the dream-geographies of heaven. These temporalities likewise leave traces of themselves in the text and become part of its cumulative meaning. This archive in turn comes to play a significant role in African intellectual history when it is taken up as a sub-tradition in the African novel. As chapter 9 demonstrates, various African writers address themselves to Bunyan, not as an “imperial” writer but as a long-standing African presence with whom particular intellectual debates, particularly around modernity, have come to be associated.

These various circumstances, then, played a part in helping *The Pilgrim's Progress* to “get a life” in Africa. Yet, under what circumstances did the text not survive?

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### **The Limits of Translatability**

In assessing the limits of the text’s portability, this book foregrounds the nature of the African intellectual brokerage that Bunyan’s narrative encountered. As we have seen, African intellectual formations were central in ensuring the book’s longevity. They were likewise critical in those scenarios where the text did not survive. The role that African intellectuals played in this regard was both witting (involving a political choice of rejection) and unwitting (where the text falls by the wayside not out of rejection but out of boredom or indifference).

An apt example of witting rejection concerns Simon Kimbangu, the leader of a prominent breakaway prophet movement that emerged as a “fall-out” of Baptist missions on the Lower Congo in the 1920s. Kim-

banguists adapted quite a few features of the Baptist tradition, including aspects of church organization and bureaucracy as well as catechisms, sermons, and hymns. The movement, however, evinced no systematic interest in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, despite the fact that it had been so intensively propagated by the BMS.<sup>35</sup> While the situation is difficult to judge precisely, this decision to bypass Bunyan may, in part, have been driven by Kimbangu himself, who at times used elements of *The Pilgrim's Progress* while disavowing its provenance. One such instance emerges from Kimbangu's belief that the hymnbook he wrote came from the other world. In order to travel there and back to locate his hymns, Kimbangu had to pass through a great body of water. Despite his dunking, however, the book of hymns remained dry, proving its divine origin. The Kongo version of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in circulation on the Lower Congo at the time, showed an illustration of the hero, Christian being helped from the Slough of Despond. He is soaking wet. The book in his hand is dry. Persecuted by both British Baptists and Belgian colonial officials, Kimbangu presumably "poached" from the text but disavowed the source, making a political decision to reject the book while still maintaining it as a ghostly reference point. This soon faded. In the extensive body of material on Kimbanguism, there is no indication that *The Pilgrim's Progress* made any imprint.

In this Kimbangu scenario, the text withers, largely because of an active decision of disavowal. However, translated texts can also disappear through indifference and boredom. Consider, for example, the wider fate of the Kongo version of the book. Within the mission world it took strong hold, while in Kimbangu's secessionist movement, it made only a fleeting impression. Beyond the mission hinterlands, the text made no discernible impact whatsoever. One way to think about this issue would be to consider *The Pilgrim's Progress* against the background of existing Kongo narrative traditions. From this perspective, the story would seem quite unexceptional. Tales of a man with a bag on his back traveling from this world to the next were commonplace. Featuring a trickster protagonist who in some variations is called Moni-Mambu, the one with affairs and concerns on his back, the narratives follow a pattern whereby the protagonist sets off from this world to the next.<sup>36</sup> There he has a series of encounters with the gods and ancestors, and using his wit and the objects stored in his bag, he is able to bring back some desired items, such as ideas, solutions to problems, hunting luck, or treasures. The overall pattern of the story is a movement from this world to the next and back again. Against this background, Bunyan's story is a bit of a yawn. A man

with a bag on his back sets off on a journey and has adventures along the way, often with creatures like Apollyon from the other world. What's the big deal? Not only is the story quite ordinary, but it is also incomplete. It starts off promisingly enough, but then stops abruptly halfway through just at the point where the protagonist reaches the next world and the story promises to get really interesting. As chapter 9 discusses, the early West African novelists Amos Tutuola and D. O. Fagunwa, who embed elements of Bunyan in their novels, could in effect be read as attempting to complete the story and reinsert it in a matrix of traveling to the next world and then coming back again.

In such situations, translated texts disappear via generic erosion or evaporation. A related process of disintegration is what one might call textual "randomization." As we have seen, the text was broadcast in bits and pieces via different media—postcards, wallcharts, magic lantern slides, sermons, or choir services. This mode of dissemination put into circulation atomized bits of the text that could be reconfigured in different ways. The postcard version of the story (figure 7), which comprised two packs of six cards, for example, allowed one to shuffle the plot units as one saw fit. This rearrangement of the plot in turn accords closely with how story episodes behave in certain oral narrative traditions. Here stories are open-ended and there is little sense of climactic closure, so that plot episodes have no strictly preordained sequence. The way in which episodes are knitted together depends much on the moment of performance and the performer's assessment of the interests and composition of the audience.<sup>37</sup> Within such a system, any randomized episodes deriving from *The Pilgrim's Progress* could become narrative fodder absorbed into a new generic field. This tendency for the story to be "digested" is further aided by the folkloric elements of the story. These include folktale motifs and plot outlines, dramatic dialogue, two characters to a scene, proverbs, riddles, formulaic phrasings, and onomastic strategies. These features are present in African literary traditions into which particles of the story could be elided. In these circumstances, texts disintegrate, not through political resistance or rejection but rather under systems unaware of, or indifferent to, their supposedly "correct" and "original" meaning.

In these ways, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, despite being so energetically propagated, in some instances, became "extinct." The text had indeed reached the limits of its circulation. Yet, what did the limits of its circulation mean for Bunyan's text back in England? And might we use

the templates of translation and transnational circulation to revise the existing historiographies of Bunyan?

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### Rethinking Bunyan Historiography

One important objective of this book is to reformulate the divided terrain of Bunyan scholarship, currently split between a Bunyan “at home” and another, largely disavowed Bunyan “abroad.” One way to reconfigure the field, as many others have done, is to refuse the division of “home” and “abroad,” “metropolis” and “periphery.” Instead, as Gyan Prakash suggests, we need a realignment that releases “histories and knowledges from their disciplining as area studies; as imperial and overseas histories . . . that seals metropolitan structures from the contagion of the record of their own formation elsewhere.”<sup>38</sup>

The first move in such a realignment is to recognize Nonconformity, the heartland in which Bunyan was nurtured, as a transnational movement. Much existing Bunyan historiography has, of course, examined the role that Nonconformity played in Bunyan’s rising national fortunes.<sup>39</sup> As Nonconformity became more respectable and powerful—so these studies suggest—*The Pilgrim’s Progress*, as one of its most prized cultural possessions, appreciated commensurately. This work has, however, overlooked the international dimensions of evangelical Nonconformity. More recently there have been a number of attempts, most eminently in the work of Susan Thorne, to reconsider Nonconformity as a transnational phenomenon.<sup>40</sup> She demonstrates how Nonconformists, faced with social disabilities at home, harnessed the glamour of foreign missions as a means of raising their national profile and their political fortunes. Bunyan can usefully be inserted into this scenario. His dissemination via the Protestant mission movement presented an opportunity for Nonconformists to advertise to a “home” audience Bunyan’s “universal” appeal to millions of readers throughout the world. In so doing, Nonconformists could display the virtues of their cultural preferences and “add value” to their cause. Bunyan could also strengthen support for foreign missions by providing a much-needed point of identification for “home” audiences, often unfamiliar with the obscure location of foreign missions. One vehicle for achieving this objective was through the circulation and display of translated texts. These, as we have seen, could be

exhibited both to publicize mission work and to give substance to the conviction that everyone in the mission domain read the “same” texts and believed the “same” ideas. By consciously invoking the outer limits of Bunyan’s circulation, Nonconformists were able to constitute an evangelical Protestant public sphere that took this text as one of its major reference points.

However, with vertiginous de-Christianization, particularly after the First World War, evangelicalism lost ground as a public intellectual force. One institution that came to occupy the space it vacated was the emerging discipline of English literature, which sought to constitute the field of literature as a way to confer racial and cultural distinctiveness on Britons “at home” and in the empire. The idea of Bunyan as a writer who appealed to converts across lines of race was initially attractive and could bestow value on him as a writer who demonstrated the universal appeal of Englishness. However, as more aggressive racist ideas took hold, Bunyan came to be “tainted” by his association with those on the imaginative peripheries of empire. Particularly for those wishing to see Bunyan (and English literature more generally) as a marker of racial distinctiveness, such ambiguity presented an uneasy problem. One response from within the literary field to this “problem” was to vigorously foreground Bunyan’s white Englishness while shifting the definition of his universality from a concrete to an abstract realm. Instead of universality meaning the literal circulation of Bunyan’s texts to numerous far-flung societies, it came to denote a concern with an abstract “human nature.” Such arguments could salvage the value-conferring properties of universality while disconnecting Bunyan from his potentially “contaminating” association with colonized people. In this way, Bunyan could be reclaimed as white and English, while *The Pilgrim’s Progress* could become a book of England.

What in effect is expunged in this process of canonization is the knowledge of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* as a translated and transcontinental text. This global existence of the book must be retrospectively erased in order for it to emerge as monolingual and national. This retrospective view also creates the impression that Bunyan is first a national writer who is then broadcast to the world to become international. The story told here reverses this order. In brief, it argues that evangelicalism made Bunyan international, while English literature made him national. He is hence a transnational writer who was belatedly made national. The story of Bunyan’s influence has been narrated back to front. Closer attention to

questions of translation and circulation will help us put matters in the right order.

Given the imperatives set out above, this book, unsurprisingly, is broad in its scope. In terms of Africa, it takes in much of the sub-Saharan area of the continent. Its major focus is on southern and Central Africa, the zones of most intense Bunyan distribution. With regard to the first, southern Africa was the earliest and most intensively missionized area in Africa and it produced twenty-three translations of Bunyan in all. In a situation where British missionaries worked under British colonial rule (which was true for much of the subcontinent), the text became pervasive and far-reaching. Although the colonial state itself seldom took direct responsibility for African education—a task left to missions—its broad educational policies, which favored the promotion of British culture, often gave the text a helping hand. Somewhat counterintuitively, Central Africa, under French and Belgian rule, likewise produced twenty-three translations. These arose firstly from the presence of the BMS, which made the Congo River its primary mission field. Bunyan was strongly scripted into Baptist traditions. He was at times claimed as a founding father of the denomination and his theology had also played a key role in the Baptist evangelical revival, a major motor for the Baptist mission movement itself.<sup>41</sup> In all, the BMS was to produce nine translations, the highest tally for any mission society on the continent. A second group of ardent Bunyan fans in Central Africa were the fiercely evangelical faith missions, nondenominational organizations that had often broken from the bigger denominational societies whom they saw as over-bureaucratized and complacent. These groups swarmed into Central Africa, in their terms the most “untouched” part of the continent. Wherever they went they translated *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, a book that exemplified their “theology” in forms accessible not only to their converts but to themselves (who generally had little, if any, serious theological training) and their supporters back home who likewise lived by a narrative and biblicist theology. Within the enclaves established by both the BMS and faith missions, the text had a powerful and deep influence. Beyond these small pools, however, the text had a feeble impact. British and other missions, notably Swedish and North American, separated by language, nationality, and denomination from the Catholic French and Belgian colonial authorities, had little influence on educational policy. As such, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, while influential in limited pockets, never gained the wide pur-



chase of a text disseminated via a school system, as it often was under British rule.

The study also “visits,” if more briefly, East and West Africa with twelve (thirteen if one includes Madagascar, the large Indian Ocean island off the continent’s East coast) and twenty-one translations respectively. The East African translations, while few in number, were far-reaching in their influence. As with southern Africa, where settler-dominated states, like Kenya, made their influence felt on mission schools, the text was propagated by public institutions including the quasi-governmental East African Literature Bureau. In the West African case, the book was disseminated in mission schools, then subsequently in colonial and post-independent, state-run educational institutions. Government-funded literature bureaus also played a role in spreading the text. The ways in which the text was woven into the intellectual histories of these regions is explored through an examination of two early Nigerian novelists (Fagunwa and Tutuola) and the Kenyan, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o.

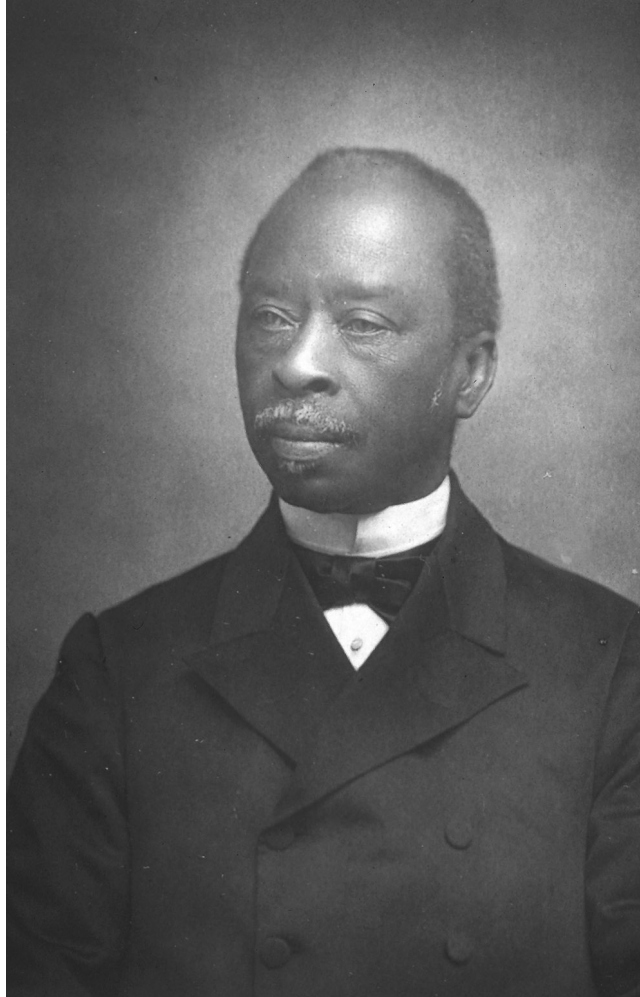
For readers interested in the nitty-gritty of where, when, and by whom the text was spread, I attach two appendices. The first lists all known African translations of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* by language, present-day nation(s) where the language is spoken, place of publication, publisher, mission society, and translator (where this is known: mission societies, as we have seen, favored anonymous translation-by-committee and so individual names did not always appear). The second discusses the social profile of Bunyan translators.

The details of exactly where, when, and by whom mission translations of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* were done are difficult to document with any exactitude. The book was produced in different places, and such transnational texts do not leave neat records in any one place, making it difficult to establish a comprehensive picture. Mainstream Bunyan scholarship has, moreover, never shown an interest in this area so little attention has been devoted to it. Available figures do indicate that overall there have been about two hundred translations of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (about twenty of these into European languages).<sup>42</sup> The geographical distribution of these figures accords with the spread of the Protestant mission endeavor.<sup>43</sup> Their most successful field was non-Islamic Africa, where Protestants made considerable headway, unimpeded by transethnic forms of organized religion and, particularly in southern and East Africa, assisted by colonial conquest. These inroads are apparent in the eighty translations that finally emerged from the continent. The next highest translation tally is in South Asia, where some twenty-four translations

were done. This number is bigger than one might expect for a region where Protestantism made only a limited impact on Hinduism and Islam. Yet, as the most favored site of the British Empire, India held prestige in mission eyes and considerable resources were invested into work in this region, accounting in turn for the relatively high number of translations. Like India, China (five translations), Southeast Asia (nine), and the Middle East (eight) were dominated by transpolity religions that largely kept Protestantism at bay. Oceania (another area of considerable Protestant advance) produced eleven translations, while in North America, where Christianity made little headway amongst indigenous societies, there were three translations—into “Cree,” “Dakota,” and “Eskimo.”

The key import of the first appendix is the extent to which it reflects the diversity of Bunyan translators, most notably by nationality, but also by race, class, and gender (a discussion of this point is included in the second appendix). With regard to nationality, mission societies came not only from Britain but from eight countries in all: the United States, Britain, Switzerland, France, Germany, Finland, Sweden, and South Africa. As the personnel of these missions was at times drawn from beyond the boundaries of the country in which the society was based, the nationalities of translators were more diverse than this list reflects. Joseph Jackson Fuller (figure 4), for example, who worked with the BMS, came from Jamaica. Other translators, while not themselves missionaries, included Charles Chinula in Nyasaland (currently Malawi in south Central Africa), who did the Tumbuka translation, and Moses Mubitana, who undertook the Ila translation in Northern Rhodesia (today Zambia in south Central Africa) on a LMS station.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps the most influential translation of all (in the southern African language Xhosa) was by the African Scottish-trained Presbyterian missionary, Tiyo Soga.

This diversity of translators reminds us again of the complexities involved in understanding the “textual zones” that inform any Bunyan translation. Clearly, this is not simply a story of the circuits between Britain and Africa but rather a story of the continent in, and as part of, the Protestant Atlantic. In this study, I have consequently attempted to highlight the complexities of movement within this zone. Inevitably, the focus has been mainly anglophone, partly because British mission societies did dominate the field of Bunyan translation, completing thirty-nine of the sixty-one translations to which we can attach specific missions.<sup>45</sup> Of the remaining tally, the U.S. mission societies produced seven, European Protestants thirteen, and South African mission organizations two. The book does touch briefly on mission translations emerging from



*Figure 4.* Joseph Jackson Fuller. Source: BMS Archives.  
Reproduced with the permission of the BMS.

other nationalities, such as the Sotho version sponsored by the Paris Evangelical Mission Society (PEMS). The Bunyan traditions emerging from northern European Protestant countries—where the book traveled from Holland (where it was translated in 1681) to Germany (translated in 1703 from the Dutch) to Sweden (translated in 1727 from the German)—are not broached here.<sup>46</sup> Neither are the U.S. mission-sponsored translations. Their inclusion would obviously have added to the book and would have underlined further the intricacies involved in any Bun-

yan translation. I hope that this book may encourage others to follow up these routes.

With regard to the timing of translations, establishing precise information is not always possible. However, from the available dates, one can divide translation activity into three clear “stages.” The first involves a small but steady increase of nineteenth-century translations, which total seventeen in all. The second period runs from the 1900s to the 1940s, during which the bulk of translations (forty-seven) was done. The final stage, the 1950s and 1960s, witnesses a decline in translations (sixteen) as the continent moved toward independence. In their broad outline, these figures conform to the trajectory of Protestant missions in Africa. While the nineteenth century, in financial terms, was the heyday of mission activity, personnel numbers were restricted and the amount of translation work that could be done was limited. This profile changed markedly in the interwar years. Mission personnel increased and there were consequently more “hands” available to do translations.<sup>47</sup> During this time, overall funding did, however, decline. Yet, as regards mission translation and educational work, new sources of subsidy became available. These included government grants for mission-sponsored education in colonial territories<sup>48</sup> and the growth of several organizations promoting “Christian Literature,” which made earmarked funding available for precisely such projects as translations of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.<sup>49</sup> The growth of a school market also pushed up the number of translations (particularly in the 1950s and 1960s when several editions by multinational publishers appeared). In the wake of the Second World War, many missions started turning themselves into local churches, a movement that gained considerable momentum as the continent moved to independence.<sup>50</sup> The number of translations consequently dropped off, although one or two evangelically inspired translations continued to appear after independence, while in many parts of the continent, the story itself remained in print and, by some accounts, migrated into other formats, such as video and photocomic.<sup>51</sup>

One question many readers will ask is how one researches a book involving eighty different translations (of which I have a reading knowledge of only Sotho and Afrikaans). In order to take account of this linguistic limitation, I have attempted to be as empirically exhaustive as possible and have been guided by a method of keeping one’s eye on the book as a material object. I have consequently attempted to locate as many of the physical books as possible. In England, the Bunyan Meeting House Museum, the Bedford Bunyan Collection, the British Library, and

the SOAS library all hold copies of translated editions. In South Africa, I located further copies in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, and Cape Town. These books can teach one a surprising amount. In some cases, editions have short English forewords; in other cases, I have had forewords translated. The physical book also reveals whether the text has been abridged, what illustrations were used, and in some instances, the name of the translator. This information was supplemented with detailed research in mission archives in South Africa, England, and Scotland. Careful trawling through these sources revealed a considerable amount about the translated Bunyan texts. There were reports on how translations were done and how the book appeared—often, for example, it was first serialized before appearing as a whole volume. There was also information on how, where, and why the book was used. By drawing together this data, one can gain a fairly detailed sense of how the book was translated, circulated, and interpreted in various contexts. With regard to African uses and interpretations of the text, I have relied primarily on a wide selection of discourses by Africans, whether these be novels, sermons, tracts, letters, hymns, or diaries, mostly in English, in some cases in Sotho, in one case translated from Yoruba, and in another from Kikuyu. A careful consideration of these writings, placed in a broader context of African intellectual and religious traditions, has revealed how Bunyan was read and interpreted.

The book itself has three sections. The first section—Bunyan in the Protestant Atlantic—seeks to sketch the nature of the evangelical mission imperial domain, as it was in this zone that Bunyan translations were shaped. This section unfolds in four chapters. Chapter 1 establishes some broad characteristics of this mission imperial world. This task is accomplished by focusing on one particular mission circuit, namely the links between a Baptist congregation in Camden Road, London, and one mission station, San Salvador, situated in the heart of the Kongo Kingdom in what is now northern Angola (situated slightly below the equator on the continent's Atlantic seaboard). In examining this interaction, I focus on how Camden Roaders constructed a vision of the “Congo” and how these images were in part shaped by the social, intellectual, and cultural structures of the Kongo Kingdom that the Baptists encountered. Chapter 2 examines how Bunyan enters this field and in turn is “beamed” back for use in mission publicity. In telling this story, I first examine how *The Pilgrim's Progress* was deeply woven into Nonconformist life and how these missionaries attempted to reconstitute the text wherever they went. The chapter narrates how Nonconformists back in Britain were quick to

pick up Bunyan's successes and publicize these to a home audience. The chapter also explores the convergence of textual practice that arose between evangelical views of *The Pilgrim's Progress* and those of African converts, both of whom saw the text as a quasi-magical charm or object capable of precipitating extraordinary transformations in its users and readers. For both mission and convert, the text became a type of "fetish," whose correct use could compel events in this world and the next. Chapter 3 moves on to consider how missionaries translated the text. In doing so, I understand translation not as a bounded event but as a process that unfolds across time and space. Once seen in this way, we can better understand how various interests in the mission domain—be they mission, convert, or home committee—help to determine the final shape and form of the translation. We examine two case studies: one to probe translation across time, the second across space. The first case study looks at the Kele translation in the Upper Congo. This translation stretched across several decades, and its final form was that of a series of highly abridged episodes. By considering the "biography" of the translation, the case study demonstrates how mission and convert interests registered themselves in the shape that the text ultimately took. The second case study looks at a Cameroonian translation undertaken by the Jamaican missionary, Joseph Jackson Fuller. In considering this story, we trace the various versions of the story that Fuller inherited from three sources—the black Baptist tradition (which had traveled from the American South to Jamaica), the British Baptists, and slave Christianities. We also consider how Fuller used these knowledges of the story in his precarious tightrope existence as a black missionary in a white-dominated world. Chapter 4 extends this analysis of Bunyan in the mission imperial domain by comparing and contrasting different interpretive strategies used by various readers. Seen from afar, the reading strategies of Protestants, whether in Africa or Europe, were similar and involved a didactic application of the text, often to one's own circumstances. However, through looking in detail at the interpretive methods used by Protestants, we trace the "African" contribution to this reading technique. This "African" method drew on the quasi-allegorical methods inherent in riddle and "folktale" and adapted these for reading Bunyan.

*The Pilgrim's Progress* traveled into the mission domain in complex and varied ways and established itself as a discursive arena or public sphere in which different audiences and readers could participate. The second section—Bunyan, the Public Sphere, and Africa—examines how African intellectuals and audiences entered their claims in this domain.

The first chapter in this section focuses on the African mission elite and how they re-allegorized Bunyan as a way of addressing their particular political concerns. The chapter is arranged around a case study of the African mission elite in the Eastern Cape in present-day South Africa and one of their prestigious institutions, Lovedale Mission Institution, a Scottish-run outfit saturated with Bunyan. We examine both the kinds of reading strategies that pupils brought with them to the school and the ways in which Bunyan was taught. The chapter then proceeds to examine in detail how *The Pilgrim's Progress* was deployed in the public pronouncements of the elite. In chapter 6 we turn to discuss more popular appropriations of the text and analyze how aspects of the story were taken up and changed by African Christians operating in a para-literate environment where documents were both a source of religious authority and a form of colonial control. Put another way, documents were both “passports to heaven” and “passes.” *The Pilgrim's Progress* offers a very similar vision. The hero Christian carries various documents during the course of the story. One of these is his “pass,” namely a permissive document that he, as a masterless man, has to carry. It is also a sign of his election and hence his “passport to heaven.” When Christian and his companion, Hopeful, arrive at the gates of heaven, they are required to hand in these documents. Popular African Christian interpretations of the text often lighted on this set of scenes, which migrated into other forms like dreams, conversion narratives, and popular poetry.

In chapters 7 and 8 we examine how aspects of *The Pilgrim's Progress* were used as forums where issues could be discussed and debated in the mission imperial domain. Chapter 7 looks at the character Great-heart, the chivalric knight who accompanies Christiana and her party to heaven in the second part of the book. We analyze how this single, celibate figure became a site in which debates about gender relations in the mission domain could be discussed and experimented with. The vehicle for this analysis is two novels—one, an early nineteenth-century bestseller by Ethel M. Dell called *Greatheart* and the second, a Sotho novel by Thomas Mofolo called *Moeti oa Bochabela* (*The Traveller to the East*, 1906).

Chapter 8 turns to the illustrations of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which, as with most European versions, became a standard feature of nearly all African editions. We focus mainly on twentieth-century editions, which generally adopted Africanized illustrations. We examine two sets of pictures: the first a sequence of line drawings, the second a “gallery” of photographic illustrations for the Kongo edition produced at San

Salvador, the BMS station in northern Angola. We examine how these pictures are enabled by the audiences they address and on whose generic competencies they draw. We also examine the use of mission photography and how it, along with the political interests of leading Africans at San Salvador, produced a form unthinkable in Europe, namely photographic illustrations for a fictional text. Chapter 9 turns to analyze how various African novelists have engaged with these Africanized traditions of reading Bunyan as well as with each other's uses of the text.

The final section—Post-Bunyan—takes the story back to Britain. In chapter 10 we examine the story of how Bunyan became English. We trace how he was taken up by the emerging discipline of English literature and how this grouping sidelined older evangelical and international views of Bunyan, which had initially “added value” to Bunyan by portraying him as universal. In the longer run, however, these views threatened to “contaminate” him by over-associating him with colonized societies. The project of the emerging discipline of English literature was to establish a racialized view of literature that could confer cultural distinctiveness on Britons. Bunyan, sprawled across the globe, did not fit into this framework, and so had to be “reeled” back in order to construct him as white and English.

The conclusion asks what would happen if we lift the “tollgate” separating a “national” and an “international” Bunyan and traces the implications of this move both for postcolonial studies and mainstream Bunyan scholarship.





## The Congo on Camden Road

Just as many other churches of the mid-nineteenth century, the Camden Road Baptist Chapel is dressed with Kentish ragstone. Quarried in southern England, this soft stone had long been used in church building, particularly in medieval times. With the nineteenth-century Gothic revival, ragstone was rediscovered and became a favored vernacular retro-idiom. New urban churches, like the one on Camden Road, mimicked their ancient prototypes, basking in the reflected glory of these medieval structures. That the London atmosphere ate into the soft stone did little to damage its popularity.<sup>1</sup>

Within its immediate neighborhood, Camden Road was the only Nonconformist church. Yet, in style, it closely resembled the two Established churches nearby. This Nonconformist embrace of Anglican architecture was not unusual. As Nonconformists became richer, and as they forgot the forms of civil disability suffered by their parents, they sought to transform the austerity of their inheritance and the barnlike meeting houses of their past.<sup>2</sup>

The Camden Road Chapel was built in 1854 and—after a gallery was added five years later—could seat more than a thousand people. On any day of the week, the church or its adjoining hall and classrooms hummed with congregants, Sunday school children, women's auxiliary workers, deacons in meetings, and the like. In these gatherings, there was a good chance of hearing discussion on a topic that was to become as English as ragstone, namely Baptist mission work on the Congo.<sup>3</sup>

This mission tradition had been propagated by the first pastor of the Chapel, Francis Tucker, who had himself worked in Calcutta with the BMS. Another twenty-two foreign mission workers were to emanate from

Camden Road, twelve of them destined for the Congo.<sup>4</sup> As the church fathers liked to claim with some pride, the sons and daughters of Camden Road stood in the “front rank of Christ’s army.”<sup>5</sup>

Today, the Camden Road Chapel is much curtailed. The ragstone building has been leased to an organization for the homeless and the congregation now meets in the hall behind the church. But, despite these changes, the mission past is still a theme in the life of the congregation. Once a year, pictures of the missionaries come out for an annual mission fête, which first began in 1878 as the Camden Road Congo Sale.<sup>6</sup> In the hall, a roll of honor records the “fragrant” names of church members who peopled the Baptist missions in Congo, China, and India.

Two important names on this board—Thomas Lewis and Gwen Lewis (figures 5 and 6)—were associated with Camden Road, where they were married. Both went to the Congo region as missionaries and both were to translate parts of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* into Kongo. In seeking to understand the broader field of African translations of Bunyan, the evangelical world of Thomas and Gwen Lewis becomes emblematic. Their lives shuttled between the Congo and Camden Road (as well as many other points), and provided an example, in miniature, of the complex transnational space in which mission cultural practices were wrought. One such practice was translation and, like all mission work, it unfolded in and across this global arena of mission imperialism. As a process stretched across time and space, translated texts are less bounded “events” restricted to one locale than webs stretched across this mission domain, synaptic networks along which currents of understanding travel back and forth. If we wish to analyze Bunyan in the nineteenth century, we need to situate him in this broader interactional field. This chapter begins this task by describing the nature of the international evangelical space into which his famous text flowed. By examining the Congo on Camden Road, we probe the imaginative filaments of this mission imperial world and ask how its infrastructures of the imagination were built and sustained. How did the congregants of Camden Road come to construct and internalize a picture of the Congo, especially one in which Bunyan could be accommodated? Our story proceeds in two parts—in this chapter, we examine how the Congo was constructed on Camden Road, and in the next, we examine how Bunyan was accommodated in this landscape.

Rev. Francis Tucker (B.A.), the first pastor of Camden Road, was an accomplished and popular preacher. His sermons, “finished in style, evangelical in tone,”<sup>8</sup> spoke to his modestly meant but aspirant congregation. Like

many of the Nonconformist would-be elite, the Camden Road congregants had moved to the rural edges of London. As Tucker reminded them, much had been given to them and much was expected in return.<sup>9</sup>

One way to settle such evangelical debt was to carry God’s word into what Tucker termed the “dark places.” As an area given over to cattle raising and slaughtering, Camden contained such “dark” pockets—of abattoir workers, dairymaids, haymaking hands, and their broods of ragged children. Dickens had grown up in the vicinity and recorded it in *Dombey and Son*: “frowzy fields, and cow-houses, and dung-hills, and dust-heaps, and ditches . . . broken crockery and faded cabbage leaves.”<sup>10</sup>

Farther south lay the dark continent of the East End. This tract of heathendom offered up objects of charity such as George Henry Bertie, an eight-year old from Spitalfields, “redeemed” as a protégé of Camden Road Sunday school.<sup>11</sup> The East End also offered a boundary of self-definition. Against the mudlarks and costermongers, against the Russians, Poles, Jews, and Chinese, against the desperate and the destitute, Camden Road congregants could think of themselves as respectable, English, and Christian.<sup>12</sup>

In this thinking, they were aided by Tucker’s sermons, which dwelt on the textures of heathenism, near and far. The figure of “the Greek,” “the Jew,” and “the Hindoo” were conjured up in the chapel along with their “degeneracy,” “profligacy,” and “vice.” Even to those who were not “twicers” and “thricers” (those who attended two or three sermons a week),<sup>13</sup> the message was urgently clear. “Open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to the power of God.”<sup>14</sup>

Driven by Tucker’s evangelical ardor, Camden Road became an active mission center whose arms reached both into the immediate surrounds of the church and much further afield into Africa, Jamaica, and India. Locally, the chapel underwrote two missions—one on Brewery Road, Belle Isle, just south of the Cattle Market, and a second not far off in Goodinge Road.<sup>15</sup> With regard to foreign missions, Camden Road focused heavily on Africa and the chapel was to support a number of stations in Cameroon and the Congo. For those involved, the local mission outreaches and the African stations formed part of one continuous evangelical field. As Gwen Lewis wrote from the Congo, “People in England seem to forget sometimes that I am as much interested in their work as they are in mine. It is the same work, only we are on distant service.”<sup>16</sup> Like Gwen, Thomas Comber (another Camden Roader) did his apprenticeship in the local mission outreaches and then in 1875 departed for the



*Figure 5.* Thomas Lewis. Source: BMS Archives. Reproduced with the permission of the BMS.



*Figure 6.* Gwen Lewis. Source: BMS Archives. Reproduced with the permission of the BMS.

Cameroon and, subsequently, the Congo. From his new home, Comber, a charismatic figure ("his belt . . . buckled by the fingers of Almighty God")<sup>17</sup> wrote to a Camden parishioner: "Hand in hand we [work] for the dear children at Camden . . . hand in hand we [work] for the dear children of the Dark Continent."<sup>18</sup>

There was one garment of which Alice Hartland was particularly proud. It was a black and red striped Chesterfield dressing gown that she and her Camden Road sewing class had stitched for the King of the Kongo.<sup>19</sup> The King, Dom Pedro V, was known to English Baptists through their mission magazine. He had granted land to the first Baptist missionaries who arrived at his capital San Salvador/Mbanza Kongo in 1878 and hence featured in frequent articles.<sup>20</sup> For one shilling, readers could order his *carte de visite* from Messrs Debenham and Gould in Bournemouth.<sup>21</sup> Having read much about the King and his capital, Alice Hartland felt she knew both well. San Salvador "seemed quite a familiar place," and the King "a good natured old fellow."<sup>22</sup>

Whether the King ever received the dressing gown or what he thought of it, we do not know. As someone descended from one of the best-dressed dynasties, the homemade gown from Camden probably held little allure. Since the sixteenth century, the Kingdom had been one of the prominent slaving empires of the Renaissance Atlantic world, a monarchy of middlemen feeding the Portuguese slave trade. The Kingdom, which had quickly adopted Catholicism as a royal cult, supported ambassadors in Portugal, Spain, the Low Countries, Rome, and Brazil and was itself the seat of an episcopal see.<sup>23</sup>

Like all feudal states, the Kongo Kingdom excelled at sartorial spectacle and panoplied performance fed by a global wardrobe of fabrics and styles.<sup>24</sup> Locally, the area specialized in fine raffia cloth likened to damask, velvet, and taffeta by Portuguese visitors.<sup>25</sup> Such fabric could be enhanced with finely brayed civet skins, zebra tails, plumes, and feathers. Male courtiers could add European capes, tabards, buskins, and rapiers, while royal women adopted black velvet caps ornamented with jewels and gold chain necklaces.<sup>26</sup>

When the Baptists arrived in 1878, the Kingdom was much reduced from the height of its seventeenth-century powers, when it had been able to exploit its position as middlemen between kingdoms further inland and Portuguese slavers. The Kingdom, however, was unable to control the proliferating points of the trade and the pretensions of provincial chieftains. By the eighteenth century, it had splintered into a wel-

ter of warring fiefdoms, and industrial production in Europe deepened this fragmentation. As European factories churned out soap, piano keys, and billiard balls, markets for rubber, ivory, and gum proliferated in the Kongo region. The trade routes for these goods were quickly monopolized by the parvenu warlords who gnawed at the boundaries of the Kingdom driving it back into its original heartland in present-day northern Angola.<sup>27</sup>

As Britain and Portugal began to vie for control of the Congo River mouth, the King's authority rallied briefly as both powers recognized him.<sup>28</sup> When Thomas Lewis met him in 1878, the King was wearing a Portuguese military uniform, a feathered cocked hat, and the red, ermine-trimmed mayoral robes of Bristol, which had been given to him as a gift.<sup>29</sup>

The contrast between Alice's austere dressing gown and the King's lavish wardrobe captures something of the Baptist enterprise in northern Angola. Rather like the dressing gown, the Baptists were to be swallowed up into a larger political world of feudal intricacy and intrigue. The major players were initially the Portuguese and the Kongo court, and it was into this byzantine world that the Baptists entered in the 1870s. Their objective was to make inroads into the Kongo Kingdom, but, like most Protestants, they made little imprint on the upper reaches of African society and instead recruited slaves, orphans, and runaways. These converts were outsiders both to the Kingdom and, subsequently, to the encroaching Portuguese colonial state that demanded that they assimilate and speak Portuguese. The Baptists, by contrast, evangelized in African languages. Protestant missions consequently became strongly associated with "African tradition" as opposed to the assimilationist policies of the Catholic Portuguese. Because of these linguistic politics, the Baptists built up a substantial Kongo-speaking following and, over time, the BMS became a "tribal church" in which denomination and ethnicity overlapped to a considerable extent.<sup>30</sup>

Like all other mission organizations, the BMS aggressively publicized their foreign mission endeavors. With its two freighted syllables, the word Congo—associated with Stanley's explorations and Livingstone's travels—evoked immediate and intense public interest. The presence of Islam in the east and Catholicism in the west simply added a touch of piquancy for Protestants, many of whom believed that they could personally hasten the advent of the Lord by ensuring that the gospel was taught to all nations.<sup>31</sup> Staggering death rates for fever-prone visitors encouraged, rather than dampened, these millennial expectations.

small wonder that the Congo became known as “the short-cut to heaven.”<sup>32</sup> As the Baptists, aided by Leopold’s annexation of the Congo basin, made a push upriver from their base at San Salvador, they could exploit the ballyhoo around these spectacular events to promote their mission cause.

At some levels, it may appear that these accounts that exploited the “glamor” of the Congo had little to do with the actual societies and people being depicted. However, if one examines the narrative strategies that Baptist publicity adopted, the shaping imprint of the region being depicted becomes apparent. Most obvious is the geography of the Congo River itself, which determined a central BMS genre, namely that of traveling upriver by boat. Initially, these journeys were pursued in local canoes, but in 1884 the society acquired the steamer *Peace*, which plied the navigable portions of the river and formed part of its bustling traffic (which Joseph Conrad incidentally was to erase in order to depict the river as eerily deserted).<sup>33</sup>

In elaborating stories and publicity around the ship, the BMS did not have to look far for examples on which to draw. Most large mission societies—whose personnel spent long periods at sea—owned at least one sea-going vessel, like the *John Williams* with which we began his book. Such ships provided endless publicity opportunities in terms of funding drives, stories, pictures, hymns, poems, and spectacle.<sup>34</sup> Viewing the mission ship in dock prior to its departure, for example, was a popular pastime. Here spectators could observe the heart-wrenching parting of missionary and child on deck and linger to hear the very last refrains of hymns echoing over the water as the ship left harbor (“Bear up, thou restless ocean! / Let the winds my canvas swell / Heave my heart with warm emotion / While I go far hence to dwell”).<sup>35</sup>

A second feature of Kongo life to imprint itself on BMS publicity was the group among which the Baptists found their first wave of converts, namely young boys who were often slaves and runaways. Letters and articles from missionaries personalized these converts for a home audience. The *Missionary Herald* ran frequent biographies and photographs of young male converts.<sup>36</sup> Their pictures were posted in the church and on mission collection boxes.<sup>37</sup> One of Comber’s converts was christened “Camden Road” after the church.<sup>38</sup> From time to time, these converts would be brought back to London where they would be turned into spectacles and mobbed by over-enthusiastic congregants.<sup>39</sup>

This combination of the young male converts along with the Congo River provided a framework for much BMS promotion. The pub-

licity around boats, for example, was aimed at young Baptist boys, and for them it became a major way of building up and occupying a concept of the “Congo.”<sup>40</sup> These boys were also encouraged to identify with “Congo boys,” whom they “mimicked” in a variety of ways. In 1910, for example, in a Baptist Sunday school in Bath, one could have seen groups of young boys standing on a large floor map of the Congo making rowing motions with canoe paddles.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, they would have been singing another homegrown Baptist genre, the “Congo boat song.”<sup>42</sup> These boat songs were generally the first African forms that missionaries learned. They were originally in Lingala, a trade creole of the river that Baptist missionaries were subsequently to promote into a language.<sup>43</sup> Phonetic renditions of these songs in “Congo Language” were produced with music in mission publications for use by churches.<sup>44</sup> Elsewhere, English adaptations of the “Congo boat song” were made available. One version called “The Hymn of the Congo Convert” was sung to the tune of “Swanee River”:

Far off the Lualaba sings it  
Christ died for sin  
To us the tide of Congo brings it  
Jesus is sure to win.<sup>45</sup>

This “Congo mimicry” was common. Sunday school pupils, for example, were coaxed to internalize the mission geography of the Congo. In one lesson, the teacher traced out the course of the Congo River, focusing (like so many subsequent writers, including Conrad and Naipaul) on its prominent bend. “I want you to follow my finger as it follows the river straight into the heart of the continent. Here it goes in the shape of a rough arch. Now watch while I do it again—for I want you to remember it.”<sup>46</sup> In another lesson, students had to memorize the mission stations along the river.<sup>47</sup> In London in 1916, Baptist Sunday school pupils pretended to visit or, at times, to be Congo villagers. (“Today we will visit a Congo village. Here we go along this narrow path in proper Indian file, up this steep hill and down the other side.”)<sup>48</sup> One could sing “Congo” boat songs, inhabit “Congo” villages, and even memorize “Congo” idioms or “Congoisms” (like “he has a body,” meaning he feels sick).<sup>49</sup>

While young boys created their own “Congos” in the Sunday school room, women stitched their versions of that far-away mission field. They made clothes for converts,<sup>50</sup> and they sewed for fêtes and for the famed Congo Sale, a three-day event at Camden Road that generated about £200 per year. They stitched hundreds of red and white squares for

a huge Congo quilt measuring 11 by 12 feet. Each square was embroidered with the initials of its maker as well as with phrases like "Greet the brethren."<sup>51</sup>

+ The boat songs, the red and white squares, and the scrapbooks were all ways of inventing a Congo, of living imaginatively somewhere else. Mrs. Hartland, mother of Alice, dressing gown maker for the Kongo King, lived on Falkland Road, a few streets away from the chapel. Her son John joined Thomas Comber as a missionary in the Cameroon and died there after a few months.<sup>52</sup> The Hartland household ran according to a hectic Congo timetable. Alice and her sister Lilley (by their own description, in a state of "missionary excitement") attended at least six to seven mission engagements a week.<sup>53</sup> Her mother, with limited mobility, stayed at home and beamed spiritual energy toward the Congo mission field. Alice was devoted to the memory of her brother in life and death. She "curated" his objects that remained behind—a picture of him, his harmonium, the curios he sent back ("your room looks quite African now," she wrote). She acquired a parrot and trained it to say his name.<sup>54</sup> She kept up her Sunday school and home mission work among the children of the cattle market workers. She sewed frantically for various causes and produced untold numbers of antimacassars and white rosettes for the Congo Sale.<sup>55</sup> When her mother died, it was said that she lived more on the Congo than in Camden.<sup>56</sup> Much the same could be said of Alice.

While Alice Hartland pictured the Congo with ease, there were many others, hundreds of boat songs notwithstanding, who could not do so. Sunday school teachers complained that it was "difficult to keep the interest alive in Foreign Missions as our children cannot see who they are working for."<sup>57</sup> What made more sense to them were the plights of the children of the local cattle market missions and other underprivileged "waifs and strays"—people one could see and touch. One project that the mission society of Camden Road took on was to periodically entertain "cripples" from a nearby home. Young members in the mission society could then sit and "mother their little crippled visitors, trying to make them forget for a time their suffering." On another occasion, a group of blind children demonstrated their occupation of making cane chairs and baskets.<sup>58</sup> This climate of caring for the weak and dependent was extended to work undertaken for the Congo. After patting the "cripples," children prepared bandages, sheets, and pasted Kongo greetings into old Christmas cards for the Congo missions.<sup>59</sup>

In order to keep alive a picture of a mission far away, the Cam-

den Road missionary initiative had to invent its own local "natives" upon whom the Sunday school children could practice their paternalism. In patting the "cripples," the children performed yet another miniature enactment of the Congo on Camden Road, but one in which they were the benefactors and those in the Congo the recipients of their charity. The appeal of this philanthropic pageant lay in its simultaneous local and global dimensions—an act of mission charity toward the neighborhood poor resonated with a distant and romantic mission field. In undertaking this linked activity, one became part of an evangelical drama that played itself out on an international stage. One's actions were situated in this bigger arena and had consequences in far-away places.

The habit of mind inculcated by such performances and practices can be likened to translation. To translate is to stitch together, to ferry between languages and genres. Mission work was exactly this—shuttling through time and space, knotting together different worlds, living imaginatively in many places at once but belonging to none. This uncertainty about "home" was a condition for which many had prepared themselves since childhood. As a child, Gwen Thomas (subsequently Lewis) with whom this chapter opened, used to sit under the dining room table of her Islington home with her brother Herbert reading stories about "Africa." Hidden behind the floor-length tablecloth, Gwen devoured mission biographies and inhabited the far-away places of the "heathen" with more intensity than her quotidian world.<sup>60</sup> In these daily apprenticeships, she was learning to create and inhabit the imaginative space of evangelicalism in which her adult professional life would unfold. Part of that life was to involve a translation of the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a text whose trajectory into the mission domain was made possible by the daily performances of the type we have examined. By bringing a distant world to their doorstep, Camden Roaders could act out relationships of philanthropic paternalism. In this way, they could imagine a world that was both familiar and structured in paternalism. It was a world into which one could easily envisage one's favorite text traveling and being gratefully received.

# 2

## Making Bunyan Familiar in the Mission Domain

In Baptist terms, the Congo Exhibition in Bristol in 1928 was a great success. Baptists made up only a small percentage of Protestants in England, yet the attendance figure of six thousand compared well with similar ventures by other mission societies. Part of the exhibition's appeal no doubt lay in the tried and tested format that the organizers used. This formula, which had been the hallmark of such events for at least three decades, involved the visitor experiencing the exhibition as an explorer. In the Bristol event, this format was given a Baptist spin and viewers "navigated" the Congo River. The floor plan was horseshoe shaped. On entering, visitors found themselves on the Lower Congo. They strolled past "mission stations," "huts," "curios," and "tropical foliage" displayed on the "banks" of the river. Midway, viewers passed under a rocky archway, marking their movement from the Lower to the Upper Congo. At the end of their journey, visitors encountered another distinctively Baptist feature, namely a Bunyan landmark in the form of the Interpreter's House. The area was "gaily decorated" and in it the themes of the exhibition were repeated or, in the parlance of the *Missionary Herald*, "lessons that should have been learned along the way were emphasized."<sup>1</sup>

The exhibition, then, drew together two favored Baptist landscapes—that of the Congo River and that of Bunyan. The first constituted one of their most publicized mission arenas; the second, that of a founding father of the denomination. The year 1928 was also auspicious. It was the fiftieth anniversary of the BMS in the Congo; the tercentenary of Bunyan's birth, and the 250th anniversary of the publication of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, part 1. By combining these two settings, the BMS were playing their two strongest cards.

W. Y. Fullerton, Home Secretary of the BMS from 1912 to 1927, improved the shining hour and produced two books, *The Legacy of Bunyan* and *The Christ of the Congo River*.<sup>2</sup> The first belonged to an army of tercentenary publications and offered a Baptist angle on "the immortal tinker"; the second book commemorated the BMS Congo half-century anniversary. Like the Bristol exhibition, it began by inviting readers onto the Congo River and concluded with Bunyan.

This closing Bunyan episode in Fullerton's book concerns Mpambu, a runaway slave who joins an American Baptist mission station, Lukenge, near the mouth of the river. The young convert soon shows himself to be most reliable and takes charge of a caravan to transport several large bags of salt ("eight day's journey through an unexplored cannibal country"). A day or two into the trip, his porters desert him. Mpambu is left stranded, sitting all alone on the bags of salt, until he is discovered by some villagers. "They were overjoyed: here was not only meat but salt to eat with it, and they made known their intention through unmistakable pantomime." The villagers retire briefly to summon the chief to sanction proceedings. Mpambu pulls out a book and starts reading to wile away the time. The book (need we add) "was a translation by Thomas Lewis of 'The Pilgrim's Progress,' and, interested in the joys and sorrows of the Pilgrim, Mpambu seemed scarcely conscious of his own." When the chief arrives, he is awed by Mpambu's reading and the boy's apparent lack of concern about his impending fate. The nervous chief decides to hold over his decision on the young boy's destiny until the next day. Mpambu, of course, continues to read and the villagers assume that his book has supernatural powers. "No doubt the stranger was acquainted with its power as a Fetish. If so, ought they not to be careful? Who could tell what dread consequences might come from that book?" In light of this concern, the chief releases him, but not before the indefatigable Mpambu compels the villagers to provide him with some carriers. Mpambu finally arrives at his destination, fatigued, but with his salt and his book intact.<sup>3</sup>

Read today, Fullerton's story sounds comically colonial with its cartoon cannibals and gawking chief, hypnotized by the technological objects of the white man. For nineteenth-century Baptist (and most Non-conformist) readers, such motifs had long been naturalized and, within this genre, they would have recognized a mission parable about *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In this genre, Bunyan's book acts as the hero of the story and has miraculous powers of redemption. It wards off evildoers, it intimidates the chief, it saves its owner and assists in removing his burdens, it proves itself the salt of the earth, and it "seasons" Mpambu and lays the

ground work for the future conversion/"salting" of the villagers and their chief. We assume, as well, that it has played a role in Mpambu's initial conversion.

For Baptist audiences, encountering Bunyan in the Congo, as they did in the Bristol exhibition or Fullerton's story, was not unusual. Today, of course, such a combination may appear curious. For many, Bunyan will be remembered as an "English" writer, and the Congo as "un-English." The two consequently would seem almost as opposites. Yet, for Baptists like the Camden Roaders, who had "rehearsed" the Congo in such detail, the juxtaposition was easy to accommodate. In this chapter, we will pursue further how this association came to be "naturalized" and how Bunyan was projected in the mission imperial domain. Our story proceeds in three parts. First, we will begin by outlining the seminal and revered place that Bunyan occupied in an evangelical Nonconformist world. Second, we will examine how and why Nonconformists seized the opportunity to publicize at home Bunyan's "universal" successes abroad. We will then trace the evangelical theory of texts underlying this Nonconformist publicity work and highlight its "magical" dimensions in terms of which texts were believed to be capable of causing dramatic transformations in those who encountered them. Third, we will analyze how these views come to converge with very similar "African" understandings of texts as magical objects or "fetishes" capable of precipitating events in this world and the next.

To nineteenth-century Nonconformists, *The Pilgrim's Progress* was a devotional text of extraordinary importance. Indeed, for many, it stood second only to the Bible. This special status of the text related, on the one hand, to the long presence of the book in Dissent and Nonconformity and, on the other, to the renewed importance that it gained through the Evangelical Revival. Published between 1678 and 1684, *The Pilgrim's Progress* had rapidly become a firm favorite and bestseller amongst lower-class Dissenters and Nonconformists. In E. P. Thompson's words, it was a book that belonged to the heart of "poor man's Dissent" and "humble Nonconformity."<sup>4</sup> The book's social reach was to be considerably extended by the enthusiasms of the Evangelical Revival.<sup>5</sup> Central to this movement was a stress on conversion, ideally an emotional event prefigured by a haunting awareness of sin. Much of Bunyan's work fits well into this schema.<sup>6</sup> His autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666) tells a gripping story of Bunyan's own dramatic conversion. In this story, Bunyan strives to render his internal spiritual torments

and his subsequent victory over them. In narrating these "inner psychological terrors," Bunyan relies heavily on personification to make his internal terrors real. In *The Pilgrim's Progress* this conversion process is spatialized and temporalized as a journey in which the protagonist, Christian, makes his way from earth to heaven.<sup>7</sup> The language of the text is strongly interwoven with biblical references, both in its cadence and in the marginalia that certain editions provided.

With its riveting plot, memorable tableaux, and powerful images, the story provided readers with a graphic and easily accessible biblicist theology. It also equipped them with a language to talk about the emotional and personal experience of religion. It was a book of "heart power," "branded in [the] imagination," a text "suited to every season of human life."<sup>8</sup> In short, *The Pilgrim's Progress* was woven into the emotional fabric of evangelical Nonconformity and became a type of shadow Bible, a text that captured the core verities of the Protestant message in memorable and user-friendly form. It was not unusual for Nonconformists to keep a copy of *The Pilgrim's Progress* alongside their bedside Bibles.<sup>9</sup>

As a book of such centrality, it was disseminated and broadcast from numerous sites. The first of these sites was the "mini-church" of the household. Here the book was favored for Sabbath day readings, where its exciting storyline provided some relief from the dour climate of such events.<sup>10</sup> Other styles of reading also prevailed. In addition to silent reading for pleasure, the book could be used as a devotional text with the assistance of study guides like *Half-hours with Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress* (1856) and *Some Daily Thoughts on The Pilgrim's Progress* (1917).<sup>11</sup> Household performance and dramatization was not uncommon.<sup>12</sup> Robert Blatchford, editor of *The Clarion* (an early and important Labour newspaper), described Bunyan as "the friend and teacher of my childhood, *The Pilgrim's Progress* was my first book . . . in my tenth year I knew it almost by heart."<sup>13</sup> Like many other children, he amused himself by enacting scenes from the text. To do this, he equipped himself with a stage sword, a paper helmet, and a breastplate. Thus prepared,

I went out as Greatheart and did deeds of valour and puissance upon an obsolete performing poodle, retired from Astley's Circus, who was good enough to double the parts of Giant Grim and the two lions.

The stairway to the bedroom was the Hill Difficulty, the dark lobby was the Valley of the Shadow, and often I swam in



great fear and peril, and with profuse sputterings, across the black River of Death which lay between kitchen and scullery. The baby also, poor, unconscious mite, played many parts. Now it was Christiana, and had to be defended against the poodle at the point of the sword; now it was Faithful being tried for his life; now it was Ignorance crossing the Black River in a cradle boat rowed by myself as Vain-Hope; and anon it was Prudence and Charity buckling on my harness before I went out to fight and vanquish Carlo [the poodle] (as Apollyon) in the Vale of Humiliation.<sup>14</sup>

Yet another way of reading was through the illustrations that most texts invariably carried. Largely through popular demand, the book had been illustrated since its very earliest editions.<sup>15</sup> These images often became a crucial site of imaginative entry into the text. For many, pictures became mnemonics for episodes in the story. For others, these illustrations *were* the story. One nineteenth-century reader said: "If you had ever seen our 'Pilgrim's Progress' with its thumbled, tousled and tattered pages, you would have sworn that it had been read by generations of children, but all torn pages and creases did not really mean that we had read it; they only meant that we were never tired of looking at the pictures."<sup>16</sup>

Bunyan could also be "consumed" through an assortment of commodities with which fans could adorn their homes. One could drink tea from a Bunyan cup while contemplating a portrait of Bunyan on the wall, possibly acquired from an edition that included such pictures specifically for framing.<sup>17</sup> Children could make Bunyan jigsaws, while their parents displayed ever more elaborate and expensive volumes in their drawing rooms.<sup>18</sup> Bunyan volumes became treasured family possessions and were passed down across several generations, as inscriptions still show.<sup>19</sup> One of these, in a Welsh edition, was haltingly written: "Plece yo give this book to David John Beynon the son of John Phillip Beynon after is father and if David will die be fore Elizabeth his sister plece to give her."<sup>20</sup> Others were decisive: "Hannah Williams—the gift to her daughter Jane Froud on her dying bed Aug 21 1852 at her death it is to be given to Emma Froud daughter of the above."<sup>21</sup> Some readers turned their texts into little reliquaries that stored photographs, news cuttings, recipes, and letters.<sup>22</sup> One ardent Methodist, James Mellor, landscaped his Cheshire garden to resemble a Bunyan theme park.<sup>23</sup> A path snaking through rhododendron bushes, yew trees, and sycamores conducted visitors past various Bunyan scenes like the Slough of Despond (a dark part

of the garden under gnarled ash and Wellingtonia). The by-way to Hell ran alongside a small pavilion with a wind and smoke machine to emulate the sites and sounds of perdition. In a departure from the original, a small bridge assisted pedestrians across the River of Death and then meandered on to the Celestial City, an elevated small stone chapel fronted by a spiral staircase.

Beyond the home, the book featured heavily in the weekly timetable of chapelgoers. Episodes from the book fueled talks at mothers' meetings, cottage lectures, and midweek sermons.<sup>24</sup> Choir services, cantatas, church pageants, and magic lantern shows shaped themselves around themes from *The Pilgrim's Progress*.<sup>25</sup> "Twicers" and "thricers" would in all probability have had multiple Bunyan encounters. Their children would have met Bunyan in Sunday schools and day schools and at times would have received his book as a prize.<sup>26</sup> These Nonconformist churches also functioned as centers of outreach to the very poor and destitute. In spreading Bunyan to them, chapels could rely on the simplified versions of the story charitably distributed by the Religious Tract Society (RTS), the predominantly Nonconformist tract organization that circulated material "at home" and abroad. The RTS provided the text in penny parts, in a Sunday school prize version, and in abridged editions that "featured among even the most meager of household libraries."<sup>27</sup>

*The Pilgrim's Progress* was woven into the warp and weft of Nonconformist experience. The book was a kind of second nature that was almost impossible, Blatchford said, to comment on or review: "I might as well try to criticize the Lord's Prayer." The book was also profoundly familiar. The characters were like friends and family, as reassuringly familiar as figures "on the Front at Brighton."<sup>28</sup> Dean Stanley, at the unveiling of Bunyan's monument in Bedford in 1874, said, "How deeply extended is the power of sympathy, and the force of argument, when the preacher or the teacher knows that he can enforce his appeal with a name which . . . comes home as if with canonical weight, by figures of speech which need only be touched on in order to elicit an electric spark of understanding, and satisfaction."<sup>29</sup> It was not so much a book as an environment, a set of orientations, a language, and a currency shared by most evangelicals.

The evangelical energy that drove the dissemination of *The Pilgrim's Progress* "at home" simultaneously led to the book's propagation and translation in other parts of the globe. In the early stages of the movement, missionaries received little professional training and so tended to mimic abroad the strategies they had used among the "home heathen."<sup>30</sup> In the view of John Brown, a biographer of Bunyan, the book

had “always had a hold upon the toiling poor . . . the one book . . . well-thumbed and torn to tatters among them.” As such, it suggested itself as the “first book to be translated by the missionary.”<sup>31</sup> *The Pilgrim’s Progress* was frequently chosen as a tool of proselytization and, in many Nonconformist missions, made it into the first ten titles translated.<sup>32</sup> This process likewise rebounded back in Britain. An historian of the RTS comments that “the impulse which drove [the RTS] to give the Christian gospel . . . to the heathen in distant lands drove them also to take counsel together about the heathen at home.”<sup>33</sup>

In propagating the text, the missionaries took with them the gal-limaufry of shapes and forms that the text’s evangelical distribution “at home” had occasioned. These included the text itself and then its versions in choir services, pageants, dramas, tableaux, magic lantern slides, postcards (figure 7), posters, and the like. These were then used and adapted in sermons, hymns, classrooms, Sunday schools (figure 8), and talks.<sup>34</sup> These forms were further fragmented by methods of proselytization that required that missionaries experiment with bits and pieces in order to establish what would appeal to their new audiences.<sup>35</sup> These procedures promoted the fission of yet further Bunyan “molecules,” which wafted out from mission stations at times like clouds of confetti. In the chapters that follow, I trace how these bits and pieces were received and interpreted by the African societies into which they floated. In the meanwhile, let us return to Britain to see how this dissemination of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* was publicized back “home.”

One of the major problems bedeviling the early mission movement was how to persuade followers to invest emotionally and materially in a venture thousand of miles away.<sup>36</sup> In a situation where British Protestants sometimes did not know the difference between China and the Congo,<sup>37</sup> and had little incentive to do so, it required considerable intellectual and imaginative effort to inveigle them into identifying with remote mission fields. As much scholarship has shown,<sup>38</sup> mission organizations evolved imaginative and effective solutions to these problems. By “colonizing” popular forms such as exhibitions, magazines, public meetings, picture technology, and revival gatherings, mission societies had tremendous success in attracting followers and glamorizing their pursuits. As we have seen in the previous chapter, these technologies, practices, dispositions, and methods of publicity were endlessly rehearsed and employed in congregations like Camden Road.

One strategy in this battle to create personal links across the



L.—CHRISTIANA AND HER CHILDREN.

Then said Christiana to her children, Sons, we are all undone. I have sinned away your father, and he is gone: he would have had us with him, but I would not go myself: I also have hindered you of him. With that she began to fall all into tears and cried out to go after their father. Oh (said Christiana) that it had been but our lot to go with him! then we should have well with us, beyond what it is like to do now.

Figure 7. Example of RTS postcard version of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, part 2. Source: RTS/USCL Papers, the SOAS, University of London. Reproduced with the permission of the USCL.

“estranging seas”<sup>39</sup> was to create a picture with which people could identify. One such node of familiar recognition was *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, and many mission discourses evoke the text as a way of establishing a shared field between themselves and their funding communities for whom much mission publicity material was produced. Mission travelogues, for instance, compared difficulties along the way to sections in the book like the Slough of Despond or Hill Difficulty.<sup>40</sup> To a home audience, a foreign landscape is rendered imaginable.

Mission material also likened converts to characters in the story.<sup>41</sup>



Figure 8. Use of Bunyan wallchart in Sunday school class, Upper Congo, 1920s. Source: *Regions Beyond*, 1928 (?), 89. (The dating of this journal is not clear. The image is taken from a volume dated 1927–1931.) Reproduced with the permission of the RBMU.

H. Sutton Smith, speaking of his experiences at Yakusu on the Upper Congo, wrote:

Others who were once near the wicket gate, have been enticed away by Mr Worldly Wiseman; other have failed to climb 'Hill Difficulty.' But others have come to the Saviour and 'found rest by His sorrow and life by His Death,' and are treading hopefully and determinedly the road which leadeth to the Celestial City.<sup>42</sup>

This type of description creates the impression that converts in the Congo tread the same spiritual path as Protestants back in England. It also functions as a euphemistic form of explanation for success and failure in the mission field. The passage does not question why converts should or should not adopt Christianity; instead the story itself serves as an "explanation." Likewise, the characters in the book could be invoked to legitimate relationships of inequality between missionary and convert. Missionaries tended to be likened to leading characters in the book such as Evangelist, Interpreter, or Great-heart.<sup>43</sup> Converts were compared to weak and vacillating characters who need guidance.<sup>44</sup> Readers "at home" would have experienced the relationships between such characters as benevolent and a similar picture could be generated of the mission field thousands of miles away.

Mission magazines, a major plank in the media repertoire, invoked *The Pilgrim's Progress* in their articles. In cases where missionaries had translated the text, this information featured in their biographies and obituaries.<sup>45</sup> The book provided items of news, such as when a translation was completed, when it had been printed, or when new illustrations were made.<sup>46</sup> Snippets informed readers of how the book was taught in Sunday school and deployed in church services.<sup>47</sup>

The RTS, which funded many Bunyan translations, invariably featured some item on *The Pilgrim's Progress* in each of its annual reports. Most often this information took the form of a "league table" reporting the latest tally of non-European languages into which the book had been translated.<sup>48</sup> As one of the items for which the RTS most frequently provided funding, translations of *The Pilgrim's Progress* feature in the histories of the organization. The book almost takes on the status of a minor character and is discussed in a familiar tone. As a contemporary history of the Society noted in 1899, "Christian and the rest are represented in Japanese."<sup>49</sup>

One major strategy for popularizing the mission endeavor in Britain was the missionary exhibition, and these included exhibits of how Bunyan was being propagated in the mission field.<sup>50</sup> At times, this information featured in the RTS book display that generally formed part of these exhibitions. Included in their stalls would be a number of "foreign" Bunyan editions (figure 9).<sup>51</sup> In another instance, references to the book were integrated into displays. As we have seen, the Baptist exhibition in 1928 ended with the Interpreter's House.<sup>52</sup> In a 1909 exhibition, a "live" display showed a missionary translating *The Pilgrim's Progress* (figure 10).<sup>53</sup> Some of these techniques were reproduced at a local level at church meetings. Here indigenized illustrations from foreign editions also appeared in displays and magic lantern shows.<sup>54</sup> Fans of the book could buy African editions of the text that were advertised as showing "how Bunyan appeals to the African reader."<sup>55</sup>

With regard to Africa, these publicity ventures were immeasurably helped by the circumstances that unfolded in 1835 in Madagascar surrounding the first African translation of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. This translation took shape against a background of intense persecution of converts by the Merina royal court. The Merina king, Radama, had initially invited the LMS in 1820, with an eye to acquiring their Roman literacy (Arabic literacy existed in small pockets), technological capacity, and bureaucratic knowledge for his expanding kingdom. However, he died in 1828 and the new monarch, Queen Ranaivalona, switched strate-



Figure 9. RTS book stall at missionary exhibition, 1911. Source: *Seedtime and Harvest*, Sept. 1911, 4. Reproduced with the permission of the USCL.

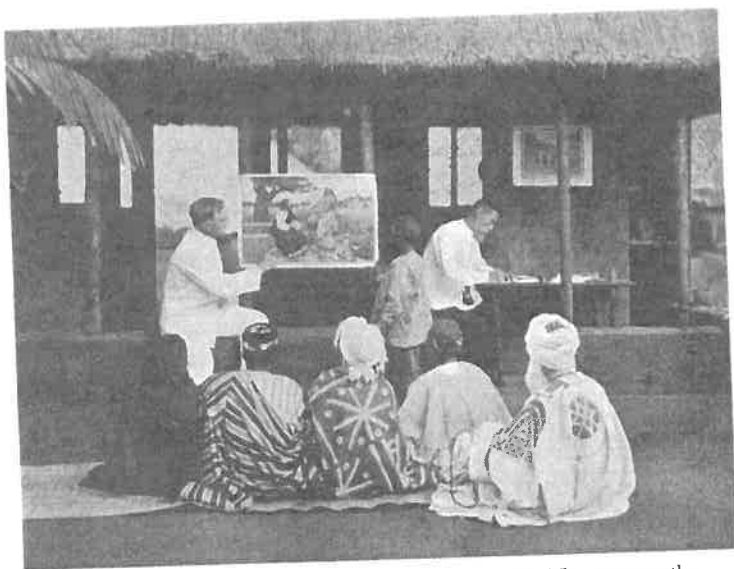


Figure 10. A display from a missionary exhibition, 1909. The man on the right is translating *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Source: *Seedtime and Harvest*, Sept. 1909, 7. Reproduced with the permission of the USCL.

gies. She ordered the missionaries to leave the island and embarked on a program of intense persecution against anyone who had taken up the new religion.<sup>56</sup> On the eve of their departure, one of the missionaries, David Johns wrote out a translation by hand of part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (interleaved with illustrations cut from his edition). A further six to eight copies were written out by the converts and these were circulated.<sup>57</sup> The Malagasy Christians read and often memorized the text and found it a source of comfort in their persecution. They also used it to construct a framework to narrate their experiences and to make sense of their suffering.

One convert, for example, likened his persecution to Christian's fight with Apollyon:

We read in the Pil[grim's] Progress that when Christian saw Apollion [*sic*] coming to meet him he began to be afraid and to hesitate whether to return or to stand his ground, but when he considered that he had no armour for his back he thought that to turn his back to him might give him greater advantage to pierce him with his darts, therefore he resolved to stand his ground, for, said he, had I no more in my eye than the saving of my life it would be the best way to stand. When Christian . . . entered the Valley of the Shadow of Death, he said, though it be a gloomy valley, yet it is the way to the Celestial City. These words of Christian and the passages quoted above express in few words our own feelings and views.<sup>58</sup>

Another convert wrote: "O God, do thou enable us to make the progress that Pilgrim made, and if thy kingdom in Madagascar is to be advanced by these means [persecution] be it so."<sup>59</sup> Elsewhere, a convert observed: "and those who received the word at first are not faint, but they are diligent in conversing together, on the favour of God towards them that believe, and the progress of Pilgrim, though he had much to annoy him."<sup>60</sup> When a group of converts managed to escape, and made their way to the coast, they narrated portions of their journey in terms of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. At one point, they took shelter in an empty house and "called it the 'Porter's Lodge,' for it seemed as if had been made for their relief and security."<sup>61</sup>

The story of the Madagascar persecution was extensively reported in the LMS and broader mission press.<sup>62</sup> In 1839, six converts who had managed to escape were brought to Britain where they addressed packed meetings.<sup>63</sup> Books and pamphlets on the persecution appeared in

rapid succession, many of them accompanied by lurid illustrations of burning at the stake and other forms of execution.<sup>64</sup> These narratives in turn became powerfully woven into LMS accounts of itself and appeared in its subsequent histories, annual reports, pamphlets, tracts, books, plays, and pageants.<sup>65</sup> One strand in this broader story was that of *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the details of this saga were endlessly recounted: the fragile manuscript copies passed lovingly among converts; the public drive in England for funds to print copies; the resulting small tract-size books that could be easily carried and concealed and were at times bound in with bits of the Bible; the adoption of the story by the converts whose persecution evoked the early history of Dissent from which the text had first emerged.<sup>66</sup> These stories were taken up in publications across the Nonconformist world<sup>67</sup> and this first Bunyan translation in Africa emblemized the power that *The Pilgrim's Progress* might exercise in a mission context.

One feature of the Malagasy case that attracted attention was that the text appeared to cross the boundaries of race and language with apparent ease. This phenomenon was often noted in reports<sup>68</sup> and in turn became the basis for a standard piece of Bunyan discourse regarding the ability of the text to travel across frontiers of race and culture. Rev. W. Morley Punshon, in his popular lecture series on Bunyan, for example, maintained that *The Pilgrim's Progress* "calmed the fierce Malay; it has been carried up the far rivers of Burmah, and it has drawn tears from the dark eyes in the cinnamon gardens of Ceylon. The Bechuana in the wild woods have rejoiced in its simple story. . . . The Hindoo has yielded to its spell by Gunga's sacred stream; and, crowning triumph! Hebrews have read it on the slopes of Olivet."<sup>69</sup> Another report noted: "From the frozen snows of the Arctic Circle to the sunny lands of Tropical Africa, the story of Christian and his burden is widely read and known. . . . Many of our fellow-subjects in India are as familiar with Christian's flight with Apollyon, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and the Land of Beulah, as we are at home."<sup>70</sup> The same idea was often phrased as the pilgrim speaking different languages, or the pilgrim assuming a disguise. In 1837, when Robert Moffat was completing the Tswana translation of Bunyan, he wrote, "I am at the present moment dressing Bunyan's Pilgrim in a Sichuana [Tswana] garb, and if he does not travel this land through and through I shall be much mistaken."<sup>71</sup>

One consequence of these invocations of Bunyan was the notion that everyone read the same book, which passed unchanged through the ether of language and culture. Yet, translation is, of course, more than

cross-dressing, and each translation occasions a new text as even a brief look at some translated titles—*The Book of Bunyan*, *The Traveller*, *A Heaven's Pilgrimage* (the Zulu, Swahili, and Somali renditions of the title)—will tell us.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless, the idea that everyone read the same story persisted. In 1928 the Dean of Winchester wrote in an article in the *Sunday Magazine* that anyone who had encountered the book would absorb its key meaning: "There are thousands of folk in obscure corners of the earth who will never meet an Englishman in this life, but in the next there will be one Englishman whom they will all greet as an old friend and companion—John Bunyan, the tinker of Bedford."<sup>73</sup>

Much of this sentiment is, of course, fueled by eurocentric vanity. Yet, some of its strands arise from a slightly different quarter, namely evangelical ideas regarding how texts and language work in the world.<sup>74</sup> In terms of these ideas, religion had to be a vital and emotional experience. One agent for sparking this emotion was a religious text that could have extraordinary power to "capture" readers and lodge its message firmly in their souls.<sup>75</sup> Evangelicalism placed particular emphasis on education and so didactic texts had an added importance.<sup>76</sup> Texts could also become surrogate evangelists, "noiseless messengers" traveling into those places where missionaries could not go or could not reach. In such instances, tracts could, for example, put on a "Chinese coat" and so "penetrate even to the chamber of the Emperor."<sup>77</sup> Against such a background, it did not seem strange to presume that people in different countries imbibed the same story.

Illustrations, too, reinforced this notion. From having such an intimate knowledge of the story and its illustrations, readers could recognize "foreign" pictures. Discussing a set of Japanese illustrations, one commentator said, "Apollyon giv[es] a truly Japanese conception of that great enemy." Another observer claimed that the Japanese pictures were "very characteristic, especially the portraiture of Mr. Worldly Wiseman who appears before us as the very ideal of a smug, self-satisfied Pharisee."<sup>78</sup> Such pictures signaled that everyone read the "same" story.

Embedded, then, in these mission messages was a picture of *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a text that had traveled to all corners of the world. Nonconformist congregational and denominational audiences encountered this message repeatedly. Within these "publics," the theme of Bunyan as a universal writer of the world became a "fact" and a piece of Nonconformist common sense. This "fact" in turn featured routinely in the plethora of ceremonies that clustered around Bunyan's name and memory. These events were arranged around his tomb,<sup>79</sup> relics, and realia.<sup>80</sup>

At the refurbishment of Bunyan's tomb in 1922 at Bunhill Fields in London, the revered Nonconformist graveyard, one speaker mentioned that *The Pilgrim's Progress* had been translated into "more languages than any book except the Bible and is read by all the races of mankind."<sup>81</sup> Introductions to the numerous editions of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, as well as lectures and commentaries on the book, mentioned his international popularity.<sup>82</sup> Bunyan's "universal" success featured prominently in popular illustrated lecture series. The authors of one of these lecture series claimed to have delivered their lecture with slides over three thousand times during a twenty-five-year period.<sup>83</sup>

While most of these events and activities were aimed at a Nonconformist public, they did extend beyond these boundaries. Commercially produced mission biographies were at times bestsellers. The massively popular missionary exhibitions reached a pan-Protestant and even pan-Christian public.<sup>84</sup> Influential Nonconformist commentators on Bunyan also spread his local and global achievements to a broader readership.

All these efforts were addressed to a world that Nonconformists felt was ignorant of or hostile to Bunyan's achievement. This point is worth stressing since if we turn to the periodization provided by Bunyan scholarship today,<sup>85</sup> we are given a different picture. In these accounts, Bunyan's fortunes were basically assured by the 1830s. Popularized by the Evangelical Revival and lauded by Romantic thinking for its "untutored genius," Bunyan's work was further crowned in 1830 by Robert Southey's influential edition of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Laudatory reviews of this edition from Walter Scott and Thomas Macauley further promoted his standing.<sup>86</sup> A rediscovery of and enthusiasm for Puritanism,<sup>87</sup> along with the rising fortunes of Nonconformity are cited as further evidence for Bunyan's general acceptance by at least midcentury. To Nonconformists, however, such a periodization would have seemed overly optimistic. To one commentator, William Hale White (a childhood Nonconformist), Bunyan only really "arrived" in 1880 with James Anthony Froude's biography, which formed part of Henry Morley's prestigious English Men of Letters Series.<sup>88</sup> Until then Bunyan had continued to be hobbled by his association with Nonconformity and the vulgarity invariably imputed to it.<sup>89</sup>

Recognition where it probably mattered most for chapelgoers—from the High Church—was seen as belated and grudging. As a writer with a wide social reach, Bunyan was admittedly invoked at ceremonies with an agenda of reconciliation between church and chapel. Three such occasions were the unveiling of a statue of Bunyan in Bedford in 1874

and the inauguration of two stained-glass windows in memory of Bunyan, one in Southwark Cathedral (1900) and one in Westminster Abbey (1912).<sup>90</sup> Yet, to at least some Nonconformists, these ceremonies seemed belated and backhanded. Speaking of the 1874 unveiling of Bunyan's statue, one Baptist commentator added a telling aside—"so late!"<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, the Westminster Abbey window had not been freely given but had instead been "shamed" out of the Established Church when a petition was started in response to a group of visiting North American Baptists aghast that there was no national monument to Bunyan.<sup>92</sup> The petition to the Dean of Westminster put together by the World Evangelical Alliance for the window noted the international circulation of Bunyan as one of the reasons why he merited a monument of his own. One of the press reports on the unveiling of the window read: "Millions (not only in England, but even more in America and the colonies) [are] stirred by [the] announcement of [the] window in the Church that reviled Bunyan."<sup>93</sup> As late as 1928, in the midst of massive national tercentenary celebrations blessed by the King, a prominent Anglican cleric could still write an article explaining to his followers why it was important for them to read Bunyan.<sup>94</sup> By 1928, however, any such pockets of High Church disdain were rare, and the tercentenary events ensconced Bunyan as a writer whose status was firmly established and recognized.

Such an account of Bunyan's international circulation may create the impression that everything was determined from England. The projection of the text out into the evangelical world, in the first place, reflected Nonconformist taste and priorities. Furthermore, the book provided a shared point of focus for mission and home audience and propagated the idea that the text that Nonconformists so loved was equally revered and identically interpreted by converts throughout the mission world. Did the drive to publicize the book lie solely with the imperatives of Nonconformist politics and its attempts to use the foreign mission venture as a means to leverage concessions at home? Did the African locales in which Bunyan was circulated have any impact on how the book was publicized back home?

The Madagascan case provides an interesting answer to this question. It demonstrates that the African societies into which *The Pilgrim's Progress* traveled did play a part in shaping the book's fortunes in Britain. The regional politics of Madagascan society was critical, both in determining how the text was taken up and how it was represented back in Britain. As Piers Larson's recent analysis of LMS evangelism in Mad-

agascar has shown, Christianity in Madagascar was vernacularized by its recipients, who determined the conceptual terrain into which mission belief and doctrine had to be translated. Conversion was not a shift from a Malagasy state to something alien but rather "the creation of a new religious consciousness and practice from various familiar and familiarized cultural resources and traditions."<sup>95</sup> Against this background, mission tracts and books, in keeping with extant sacred practice, became treated as protective objects and charms. Larson notes that this practice appears the most credible way of explaining the quite disproportionate desire for reading matter amongst converts, many of whom were not fully literate. By the early 1830s, the LMS press in the capital Antananarivo, was producing twenty thousand items per year for a "reading" population of, at most, five thousand. As Larson points out, this understanding of documents as protective objects influenced missionaries, who gained a renewed understanding of the Scriptures as a "charm of life."<sup>96</sup> The adoption by persecuted converts of *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a charm and guide must similarly have given missionaries, and the audiences to whom these stories were relayed, a revitalized grasp of the book's extraordinary powers and underlined, popularized, or, in some cases, possibly even inaugurated the idea of Bunyan's text as a second Bible (given the practice of binding *The Pilgrim's Progress* in with sections of the Bible, a fact that featured in Nonconformist publicity on the text). These mission depictions are inflected by Malagasy understandings of documents as protective charms or "fetishes." Such representations of the text far away rebound back on the text "at home" and resonate with evangelical audiences who themselves hold magical theories of textuality and texts that are capable of "seizing" and utterly transforming readers.

For further evidence of such "magical" practices, one need only look at the inscriptions and introductions to British editions that urged readers not only to read but also to act. The text is consequently something that, fetish-like, compels its readers to particular forms of action in the world. Instructions on how to read the text often take up this theme and advise the reader on how they might allow themselves to be compelled by the text. One inscription, for example, urged: "Reader! Whosoever thou art . . . before beginning the perusal of this book . . . offer up from thy heart, the following brief, but most comprehensive and necessary petition 'O God, for Jesus Christ's sake, give in the Holy Spirit that I may profit by whatever is good in this book.'" Another inscription (of 1869) outlined an action for its reader to follow: "Dear Annie, Be a little pilgrim to the Glory land." An introduction to a 1776 edition likewise

spoke directly to the readers and advised them how to permit the text to compel them: "Let the Preface close with a word to the Reader's heart . . . The Pilgrim's Progress is a parable, but it has an interpretation in which you are . . . concerned. If you live in sin, you are in the City of Destruction. O hear the warning voice! Flee from the wrath to come!" An echo of these practices remains in a First World War edition that asked its readers to sign and date an enclosed bookmark as a token of having accepted Jesus as their savior. They were also requested to tear out, complete, and then send off a postcard to the Open Air Mission that had published the book.<sup>97</sup>

Similar themes of magical conversion emerge in the story of Mpambu with which we started. In that story, *The Pilgrim's Progress* exercises an astounding power over the villagers and changes them from would-be cannibals to awestruck observers, a mission trope frequently used in relation to Bunyan's text.<sup>98</sup> For the villagers, the book is a protective object or "fetish." Such items were widely publicized in BMS literature and exhibitions and functioned as a shorthand symbol of heathendom.<sup>99</sup> Baptist readers would consequently have interpreted Fullerton's parable as a story of the struggle between the fetishistic heathen beliefs of the Congo and the antifetish of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (a surrogate Bible), which could turn cannibals into converts. However, as with all such paired terms, the boundary between fetish and antifetish is at times uncertain. Both in how Mpambu uses the book and in other mission descriptions of *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a quasi-magical object, Bunyan's book has become a type of "fetish," namely a material object whose correct manipulation can compel events in the real or spiritual world. Most missionaries would have been appalled at such a suggestion—Mpambu probably less so. Like many other mission recruits of slave background, he had ameliorated his marginal position by becoming a convert and hence a guardian of the book, an object that was widely treated as a category of fetish.<sup>100</sup> In his encounter with the villagers and chief, all participants recognize that he has the authority to manipulate the book/fetish and it is this acknowledged power that probably ensures a happy outcome for Mpambu.

Early twentieth-century Baptists, of course, would not have countenanced such a reading of the Fullerton extract. For them, Bunyan's book (as a second Bible) radiates holy power and vanquishes the superstition and heathendom of the fetish-enthralled villagers. Yet, whatever one's reading, Fullerton's anecdote (as well the Madagascan case) serves to induct Bunyan's book into the symbolic field of the "fetish"—whether



as a fetish in its own right or as an antifetish. In this guise, the text fulfilled a complex role—a “fetish-like antifetish”—with compulsive powers to possess and transform readers both “at home” and “abroad.” This perception of the text is admirably illustrated in a comment from the introduction to a nineteenth-century edition of *The Pilgrim's Progress*:

It seizes us in childhood with the strong hand of its power, our manhood surrenders to the spell of its sweet sorcery. . . . Its scenes are as familiar to us as the faces of home. . . . We have seen them [characters] all, conversed with them. . . . There was never a power which so thoroughly possessed our hearts.<sup>101</sup>

As long as readers subscribed to an evangelical, hence implicitly magical, view of Bunyan, such ideas could cohabit quite easily. However, once one attempted a secular reading of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the magical component of evangelicalism became a problem. Alfred Noyes, who launched one of the first and most widely noted secular interpretations of Bunyan in 1928, ran into precisely this dilemma. He clearly recognized—and disapproved of—these magical powers. “When one looks at poor Caliban-Bunyan himself there are symptoms of a reversion to type which all students of primitive religion will recognize.” Bunyan we are told is mad: “He wanted to pray to broom-sticks, to a bull, and to Satan” (in his preconversion phase, that is).<sup>102</sup> Bunyan consequently exercises a premodern power that Noyes finds, and constructs as, dangerous by equating it with African societies (the book “is on the lowest and most squalid levels of the primitive races of Africa”; Bunyan is described as having a “narrow and stunted brow”).<sup>103</sup> Bunyan clearly “spooks” Noyes. Part of this antipathy arises from a lingering class prejudice against him. Part of it, as we shall see in chapter 10, has to do with Bunyan’s “over-association” with colonized society and the difficulties that this posed for those who wanted to claim him as English and “white.” Yet another (and related) dimension of this prejudice emerges from Noyes’s own attempts to disavow a premodern superstitious British past and project it onto Africa. By racializing a past he does not desire, Noyes seeks to exile it into a realm that has no connection to him and that signifies primeval pastness. Through this maneuver, he seeks to position himself in a domain that has apparently always been secular, modern/rational, and white. Bunyan—superstitious, irrational, and long associated with Africa—falls outside these criteria and has to be exorcized. However, as with most such exorcisms, Noyes’s attempts to “ban” Bunyan to the periphery cannot work. Instead, Bunyan lurks like a ghost around the corners of Noyes’s articles,

emerging as the specter of superstition each time secularism is invoked. He functions, then, as a necessary “familiar,” the ghost-like twin without whom terms like modernity and secularism cannot function.

By being projected into the far-away field of the fetish and then reflected back to Nonconformists in Britain, Bunyan and his text become “familiar” in a number of senses. Firstly, everyday, and hence familiar, uses of the book as a magical “charm of life” are underlined and revitalized. Secondly, the book itself is made “familiar” to the world, which seems to read it in exactly the same way as Protestants back home. Finally, as evangelical ways of reading declined, Bunyan becomes the “familiar” of modernity, the ghost of the premodern and magical, inhabiting the borders of the modern and secular.

The year when Noyes wrote (1928) was a long time past the Madagascan translation of 1835, but this chapter has nevertheless suggested that these two events can be read together. By inaugurating Bunyan into the symbolic field of the talisman, the Malagasy translation and its reflections back in Britain inducted the book into a zone of magical practices to which evangelical audiences, who themselves read this way, could relate. However, as Noyes attempted to insert Bunyan into a secular domain, these magical practices, both “at home” and “abroad,” became a “problem” that Noyes attempted to excise. These shifts indicate the complex transformations that awaited Bunyan’s text “at home” as it traveled into new zones of intellectual and spiritual practice. One crucial bridge in this process of induction was translation and it is to this topic that we now turn.



# 3

## Translating Bunyan

"Prophets," as John Whitehead noted, "are a nuisance."<sup>1</sup> Whitehead knew whereof he spoke. A self-styled prophet himself, he worked on the Upper Congo for fifty years and caused a considerable nuisance. His obduracy still survives in the euphemism of obituary: "hard, forthright, clear and firm in his views . . . a lone figure unable to work easily with his colleagues."<sup>2</sup> Indeed these colleagues soon abandoned the station rather than work with him. Eventually his wife left him, too. His employers (the BMS) and his children begged him to come home. In 1925 the BMS cancelled his contract. Whitehead—"the prophet of Wayika"—stayed on defiantly, returning reluctantly to Britain in 1946. "The Congo," he observed (rather like a Baptist Kurtz), "was a fine place to lose one's character in."<sup>3</sup>

Whitehead believed fervently that God had directed him to the Congo to work as a linguist and translator. Before leaving for the Congo, he had studied the Kongo grammar of Holman Bentley, the legendary Baptist linguist. Whitehead became convinced that "Bentley's Elijah cloak" had fallen on him and he envisioned his role of translator as that of a mighty ventriloquist. His gospel translation enabled him to speak "with 15,000 voices" ("I hope to add 8,000 more in the new year when more paper arrives," he mused). Whitehead imagined his "voices" reverberating across entire territories as his hymns traveled from the Upper Congo into Tanganyika.<sup>4</sup> As relations with the home committee deteriorated, Whitehead believed there was a conspiracy to silence his "voices." He ignored all directives to stop work and continued to order paper and equipment on the BMS account. When this channel too closed up, he

begged and pouted: "For Christ's sake, send me that paper. . . . Abandon me, cross me out, but let me finish the work."<sup>5</sup>

In its extremity, Whitehead's career dramatizes two key features of the mission translation endeavor. The first of these is the extravagant stage—several countries with a cast of thousands—on which he saw his translation work unfolding. A second instructive feature of Whitehead's career is the constant tension between him and his home committee. Their differences were, of course, exacerbated by Whitehead's impossible personality. Yet, behind this personal discord, one can detect disagreements that were organizational and professional. Whitehead, for example, felt driven by an urgent apocalyptic mission to spread the word. By contrast, BMS structures (with their "bloodless obedience to dead rules," as Whitehead said) demanded caution, delay, and fiscal restraint.<sup>6</sup> Whitehead (rather unusually for a missionary) craved individual glory as a translator. Yet he worked in a mission society structure that did not favor "one-man" translations. Like all mission organizations, the BMS—particularly in matters of biblical translation—recommended translation by committee.

Judged from this encounter, mission translation was a vast and vexed field. Its avowedly international scale encompassed different and often competing interests, and ranged across the arena of mission imperialism. Translation is consequently not one "event" by which a text is lobbed from Europe into Africa. Translations stretch across the time, space, and ideological tensions of the mission domain. If we are to understand the complexity of such translation events, we have to follow their threads in detail. This chapter attempts such a task. In the first part, I examine the paradoxes inherent in mission translation and how *The Pilgrim's Progress*, as a second Bible, offered temporary relief from some of these contradictions. I then turn to narrate a "biography" of one Congo translation as it unfolds in time. Through this process, we gain insight into how various players in the mission arena imprint their interest on the translation's final form. In the third section, I trace one Cameroonian translation through space, the translation undertaken by the West Indian missionary, Joseph Jackson Fuller (figure 4). We follow the journey of the text from Bedford (Bunyan's hometown) to New England, to the American South, to Jamaica, and finally to West Africa. We examine how the story becomes "black" as it travels into a slave world and how Fuller, an ex-slave-turned-missionary, used this changed text to negotiate the contradictions of being a black missionary in a white-dominated world.

The contradictions besetting mission translation are numerous. Not only does translation have to steer a path between different languages, different denominations, and competing theological viewpoints,<sup>7</sup> but it also has to negotiate the problems of dialect (which of the many dialects around the mission station is to be written down as a language?), orthography (using what orthographical choices?), and local politics (taking heed of which sets of interests?).<sup>8</sup> Much translation is determined by first-language converts rather than second-language missionaries. Missionaries labor in others' linguistic vineyards without full control over how key ideas, concepts, and terms come to be rendered.<sup>9</sup> Indeed the core business of biblical translation itself rests uneasily on a set of theological fault lines. Can heaven's design be expressed in human idiom? Can God's message be transferred from one language to another? Can translation reproduce revelation?<sup>10</sup>

Mission translation is thus essentially about managing contradiction. As such, any translation could only ever be a temporary truce between clusters of warring demands. Each piece of translation was always provisional, one of many "rehearsals" in a process that had no final performance. Indeed, many early mission translations were interleaved with blank pages so that evangelists could jot down better phrasings or indicate where sentences were not clear.<sup>11</sup> Mission journals frequently reported mistranslations ("sitting on a stick" for "going to heaven," or "Jesus is in a snail-shell" rather than "in heaven").<sup>12</sup> The invariable blitheness of such accounts speaks not only of the contempt that some missionaries held for "savage" languages but also underlines the prevailing view of translation as necessarily hasty and provisional.

Within this ambiguous environment, *The Pilgrim's Progress* could play a useful role. For nineteenth-century Nonconformists, as we have seen, the book was a substitute Bible: the story of Christian and his burden that rolls from his shoulders at the Cross captured in vivid and dramatic form the essential kernel of Christianity. Through a series of syllogistic steps, this story could come to stand for the Gospel message and hence for the entire Bible. The deep interpenetration of Bunyan's language with that of the Bible, and the latter's pervasive influence on the text, strengthened this claim of *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a substitute Bible.<sup>13</sup>

As a near-Bible, the book could share in the importance of the Scriptures while being exempt from the rule-bound rigors of biblical translation. Translating the entire Bible often took decades. During this time, the Bible per se did not exist except as a scrappy handful of little booklets indistinguishable in most regards from tracts, catechisms, or

primers.<sup>14</sup> Some parts of the Bible—particularly with regard to prophets and polygamy—carried mixed messages and certain missionaries refrained from translating them.<sup>15</sup> A small minority, taking up a peculiarly un-Protestant position, even felt that the Bible should never be written down in African languages.<sup>16</sup> While missionaries argued behind the scenes about these issues, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (or parts of it) could be held up as a synecdochal scripture. In this context, mission publicity material was quick to light on stories of converts who preferred Bunyan to the Bible. A missionary from the Punjab, for example, reported that one of his flock had turned down the offer of a Bible. "I have got something much better than a Gospel." And he pulled out a *Pilgrim's Progress* . . . "This is wonderful. I can understand this. I cannot understand the Gospel."<sup>17</sup> Such pictures resonated well with a "home" audience who had, no doubt, from time to time, secretly harbored similar thoughts themselves. Such accounts also allowed British readers to believe that they and converts far away read the same book and believed the same set of ideas.

This complexity of the relationship between Bunyan and the Bible was at times apparent in the physical nature of the book itself and in the Madagascan case, bits of the Bunyan text were bound together with sections from the Scriptures.<sup>18</sup> In the minds of some, the two texts often swirled together. A Baptist medical missionary in China, for example, did some illustrations for evangelical purposes, and the pictures he chose ran together biblical and Bunyan scenes indiscriminately. They were the Prodigal Son; Noah and the Flood; the Horrible Pit and the Miry Clay; the Good Samaritan; and the Burden and its Removal.<sup>19</sup>

This intimate relationship of Bunyan and the Bible was, in some instances, figured in metaphors of gender. Bernard Cockett, the pastor of Bunyan Meeting House in Bedford, wrote: "[The] Pilgrim speaks 121 languages, and accompanies the Bible in Christian missions with the intimacy of Greatheart and Christiana."<sup>20</sup> In this image, the Bible becomes Greatheart, the chivalric knight who protects Christiana and her party on their journey to heaven. *The Pilgrim's Progress* itself is compared to Christiana and so becomes the Bible's female companion. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is hence likened to a feminized Bible, an image that usefully captures the ambiguous zone that the text occupied. The text was secular, yet also sacred; it was fiction, yet also "true" in that it carried the Gospel message. Translating it could be a site of pleasure and experimentation and a relief from the "manly" demands of Bible work. Rosemary Guillebaud, who "converted" *The Pilgrim's Progress* into Rundi, recalls that

she did it as a form of relaxation from the more arduous New Testament translation that she was doing at the same time.<sup>21</sup>

The Zulu version of *The Pilgrim's Progress* commences with a short foreword by the translator, John William Colenso, the Bishop of Natal. The book appeared in 1868 at a time when Colenso found himself embroiled in an international dispute about his theological scholarship, which had questioned the literal truth of the Bible. Colenso had been excommunicated by the southern African branch of the Anglican Church and had had to fight legal battles both at home and in England.<sup>22</sup> Against this background, the opening sentences of the foreword unsurprisingly apologized for the delay in the text's appearance:

Christians, I have written this book about Christian that I would like you to read and get to know. But I beseech you my people, do not be dissatisfied that it has taken me this long to write this book. . . . I was preoccupied with something very big that I had not foreseen. . . . I have written this book so that you may read it and acquire the power to see [get its powers/wisdom], and know how to page [investigate] it like the white people. Here it is, then, the book of Christian. You have heard others talk of his existence, and that he has his own book that talks about the suffering of a person who wants to know our Father, the Lord, and to have faith in Jesus Christ our King.<sup>23</sup>

Colenso was no ordinary mission translator. A Bishop and an international figure, he is probably the most prominent of all Bunyan translators. Nonetheless, as a mission translator in Africa, he faced similar problems to his colleagues. The first and most obvious of these was a lack of time. As the extract makes clear, the translation stretched over a much longer period than he had anticipated. The second point worth noting is that the book is already known to its intended readers. Christian, the protagonist, and his story already live among Zulu believers. Bits of the book have migrated in and around the Zulu mission world. Pieces of the text have been "peeled" off and been immersed in the new language community. The "book" has cleared a space for itself and settled down before its printed incarnation arrives. Like any translated text, then, the Zulu *Pilgrim's Progress* has a "biography," more complex than one might initially anticipate.

Unfortunately, the records for Colenso's translation are patchy and do not permit us to put together a detailed picture of the text's "biography."<sup>24</sup> Instead, let us turn to another translation of *The Pilgrim's*

*Progress* (this time into Kele, a language of the Upper Congo) where evidence is more plentiful. If we consult bibliographies or published mission accounts,<sup>25</sup> we will see that the translation appeared in 1916. Such entries create the impression that the translation was one neat and finite "event," but it was, of course, only the tip of an iceberg. Below this just-visible apex lay a deep and byzantine story.

The Kele translation of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, part 1, took shape in and around the mission station, Yakusu, established in 1895 as part of the BMS advance up the Congo River. The station operated in a complex linguistic environment that by some accounts included fourteen different languages and dialects. The initial decision was to work in Lingala, the trade language of the river, and Swahili. These were, however, second-languages for the target population and, furthermore, some missionaries judged them to be "mongrel" tongues. The station consequently changed strategies and decided to work in Kele, the first-language of its desired convert group.<sup>26</sup>

One of the earliest staff members at Yakusu was W. H. Stapleton, the noted Baptist linguist, who arrived in 1897. Working with his assistant, Bondoko, Stapleton undertook several translations including Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, and one-fifth of *The Pilgrim's Progress* into Kele. This fragment was completed in 1902 and then sent back to London for printing. It finally appeared about three years later as a freestanding thirty-two-page book in 1905, a year before Stapleton's death.<sup>27</sup>

The baton then passed to H. Sutton Smith, like Stapleton from the Rye Lane Baptist Chapel in Peckham, London. He arrived at Yakusu in 1899 and soon established a close working relationship with a young convert, Itindi. Together, this pair tackled Hebrews and Colossians. In 1909 Sutton Smith and Itindi undertook the next chunk of Bunyan, but managed only a half-dozen more pages before Sutton Smith became ill and relocated to China.<sup>28</sup> In the same year, the energetic Charles Pugh arrived and found that pupils on the station were familiar with the story and could recite parts of it from the Stapleton translation.<sup>29</sup> Possibly spurred by this enthusiasm, Pugh took up where Sutton Smith had left off and quickly added another twenty pages.<sup>30</sup>

By early 1910, the sections translated by Sutton Smith/Itindi and Pugh began to be serialized in the Yakusu periodical *Mboli ya Tengai*. The first episode appeared in April 1910 and the serial ran for two years.<sup>31</sup> This curtailed form of the story proved popular among readers ("more acceptable to the native mind," in Pugh's words) and no doubt because of this popularity, Pugh was requested by the station committee to compile a "complete" abridgement of the story.<sup>32</sup> Performing six hours of

translation a week, he abridged the entire part 1 by revising earlier translations and by undertaking a summarized translation of the remainder of the text.<sup>33</sup> His version finally appeared in a 64-page edition in 1916. Pugh's version proved to be so popular that it was again serialized in 1925, in extracts that were sometimes less than one hundred words.<sup>34</sup> Subsequent editions in book form of Pugh's abridged translation appeared regularly until at least 1958 and are quite probably still in print amongst Kele-speaking Protestants.<sup>35</sup>

As this story of one translation demonstrates, any Bunyan edition was made in a tangled web that stretched across continents. Within this web lay a number of interacting sites linked by filaments of cooperation and conflict. The first of these, in our Kele story, concerns the complex linguistic environment in which translation proceeded. In a multilingual situation, the decision to work in Kele registered a variety of political interests. Those missionaries favoring the large-scale languages, Lingala and Swahili, were in all likelihood modernists (or aggressive evangelicals, or both). For them, the reach of such languages offered the economies of scale they sought.<sup>36</sup> Those favoring small languages were generally antimodernist in outlook and wanted to protect the "purity" of African societies from social change. For some Kele-speakers (a small group today numbering only 160,000), the chance to get their language promoted by the mission must have held considerable political attraction. However, at the same time, other Kele-speakers probably regarded the opportunity as a double-edged sword given that mission transcription often produced a language not entirely recognizable to its speakers. Part of this problem had to do with "mission station jargon." Eugene Nida of the American Bible Society explains:

Earlier missionaries have in some instances decided to 'improve' on the language of the natives by introducing some of their own ideas about how its grammar should be changed, or perhaps they have just not learned the language well and the natives . . . have actually come to copy the mistakes of the missionaries. . . . On the other hand, some natives employ a 'reduced' form of the language around the mission station just because they discover that the missionary is not competent to understand fully the more elaborate and intricate grammatical forms.<sup>37</sup>

At Yakusu, this general mission problem was compounded by the fact that mission converts and hence translators were slaves, runaways, and young boys, as was the case with Stapleton's and Sutton Smith's assistants,

Bondoko and Itindi. The mission station jargon and its written manifestation inevitably reflected the sociolects of these groups.

Also contested, if not to the same degree as the question of target language, was the issue of whether and when to translate Bunyan. Most Nonconformists, of course, considered *The Pilgrim's Progress* an evangelical priority. One might consequently anticipate little mission disagreement about devoting resources for translating Bunyan as soon as possible. Stapleton did indeed put Bunyan very high up on his list. By the time his fragment of *The Pilgrim's Progress* appeared in 1905, the "Bible" comprised only a handful of books: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Epistles, and Nehemiah.<sup>38</sup> Judged alongside this huddle of booklets, *The Pilgrim's Progress* must have seemed nearly as weighty as the "Bible." Stapleton was, however, a Baptist and Bunyan would have been especially significant to him.

However, even Baptists sometimes argued about Bunyan's usefulness. The fractious Whitehead, for example, felt that the text was "obscure" and "awkward" but did concede that it may "be alright later on."<sup>39</sup> Beyond the Baptist fold, arguments about Bunyan became more acute. Many of these disagreements were staged in the Congo Mission Conference, an organization that attempted to institute cooperative production of literature between Protestant mission societies in the Catholic-dominated Belgian Congo. Herbert Smith of the U.S.-based Disciples of Christ Congo Mission commented: "It is surprising to some of us to find *Pilgrim's Progress* in nine different tongues."<sup>40</sup> J. A. Clark commented:

Then there is the *Pilgrim's Progress* which ought to be very useful in spite of many difficulties. I would however cut out with unsparing hand the greater part of the long theological discussions. . . . And the book should be translated literally, but very freely. It strikes me too that the second part is likely to be more popular than the first, as it contains more humour and the larger number of pilgrims, some of them children, makes for more human interest for the readers.<sup>41</sup>

E. Guyton of the Congo Balolo Mission, a small British-based non-denominational organization, somewhat surprisingly, felt that Bunyan was not the best choice: "We must consider the mind of the native so as not to give him ideas which are distinctly European. In the *Pilgrim's Progress* there is much that is incomprehensible on that account."<sup>42</sup> G. Thomas, a Baptist, stoutly defended the book: "the *Pilgrim's Progress* will become a large factor in the imagination of the native."<sup>43</sup>

However, when it came to funders (another crucial link in the

translation chain), such local differences of opinion evaporated. In reporting back to their funding structures, missionaries presented translations of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in an unrelentingly favorable light. The text was well known to home audiences and around this point of familiarity, mission publicity wove a story of the miraculous book that could compel spectacular changes in "heathens." Pugh, for example, told a mission breakfast at the Cannon Street Hotel in London about the Kele translation. Part of his story reads:

when I reached the station [Yakusu] . . . many boys and girls were able, not only to read the book, but also to recite passages from it. And not only so, but there were many who had read the book to such good purpose that they had set out from the City of Destruction with their faces steadfastly set towards the glorious City, and as they had journeyed along the pilgrim way had come to that place, somewhat ascending, on the summit of which stood the Cross, and there, near the Cross, the burden had rolled off from their shoulders, and rolled and rolled until it fell into the grave there and was seen no more.<sup>44</sup>

Pugh, a superb publicist, was speaking to an English evangelical audience who knew Bunyan intimately. He invokes what many regard as the core segment of the text, namely the scene at the cross where Christian loses his burden. For many readers, it was an electric moment in the narrative and was quoted and requoted in evangelical circles.<sup>45</sup> Hearing Pugh's story, which employs phrases from the original, the guests at the breakfast must have felt that African converts understood the text exactly as they did.

But what did converts make of the text? This question is often difficult to answer, since in this case we have to work only with pronouncements from missionaries. Yet, with careful reading, there are some deductions we can make. With the Kele translation, as we have seen, Yakusu readers had the choice of Stapleton's version or the abridged nuggets in the periodical. They voted for the latter. One possible explanation for this popularity (apart from ease of reading) is that the serial version gave readers only the narrative highlights and cut out the theological discussion. Much of this theological discussion exemplified core evangelical Protestant belief. Yet, as research on African Christianity reveals,<sup>46</sup> converts were discriminating in which parts of the Protestant package they accepted. One cornerstone of Protestant belief that never took any hold in the continent was the idea of original sin.<sup>47</sup> Yet, the central image in

the text, namely the burden on Christian's back, stands precisely for his original sin, which is then elaborated upon in the theological discussions elsewhere in the text. By sloughing off the text's theology, African readers could bypass those sections of Protestant thought that made no sense to them. As we shall see in the chapters that follow, by adopting this strategy, African converts could also redeem certain images in the story—like the burden on Christian's back—and put these to work to explain the new and burdensome colonial circumstances they had to face. Through these strategies, the popular taste of converts registered itself in how Bunyan was translated and helped to dictate the final form of the book as a series of abridged episodes.

In looking at the Kele translation saga, one "event" turns out to be underpinned by an extensive network of relationships along which ideas and images of the texts traveled. Different players in this field (Baptist missionary, Kele convert, cross-mission council, funders, and so on) supported divergent understandings of the text rooted in their various local worlds. But, at the same time, missionaries worked to promote the idea of a "universal" story, read in the same way by all participants. In the zone created by this publicity, "images" of Bunyan could start to confront each other and produce a chemistry that, as we shall see in chapter 10, was to affect his standing in England profoundly.

Striking, too, in this Kele saga, is the fragmentary nature of the translation. The text did not evolve smoothly from English to Kele in one complete unit: bits and pieces were translated, earlier versions were revised and abridged, and fragments were "trialed" in periodicals then reformulated in an abridged edition. This "magpie" method, as others have shown,<sup>48</sup> was central to mission endeavor, which, of necessity, had to experiment with shreds and patches to see what would appeal to their new audiences. In their attempt to create a shared field of metaphor and image, missions had to be permanent experimenters, trying out new strategies and media at every turn. In keeping with these practices, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (even once it was translated) was broadcast from many sites. These included the classroom, Sunday school (figure 8), pulpit, choir, debating society, and school play.<sup>49</sup> It was also disseminated via different media: magic lantern slide, poster, postcard (figure 7), book illustration, periodical, school reader, drama, sermon, and hymn.<sup>50</sup>

In all these various sites and via these different media, versions of *The Pilgrim's Progress* were crafted and recrafted, fashioned and refashioned—a process that stretched out over decades. It is consequently impossible to locate any translation as one finite spot in time. It is like-

wise impossible to locate it as one neat dot in space. When I first commenced this research, I kept a map showing each Bunyan translation in Africa as a dot. Every time I located a new one, I proudly added it to my collection until I had a "measled" map of the continent showing eighty translations. However, as the research progressed, I came to understand that such a representation was misleading. Each dot implied that a translation is a bounded and local event, cut off from the international threads that run into and from it. Particularly if we wish to understand how cultural history is made transnationally, then it is crucial that we trace these threads both through time and space. Having looked at one translation through time, let us turn to another in space. This story concerns Joseph Jackson Fuller and Bunyan in the black Atlantic.

The first chapter of W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* sketches out his famous notion of double consciousness as "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity."<sup>51</sup> His first chapter also outlines an African American history of attempts to overcome this doubleness "to merge [a] double self into a better and truer self," of attempts to be "both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face."<sup>52</sup> In this struggle, there have been what Du Bois terms many "false gods" of utopian expectation. Emancipation, black male enfranchisement, and then educational advancement—all these promised redemption and each in turn was blocked by continuing violence and racism—"the holocaust of war, the terrors of the Ku-Klux Klan, the lies of carpet-baggers, the disorganization of industry."<sup>53</sup> In describing the grim journey along this careworn path, Du Bois introduces a number of images from Bunyan. He speaks of the "highway of Emancipation and law, steep and rugged, but straight, leading to heights high enough to overlook life." He continues:

Up the new path the advance guard toiled, slowly, heavily, doggedly. . . . It was weary work. The cold statistician wrote down the inches of progress here and there, noted also where here and there a foot had slipped or some one had fallen. To the tired climbers, the horizon was ever dark, the mists were often cold. . . . Canaan was always dim and far away. If, however, the vistas disclosed yet no goal, no resting-place, little but flattery and criticism, the journey at least gave leisure for

reflection and self-examination; it changed the child of emancipation to the youth with dawning self-consciousness, self-realization, self-respect.<sup>54</sup>

A few lines later, the submerged Bunyan references become explicit: "For the first time [the Negro] sought to analyze the burden he bore upon his back, that dead-weight of social degradation partially masked behind a half-named Negro problem."<sup>55</sup>

Du Bois's politicized interpretation of Bunyan's allegory, in certain respects, resembles the Kele reading strategies outlined above. Both retain key Bunyan symbols, empty them of their prior meaning, and then fill them with new political content. Both, importantly, construe the central figure of the story as a black character. This "translation" of the story was one of the consequences of its journeys—across the Atlantic and into Africa—and raises fascinating questions about Bunyan in the diaspora and African American uses of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Curiously, this is a story that, to my knowledge, has never been told. When it is, a key figure in the saga will be Joseph Jackson Fuller, born a slave in Jamaica and for much of his life a missionary in the Cameroon in West Africa. During his mission tenure, he was to complete two Bunyan translations, one into Isubu and the other into Duala, the trading language associated with the city of the same name. As this section seeks to show, Fuller, in undertaking these translations, was able to draw on a multiple Jamaican Bunyan inheritance that was shaped by three major streams. One part of this bequest came to him from a black Baptist tradition forged first in the American South and then brought by African American missionaries to Jamaica. A second part of it was bequeathed to him by British Baptists who began working in Jamaica in 1814. A third part of it was formulated in the terrain of slave religion, where bits of Bunyan were reshaped to fit into a world of African creole spiritual experience. Inheriting these streams in which Bunyan characters could be black, white, American, Jamaican, British, slave, or free, Fuller could only have been "doubly conscious" of the text as a prism revealing the fluidity of racial identities, even where such identities had been violently created, imposed, and upheld. It was an insight that he would draw on as he walked the tightrope of being a black West Indian missionary among predominantly white British colleagues.

Our story proceeds in three sections. We first trace the spread of the text from Bedford (Bunyan's hometown) to Jamaica. We then examine how, in Jamaica, different Bunyan traditions arose around black Bap-

tist preachers, slaves, and British Baptists. Finally, we examine Fuller's mission experience in West Africa and how he used his Jamaican Bunyan inheritance, not so much among converts (a subject on which there is little information) but among his colleagues.

*The Pilgrim's Progress* was written in the wake of the collapse of the English Revolution. In a climate of renewed persecution against Dissenters, Bunyan was jailed for illegal preaching and most of the text was produced in prison. The first part of the book appeared in 1678 (the second in 1684) and immediately found favor among the poor and religiously persecuted. Many of these Dissenters fled (or were transported) to New England and the popular Bunyan text went with them. As a Puritan classic, it was strongly woven into the secular and spiritual lives of the early settlers.<sup>56</sup>

In the three decades after the American War of Independence, the text widened its reach, courtesy of popular evangelized versions of Christianity. From these demotic religious sites, evangelical ideas (and Bunyan as part of them) seeped into slave Christianities. Baptists and Methodists spearheaded this process. Their enthusiastic evangelical style was accessible, and its raptures and spectacles approximated the religious heritage of Africans. One text they often imparted was *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which left an imprint on some of the central metaphors of slave Christianity.<sup>57</sup> Abolitionists, too, took up the text. A book entitled *Pilgrim's Progress in the Last Days* turns Bunyan's story into an abolitionist tract in which Christian is of "dark hue" and is accompanied by a fugitive slave, White-heart.<sup>58</sup>

One feature of early African American Christianity was the figure of the preacher. These men not only played a decisive role in shaping African American Christianity but also established independent congregations and churches.<sup>59</sup> Some of these preachers turned themselves into missionaries and took on the task of spreading a distinctively black Christianity. One such person was George Liele, a slave who capitalized on the disruptions of the Revolutionary War to establish a separate black Baptist church in Silver Bluff, South Carolina.<sup>60</sup> During the War, Liele, like many other slaves, fought for the British. After the war, Liele was freed by his owner Henry Sharp but then reenslaved by Sharp's family. He managed to free himself again and made his way to Jamaica in 1782 with his wife and four children. In Kingston, he started preaching and soon attracted hundreds of converts.<sup>61</sup> Liele was joined by two other African American ex-slaves, Moses Baker and George Gibbs, who subsequently set up their own churches.<sup>62</sup> At the request of Liele and other

church leaders, an invitation was issued in 1803 to the BMS to send envoys to assist the church. BMS representatives finally arrived in 1814 to find a black-initiated religious movement, eight thousand strong.<sup>63</sup>

Liele was a reader of Bunyan.<sup>64</sup> It also seems that he may have used Bunyan as a source for instructing his congregants.<sup>65</sup> His interest in Bunyan is hardly surprising for a Baptist, but the parallels in their lives may also have sparked Liele's curiosity. Both were Dissenters laboring under Established Church rule; both fell foul of a ban on unauthorized preaching; and both were imprisoned. Contemporary descriptions of Liele's incarceration in 1794 could have come directly from Bunyan's trial. Liele was arraigned for "uttering dangerous and seditious words." One extant report observed: "He was charged with preaching sedition, and was cast into prison and put in irons."<sup>66</sup>

However, Liele was not only a Dissenter but also black, and so suffered compounded oppressions. In addition to being arraigned for illegal preaching, he was imprisoned for preaching to slaves. He was also persecuted as a black intellectual in a white slave-holding society. His colleague, George Gibb, was likewise imprisoned. "He was once thrown into Spanish Town jail, and confined there for four days, for having been caught teaching the slaves. He was many times found on estates at night, and cast into the dungeon, and his feet placed in the bilboes, for having dared to enter into a negro house to teach those by night to whom he could not have access by day."<sup>67</sup>

In this black Baptist context, Bunyan's story offered preachers a model of maintaining faith under conditions of persecution. The narrative could easily be "doubled" so that it encompassed both a religious and a political message. As Christopher Hill has frequently pointed out, the text can be read not only as an evangelical drama of redemption from sin but also as a story about redemption from feudal slavery.<sup>68</sup> Christian, we learn, is subject to a tyrannical lord, Apollyon, who ruthlessly exploits his laborers. Christian has fled his service and pledges himself as a follower of a new humane master, Jesus. Apollyon, figured as a fearful monster, confronts Christian, who refuses to return to his oppressive service. A fight ensues, with Christian finally putting Apollyon to flight. In a Jamaican context, where Christian was probably read as a black character, such scenes would have allowed readers to interpret *The Pilgrim's Progress* as an allegory on the burdens of religious persecution of black Dissenters in the Caribbean, as well as an allegory about the burdens of slavery.

The British Baptists who arrived from 1814 were ardent Bunyan fans. Bunyan had long been scripted into their denominational traditions



and, of all Nonconformists, they were the most active propagators of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The British Baptists who traveled to Jamaica were also abolitionists, and so would have been sympathetic to the interpretations of Bunyan evolved by Liele and other preachers. A black Baptist reading of Bunyan, which stressed a double salvation from the bondage of both sin and slavery, would have made sense to them.<sup>69</sup> However, at the same time, the British Baptists differed in theological orientation from their black Baptist colleagues. Both groups were nominally evangelical but came out of very different traditions. The black Baptists laid great stress on spiritual experience and charismatic gifts. The British Baptists emphasized conversion and pastoral guidance.<sup>70</sup> These were also the themes they liked to extract from Bunyan. Bunyan's autobiography and *The Pilgrim's Progress* offered a model of what an evangelical conversion should be. Its ingredients were a great awareness of sin, and an emotional conversion followed by close contact with a pastor. In Bunyan's own life, this figure was the preacher John Gifford and, in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the character Evangelist takes on this role. The autobiographical writings of James Mursell Phillipo, an important British Baptist figure in Jamaica and a teacher of Fuller, exemplify this British Baptist understanding of Bunyan. Phillipo's life story commences with an account of his conversion that is prefigured by a terrible sense of sin. He decides to join the Baptist church and then experiences a profound moment of conversion, which he describes through language drawn from *The Pilgrim's Progress*.<sup>71</sup> For black Baptists, conversion did not have to take this form. Instead, dreams, visions, or spiritual visitations could all betoken conversion that, furthermore, did not have to be mediated through a trained minister.<sup>72</sup> For British Baptists, however, Bunyan offered the "recipe" for guided evangelical conversion, and they propagated these views systematically from their churches and schools.

Such debates about Bunyan were, of course, open only to those who could read the text in considerable and careful detail. Slaves were seldom permitted to acquire any literacy and so would not have read the text. But, from both British and Jamaican Baptist preachers, they would have heard fragments of the story, and a few of these made their way into popular slave religious practice. The contours of this religion, as others have shown, were strongly gnostic, and religious experience was primarily about spiritual encounters and mystical revelation.<sup>73</sup> Dreams and visions were highly prized and came direct to the believer rather than being mediated via a minister or a written text. As Edward Brathwaite and others have shown, this creole Christianity was indebted to African no-

tions of spiritual life that stressed spirit-contact and possession rather than "worship" in the European Christian sense.<sup>74</sup>

In the records of Jamaican slave Christianity, the Bunyan remnants are noticeable. Some of these are, no doubt, random phenomena. Take, for example, the case of a dream reported by a slave from the north of the island. In this dream, he found himself sitting under a tree with a heavy basket at his feet. A white man approached him and bade him pick up the load and follow. They proceeded until they came to a large hole and the guide told the dreamer to cast the basket into the hole.<sup>75</sup> This dream fragment is reminiscent of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Christian carries a load, he meets a stranger who directs him on his way and eventually his burden rolls into a large hole when he confronts the cross. In evangelical terms, this episode makes up the core of the story. The dreamer can hardly have been aware of this but he may have encountered versions of this key piece of Bunyan via the black Baptist network (or "Black Family," as it was sometimes known).<sup>76</sup>

Other uses of fragments from *The Pilgrim's Progress* appear to be more purposive. Most notable in this regard is the idea of the "passport to heaven."<sup>77</sup> In this practice, tickets were given out by local Baptist leaders to their group members to vouch that they were suitably prepared for important church rituals. These pieces of paper were known as "passports to heaven" and, in some cases, slaves were buried clasping their tickets.<sup>78</sup> The origins of this practice have been located in two spheres. First, as Philip Curtin has indicated, the piece of paper is subject to African creole religious beliefs and is treated as a sacred object or "fetish" that can compel spiritual events: in this case, causing the gates of heaven to open.<sup>79</sup> Second, documents in slave societies were a key part of the apparatus of ruling and were used to control the movement of slaves who had, for example, to carry a permissory letter to travel. Consequently, the idea of entry to a venue of power being conditional on a piece of paper would have accorded with slaves' everyday experiences. To these two explanations, we can add a third that concerns the final scenes of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, part 1. Here Christian and Hopeful arrive at the gates of heaven and are asked for their "certificates." After these are scrutinized, the two characters are admitted to paradise. Those without certificates, like the character Ignorance, go straight to hell.

Slave ideas of "passports to heaven" share parallels with this scene, which must have been one tributary for the notion, either via oral retellings of the story or possibly through illustrations.<sup>80</sup> The scene further provides "proof" of the idea, particularly as it comes from a text that



carried almost as much authority as the Bible. The episode also dramatizes a creolized view of literacy and of documents that draws together "African" and "European" understandings. In "African" terms, the documents in the scene function as magical and protective tokens and so embody "African" notions of spiritual power. But, at the same time, the documents also appear to be part of a bureaucratic apparatus of slave-owner rule and so encapsulate the power of the slave-owning state. The piece of paper, then, represents a portfolio of power in which its holder might share. As we shall see in chapter 6, African readers, too, often singled out this scene and for broadly similar reasons. Both communities of interpreters were, in effect, formulating a diasporic mode of reading Bunyan. In this hermeneutic practice, parts of the text were extracted and then used as a template to analyze situations of great inequality with a view to understanding the nature of power at work in these contexts.

In Jamaica, then, *The Pilgrim's Progress* arrived from the Baptist American South already shaped as a book about black experience. In its new context, the text was further "baptized" in the currents of Caribbean intellectual traditions. Among slaves, usable bits of Bunyan were resituated in the landscapes of popular spiritual religion and redemption. Preachers, drawing on experiences in the American South and Jamaica, elaborated a reading of the text in which notions of redemption carried both a political and evangelical meaning. British Baptists expounded a similar reading, but, because of their denominational history, strongly underlined Bunyan's evangelicalism.

These particular traditions of Bunyan that swirled together in Jamaica were to take yet a further journey, this time as part of the post-emancipation West Indian missionary contingent to West Africa.<sup>81</sup> This movement was inspired by the belief that "Africa must be civilized by Africans" and that those who had African ancestors would be less prone to the diseases and fevers of the continent. One of the first Jamaicans to join the venture was Alexander McCloud Fuller and, at his express behest, his son, Joseph Jackson, also joined the mission in 1844.

The mission was destined for failure. Recruited in evangelical haste, poorly trained, demeaningly supervised by white missionaries, resented by coastal chiefs seeking white British agents, and ravaged by malaria, the Jamaicans mostly left the continent after only a few years. Fuller persevered, working initially under the mentorship of another Jamaican, Richard Merrick, who died in 1849, only five years after Fuller's arrival.<sup>82</sup> Like many missionaries, Fuller passed through trials—he lost a wife and two children, his house was attacked, he suffered from all manner of

illness. Yet, as a black missionary, he experienced additional burdens. Unlike his white colleagues, he had only restricted rights to furlough and in forty-five years had just two such breaks. He had to live the life of an "example" to Africans—a black man living with one wife. He had to occupy the ambiguous terrain of the black Jamaican missionary in Africa. As one missionary observed, "The natives . . . are natives, and the Europeans are Europeans; but those from Jamaica are neither."<sup>83</sup> These conditions notwithstanding, Fuller was one of the very few to remain behind. He built up a successful mission and worked there until 1888, when the Germans seized the Cameroon and his station was handed over to the Basel Mission. He left the Cameroon privately heart-broken ("the pain of leaving a life's work I can scarcely d[e]scribe") but publicly conciliatory ("He who ruleth on high knows that which is best for his children").<sup>84</sup>

Part of Fuller's work included translation, and he "converted" Bunyan into two languages, Isubu and Duala. We know little about these translations or how they were received. Available evidence does suggest, that in some respects, Fuller presented his translation in an orthodox evangelical vein. The introduction to the Duala translation (1885) expresses the hope that the text "will tend to expand [converts'] knowledge of the Christian religion so different from their former superstition."<sup>85</sup> At the time of doing the Duala translation, the only book available in the language was the "Holy Scriptures," and so, in selecting Bunyan, Fuller was again making a standard evangelical choice.

Because evidence on Fuller's translations is limited, it does not allow us detailed insight into whether he carried forward any "Jamaican" inflections of the text. We do know, however, that Fuller defined his mission vocation from a West Indian perspective and felt that he had a particular calling to return to Africa: "God intends that Africa, which has long had to bear the burdens of oppressions of all nations, shall take her place among the children of men."<sup>86</sup> He saw himself as an agent carrying "messages of love and salvation to those . . . in our fatherland who had been so long held in bondage of sin."<sup>87</sup>

As an evangelical Jamaican Baptist, Fuller would almost certainly have seen Bunyan as one of the "messages" that he was carrying to Africa, and he was indeed very proud of his translations, which feature in his autobiography and his obituary.<sup>88</sup> As a Jamaican, he had inherited traditions of the text in which characters changed race and nationality, transmuting from seventeenth-century English folk to African American and then Caribbean slaves. His Cameroonian translations of Bunyan may have aimed for a similar outcome in which his Duala Baptist converts

could read the text as a story about themselves and their struggles. Such a translation strategy would, of course, unmoor traditional conceptions of Bunyan as a "white" writer telling a "white" story. Freed of its moorings, the text could become a zone of experimentation in which identities ("Jamaican," "Cameroonian," "slave," "free," "black," "white," "African," "European," and so on) could be "tried out" and shifted around.

Seen in this way, *The Pilgrim's Progress* could become a surprisingly useful resource for negotiating the contradictions of being a black missionary in a white world. In a situation where missionaries were generally white and converts black, the position of the black missionary was ambiguous. One BMS strategy for managing this topsy-turvy environment was a particular politics of the public and the private. In terms of this tactic, black missionaries were treated as "white" in public and "black" in private. In an obituary of S. C. Gordon, a Jamaican missionary in the Congo, one of his colleagues said: "[Those who dealt with him] forgot his colour, and indeed, in the best and highest sense of the word, he was to his colleagues, as well as to officials and others, a 'white man.'"<sup>8</sup> In private, white missionaries at times expressed different opinions, railing against their colleagues, who became redefined as "black." G. K. Prince, a leader of the Jamaican mission to the Cameroon, referred in private correspondence to the West Indians as "spots and canker worms to the Society."<sup>9</sup>

Another type of response was for white missionaries to position themselves as "black." Fuller, in fact, witnessed such an episode at close range, when in 1859 a dispute arose between a hotheaded new recruit, Alexander Innis, and Alfred Saker, the senior missionary in the Cameroon. Seeking to position himself as the "quasi-black" "friend of the native," the working-class Innis accused Saker of violently assaulting African converts. In order to try and gain support, Innis wanted Fuller to come out publicly as a black missionary supporting a white colleague (Innis) against another white colleague (Saker), all on behalf of "helpless" African converts crying out for Innis's protection. Fuller demurred. In his reading of matters, the home committee would brush the event aside, saying, "'Oh, it's only th[at] black fellow again.'" Innis was dismissed from the BMS and made something of a minor career retailing the Saker saga in public forums. In later years, he attacked Fuller by playing the "class card," dubbing him "the black doll of the society . . . acting the gentleman in London and other places."<sup>10</sup>

In this world of perilously rotating identities, Fuller mostly held his tongue. In public, he remained intensely loyal to the BMS and gen-

erally only raised criticism in private. He did, however, evolve some techniques for expressing dissent publicly and these drew on the "Jamaican-Bunyan" method of inverting identities and shifting roles. An opportunity arose for Fuller to employ this strategy at an international Protestant mission conference in 1888. Here he made an intervention from the floor concerning current soap advertising:

It is said that Fuller's soap whitens, but I believe you have tried to compete with Fuller's soap in adopting Pear's soap. I have seen it put up at places that Pear's soap can make the dark skinned African white, but if they try it on me it would be labour in vain, for they would not make me a bit whiter than I am.<sup>11</sup>

Fuller was referring, of course, to a style of imperial soap advertisements in which black characters wash off their "color" to reveal a white skin underneath. This set of images in turn drew on a long-established tradition of European iconography of "washing the blackamoor white." The idea itself comes originally from Jeremiah 13:23 ("Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil?") and betokens any vain or impossible labor.<sup>12</sup>

Those in the audience who knew their Bunyan well would also have recognized a reference to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, part 2. Here, in a brief scene, we see two characters, Fool and Want-wit, washing an Ethiopian in an attempt to make him white. The more they wash, the blacker he becomes. Whereas much scholarship on *The Pilgrim's Progress* pays close attention to seventeenth-century contextual detail, relating many aspects of the book to the world from which Bunyan came, this episode has not been read to see what it can tell us about contemporary attitudes to race. Where there has been comment, it has restricted itself to allegorical interpretations, and the episode has been glossed as representing a vain attempt to give a bad person a good name (and hence any hypocritical endeavor).<sup>13</sup> As a nineteenth-century abridged version of the story puts it, "Thus shall it be with all who pretend to be what they are not."<sup>14</sup>

It is, of course, difficult to assign one meaning to what Fuller intended with his comments. He may in part have been playing "the black doll" of the mission world, by making what the audience would see as a humorous intervention. Yet, at the same time, the piece is riven with ambiguity as Fuller experiments with racial identities like counters on a board. If, for example, Fuller in fact is "white," then his "white" colleagues must be "black." They consequently need "whitening" by means

of Fuller's soap, that is, by Fuller himself. Fuller, then, becomes the "whitening" agent of the Protestant mission world. Why its "whites" may need "whitening" was made explicit by Fuller in a subsequent intervention that he made at the conference. "Brethren," he said, "the oppression and cruelties that Africa has suffered call for your sympathies; and as you have helped in her ruin in bygone days, now is the time to try and lift her from the depths to which she has been brought."<sup>6</sup> To continue in Fuller's terms, "whites" have a "black" history that needs "whitening" by an "Ethiopian." The roles of "washer" and "washed," "clean" and "dirty" need to be reassigned if Africa is to be redeemed.

To translate this back into *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the "Ethiopian" in the text should become "white" and the "white" characters "black." This shift is what translations like Fuller's precipitated. In these texts, characters generally acquired African names and at times appeared in Africanized illustrations. In pageants, performances, and illustrations, the book's "white" characters could be played (or represented) by black performers and so become "black." Such possibilities sharpened questions around one of the central contradictions of the mission enterprise, namely claims of belonging based on conversion as opposed to those based on race. In theory, evangelical Protestantism promised equality to all who converted, irrespective of background (or, in Paul's words, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female." Galatians 3:28). In practice, as aggressive forms of social Darwinism "bit" into mission thinking, boundaries of privilege were increasingly racialized. Once translated, *The Pilgrim's Progress* dramatized these concerns in vivid ways. Was this a story only about white British Protestants or could it become a story about all Protestants? If characters became African (in illustration, dramatic performance, and translated language) was Bunyan still "white"? These questions came to matter a great deal, particularly in the latter quarter of the nineteenth century when the emerging English literature lobby set out to claim Bunyan as a symbol of white Englishness, both at home and abroad. Having crossed the boundary of race, *The Pilgrim's Progress* raised profound questions about where to draw boundaries in the mission imperial domain. Bunyan was not only a story about white Britons. It was a story for all Protestants.

Through his translations, Fuller played a role in this democratizing process. His Jamaican background had prepared him for the task, equipping him with a version of Bunyan that had already been broadened in the black Atlantic.<sup>7</sup> As we shall see in chapter 10, it was a bound-

ary that those associated with the emergence of English literature sought to roll back. For these intellectuals, one of the major tasks of English literature was to provide a marker of racial and cultural distinctiveness for those in the empire. "Having" or "owning" English literature consequently became a sign of whiteness. Bunyan, who had been democratized in the black Atlantic, unsettled this picture considerably and so had to be "reeled in" and brought "home" where he could once again become unequivocally "white."

# 4

## Mata's Hermeneutic

### Internationally Made Ways of Reading Bunyan

In the days leading up to her death in 1923, Emily Lewis (third wife of Thomas Lewis) spoke often of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Her funeral was held at the Camden Road Chapel and, in the oration, Rev. George Hawker told the congregation how, on her deathbed, Emily alluded to her favorite portion of the story—Christiana in the Land of Beulah. She spoke of “how the allegory . . . accorded with her own experience.”<sup>1</sup>

This section invoked by Emily comes toward the end of the second part of the book. Beulah Land borders on heaven and acts as a celestial waiting room. Here faithful pilgrims at the end of their journeys recuperate before being summoned by a heavenly postal service to cross the River of Death. We receive detailed reports of how eight pilgrims in turn are called, we hear their last words and wishes, and then we witness each person crossing the River in their own trademark style: some pause midstream to issue last instructions, some cross over in a flash, some wade through singing, some require a helping hand, and some discover stepping stones that see them to the other side.

In invoking Beulah Land on her deathbed, Emily Lewis was practicing the well-developed art of Nonconformist dying. As the moment around which Protestant belief is arranged, Nonconformists not only invested time preparing themselves for death but also choreographed the details of their own departure. Believers were urged to think about which books they would have by their deathbed and which people they would summon.<sup>2</sup> *The Pilgrim's Progress* was recommended as “a book to live and die upon.”<sup>3</sup> One nineteenth-century commentary observed: “the descriptions of the pilgrims’ crossing the river are full of instruction and

comfort for dying believers, and have been helpful to many in looking forward to a dying day.”<sup>4</sup> The language of the final scene—“receiving a summons from Beulah Land”—had also entrenched itself as a euphemistic discourse for dying.<sup>5</sup>

Like many Nonconformist women, Emily chose to invoke the second half of the book and so to compare herself and her life to the pilgrimage of Christiana. There has, of course, been much debate on the gender meaning of Bunyan's text.<sup>6</sup> Much contemporary opinion maintains that the story of Christiana offers women only circumscribed forms of spiritual authority. The first half of the story concerns Christian and narrates his epic struggle for religious truth and interpretive authority, defined as men's business. The second half tells a story of community and church within which women must take their obedient places. This view is quite possibly one that Emily Lewis (a good Baptist woman) endorsed. But she might simultaneously have entertained other readings of the story as well. Perhaps Christiana's travels became a way of summarizing Emily's time as a missionary along with husband Thomas in northern Angola. Perhaps, like other Nonconformist women, she also identified strongly with Christiana's companion, the knight Great-heart, who defends the party against dragons, giants, and hobgoblins. Like some of her later Nonconformist female colleagues, she may have dreamed of herself becoming “Woman Greatheart” (the name of a Methodist pageant).<sup>7</sup> Similarly, she might have admired Great-heart and Christiana for their platonic yet intimate relationship and, like others, construed it as a model of marriage in which women commanded chivalrous respect.

Whatever Emily Lewis thought of these matters, it is clear that the story—both in life and death—offered her a way of talking about the delicate and unspoken dimensions of her life. Many other Protestants applied the text to their lives in similar ways, and throughout the nineteenth century, as we have seen, Nonconformists used the book's allegorical dimension to put their personal spiritual feelings into words. A Scottish pastor reported that his congregants conscripted the language of Bunyan to “give expression to their personal Christian experience.” One man, suffering from doubt and despair declared, “I am the man in the iron cage.” He refers to the well-known tableau that Christian observes in the Interpreter's House. Here Christian sees a sighing figure, eyes downcast, sitting in an iron cage. Christian engages the man in conversation and learns that he is a “man of despair,” unable to flee his cage. He once had faith and was a devout believer. However, he turned to a licentious life and was then rejected by God. In comparing himself to this image,

the Scottish congregant taps into an accessible field of reference and finds a way of talking about his depression and doubt, while possibly hinting at some unsavory episodes in his past life. Another of the Scottish minister's flock underwent a dangerous operation that might have robbed her of her speech. After the operation, the pastor visited her in hospital. Turning to him, she whispered, "The jewels are all safe!" Her phrase refers to a scene in which the character Little Faith is robbed. The assailants make off with his spending money but fail to find his jewels—his belief in Christ. The woman in hospital uses the image to signal that both her voice and her faith have survived the operation.<sup>8</sup>

Like this woman, many readers wove the text into the inner recesses of their lives. They were able to do this by summoning up a widely shared and deep knowledge of the text. This implicit understanding hung like a backdrop to much Nonconformist discourse and could easily be activated through a phrase or name from the text. Such words could in turn ignite a moment of becoming a Bunyan character like Christiana in Beulah Land, or the Man in the Iron Cage.

This method of reading in which one likened oneself to a character was not only found on Camden Road. The case of Mata, a Kongo-speaker and head porter for the BMS at San Salvador provides an instructive example. His association with the mission society dated back to the earliest arrival of the BMS in the Kongo Kingdom in the 1870s and Mata accompanied Baptist notables on their initial itinerations. He also led many of the "pioneering" BMS explorations into the interior, including the dash to "discover" the Stanley Pools in 1881, where they earned second prize (the French explorer, de Brazza came in first; the BMS, second; and the much ballyhooed Stanley—ultimately the eponymous winner—traipsed in third).<sup>9</sup> In July 1899, Thomas Lewis asked Mata to act as head porter for an expedition to Zombo, a highland region seventy miles east of the Kongo Kingdom. During the journey, the party encountered difficult terrain. Thomas Lewis explains:

Our troubles increased considerably when we got into a swamp . . . all of us made many slips and disappeared over our heads in the muddy water. There were plenty of papyrus to cling to, so we were all able to draw ourselves in eel-like fashion to a place of safety. At one point, just as I was reappearing after a slip into the mud, I saw Mata, who was supposed to help me, standing on a tuft of papyrus laughing as if it were great fun. He wanted to know from me if this was Christian's 'Slough of

Despond'! He had only just emerged from a dip himself, and his face was all slime, and he named himself 'Pliable,' which was far from being true. After about two and a half hours we got out of the mire 'on that side which was farther from our own house,' and looked in vain for the man who carried our dry clothes.<sup>10</sup>

In this passage, Mata interprets Bunyan's text by comparing himself to one of its characters, Pliable, a neighbor of Christian. With his associate Obstinate, Pliable initially tries to dissuade Christian from setting out on his journey. Pliable, is however, won over by Christian's determination and, along with Obstinate, accompanies the protagonist briefly on his journey until they both stumble into the Slough of Despond. A disgusted Pliable berates Christian for misleading him, scrambles out of the bog, and heads for home leaving Christian to press on to the bank "on that side of the Slough that was still farther from his own house."<sup>11</sup>

Emily and Mata, then, both employ similar textual strategies that involve likening themselves to characters in the story. How might we figure the relationship between their two reading methods? Are they the same thing in that Emily's is the "original" practice and Mata's the "be-lated" copy (despite being chronologically prior)? Or, to put it in more contemporary terms, does Mata "subvert" or "rewrite" Emily's original? Indeed, are these terms even useful? Might the relationship between these two reading strategies not be more interesting than these tired scenarios suggest? Might these two intellectual strategies not be more unpredictably wrought in the tangled web of the Congo and Camden Road?

One may argue that the Baptist missionaries were the most powerful players, and it is consequently their methods of reading that prevail. This sense of mission prerogative, for example, is apparent in Lewis's extract about Mata as Pliable, an anecdote that exemplifies a set of standard mission conceits for portraying the "gauche" convert. The reader back home is provided with a familiar point of reference—*The Pilgrim's Progress*—and shown a naive but sincere convert striving to use the text. Thomas Lewis—as knowing missionary—winks at his metropolitan audience who chuckle indulgently at Mata's childish comparisons while admiring Lewis's level-headedness. The clownish convert plays foil to the missionary's sturdy good sense.

One response to such episodes is to dismiss them as so much mission ballyhoo. Indeed, how do we even know that Mata in fact said

what Lewis claimed? Lewis, it seems, scripts the scene on his own terms. He has "voice" and Mata has none. Lewis writes the story. Mata, the head porter, carries the burden. There is little more to say on the matter.

Yet, if we look beyond this immediate extract, the picture becomes more intricate. Comparing oneself to Bunyan characters was something of a pastime among porters on such trips. Elsewhere in this text, Lewis tells us of a guide who led the party miles out of the way.<sup>12</sup> The porters on the expedition named him Mr. Talkative, no doubt because like his counterpart in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, he too misled people. The porters and Mata, then, were not averse to entertaining themselves by "trying on" different characters.

It was a game of deceptive simplicity. Take, for instance, Mata's self-comparison with the character Pliable. On one level, the comment could be quite straightforward. Pliable is the character who, along with Christian, sinks into the Slough of Despond. Likewise, Lewis and Mata stumble into a swamp and Mata may simply have been trying to make light of a tense moment. Yet, the original episode in *The Pilgrim's Progress* presents a number of complications. Pliable, as we mentioned earlier, is someone who has been persuaded against his better judgment to undertake a difficult journey. The expedition to Zombo—to establish a new mission—was exceedingly dangerous. Zombo had for centuries been a slave-raiding zone for the Kongo Kingdom. A party coming from that kingdom would not be well received. If it included men in trousers, who would be taken as Portuguese or Arab, fears of slave-raiding would only increase and the party would be unlikely to survive. Indeed, the first time Lewis set off for Zombo in June 1898, Mata flatly refused to go. Only after Lewis threatened to replace him as head porter did he reluctantly agree. As matters turned out, everyone survived the first expedition. A second was undertaken in July 1899 and it is from this journey that Lewis's swamp episode comes.<sup>13</sup> Both journeys were exploratory trips with a view to establishing a new mission at Quibocolo that Lewis ultimately headed. The mission proved to be less than a success and by 1912 had enrolled only ten converts.<sup>14</sup>

Mata's comparison can be read, then, on various levels. Most obviously, it diffuses a number of tensions by acknowledging everyone's folly—beginning with his own. Like Pliable in the text, he tries to persuade the protagonist not to undertake an apparently suicidal mission. However, as matters turn out in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian is, of course, right and achieves his goal. Like Pliable, Mata thought Lewis would not succeed in his expedition and, like Pliable, he was wrong. But

at the same time, by taking on the role of someone who warned against over-hasty ventures, Mata comments on Lewis's pigheadedness in pursuing a mission venture that could never work. Anticipating many twentieth-century critics, Mata's comparisons raise questions around who the hero of the text really is. Christian is nominally the "hero" in so far as he is the main character. But as critics have suggested, he is a "wobbly" protagonist.<sup>15</sup> Right up until the very end, he is prone to being led astray and could backslide at any moment. He needs constant guidance and propping up from stronger and more experienced characters like Evangelist and Interpreter. Like other African Christians, Mata uses *The Pilgrim's Progress* to question the distribution of spiritual authority in mission stations. Is Lewis really the hero? Does he really know where he is going? Also, if Lewis is Christian, then who is Evangelist? Who, in the mission venture, is guiding whom? This question became ever more pressing on the Zombo expedition, where, from existing accounts, it is clear that Mata did much of the negotiating and proselytizing.<sup>16</sup>

So far, of course, Mata's reading strategy is indistinguishable from Emily's or Fuller's, which we examined in the previous chapter. In all instances, the text becomes a kind of checker-board. On it, one could "try on" different characters and take up different positions. This method of teaching Bunyan—and indeed other texts—was widely used in Protestant mission stations. Although not set in Africa, this description of using Bunyan slides in Palestine/Lebanon in 1899 gives an insight into how converts or would-be converts were encouraged to think of themselves as characters in Bunyan's story:

the schoolroom was packed full of people, men, women and children. . . . Our catechist . . . explained the pictures and brought out the story of redemption very well. A few days later we went to Zaneb [a Druze girl of twelve] and she was full of the pictures. Those of Christian seem specially to have struck her. His burden, the losing of it at the cross and his crossing the river were her chief favourites. . . . It was now quite easy to tell her to put herself in Christian's place and her burden would fall off too, and so on. [After a second showing] the impress of the first night was deepened and in subsequent visits she often alluded to Christian's experience.<sup>17</sup>

Closely allied to illustration was the role of pageant, tableau, and performance, a form routinely used on missions. Productions of *The Pilgrim's Progress* were common and, in these, students acted out the story and

thus briefly became the characters.<sup>18</sup> These tableau-like forms often functioned like living illustrations and possibly furnished a forum where participants began to think of creating Africanized illustrations for the text. As we shall see in chapter 8, in two cases these illustrations took the form of photographs in which prominent members of the mission took the parts of the characters in the text. To a local audience, these individuals had quite literally “become” the characters in the text. As chapter 8 discusses, such conjunctures opened up new possibilities for reading the text as a “biography” of those appearing in its illustration.

A further factor promoting this method of reading was the ways in which the text was fractally reproduced, as we have seen, in media like magic lantern slides, wallcharts (figure 8), postcards (figure 7), and pageants,<sup>19</sup> a method in turn made possible by the episodic and hence friable nature of the text. Like many allegories, the relationship between scenes in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is not strongly causal or driven by “normal” rules of plausibility.<sup>20</sup> There is, of course, the overarching framework of the journey, but this simply acts as a backdrop to a series of episodes, many of which could be extracted, as mission forms of teaching the text showed, and disseminated as freestanding items. Part of the missionaries’ strategy was no doubt to reassemble these units at some later point, and they were clear on how the scenes related to each other. For them, the “string” on which these various “beads” could be threaded was the stages of Christian spiritual experience and growth. This point is illustrated by an account from an LMS missionary, David Carnegie, who describes how he taught the text to a class of Ndebele enquirers in present-day Zimbabwe:

Some fourteen anxious inquirers came forward of their own accord asking me to explain to them the way of salvation. I formed them into a class, which, with one or two exceptions, has been going on ever since. . . . *The Pilgrim's Progress* has been my text book, and a more suitable one I think could not be found for giving these people a clear conception of what the Christian life really means. The whole outline of the book, with its simple illustrations, has been more or less explained to my class, and we hope the words of wisdom and power have touched some of their hearts. We have had over four months at this work weekly, and it does my heart good to see how one or two of them appreciate and understand my explanations of the various stages of progress in the Christian life.<sup>21</sup>

From this description, it is clear that Carnegie taught the book in weekly “rehearsals” using illustrations to “summarize” the various episodes in the story. (These classes were done in Ndebele at the time Carnegie was completing a translation of the text with his wife and assistant. These class discussions no doubt helped to suggest at least some phrases and forms of discourse for the final version.) Carnegie is very clear on how these various episodes hang together: they are to be collated as “the various stages of progress in the Christian life.” However, there is no guarantee that this is how the enquirers saw them. They could have extracted individual episodes that interested them, particularly since the story was related orally. In local oral narrative traditions, episodes can be shifted from one story to another or added and subtracted (rather, in fact, as Bunyan himself did in his various versions of the text).<sup>22</sup> Given that, in this case, *The Pilgrim's Progress* appears to be the very first Christian text they encounter in the mission, they might have regarded it as important enough to preserve the original sequence that Carnegie set out. Yet, whatever the case, Carnegie’s method of teaching encouraged his inquirers to see themselves as characters, either in the whole story or in its parts.

This mode of “being someone else” was an interpretive technique that characterized much teaching on evangelical mission stations. That Mata derived his reading techniques from such mission teaching is beyond doubt. Mata had had contact with missionaries since the late 1870s and, although the Kongo *Pilgrim's Progress* only appeared in print in April 1897 (two years before the expedition), parts of the book were disseminated verbally and “rehearsed” by means of magic lantern slides, sermons, Sunday school classes, choir services, and the like.<sup>23</sup> The Kongo Protestant community was small and close knit, so Mata would undoubtedly have encountered the story.

Yet, at the same time, there were other sources of interpretation on which Mata drew. His primary interpretive community would have been other Kongo Protestants, who, as the scholar Mpiku has shown, evolved their own reading strategies.<sup>24</sup> These, as Mpiku argues, entailed formulating novel ways of reading on the back of traditional literary techniques. One strategy was to “embezzle” (*détourner*) the oral story or “folktale” (*nsamu* or *kimpa*) by “extorting” or “extracting” (*tirer*) a new Christian message or meaning from the tale.<sup>25</sup> Mpiku cites the following story as an example of this method. A father sends his four sons to hunt and demands that they bring back many birds. The first two sons construct their traps badly and return empty handed to the village. The third son works diligently and shrewdly and catches many birds while the



fourth son whistles away his time. The father rewards the third son and punishes the rest. Traditionally, the story was taken to underline the need for filial obedience and reward for personal attainment. Pauli Dikoko, a member of the Swedish Mission (on the north bank of the Congo River and about sixty miles from San Salvador), reworked this story for the mission station periodical *Minsamu Miyenga* by attaching new meanings to the anecdote. In his view, the father stands for God; the forest where the sons hunt represents the assembly of nations that have already been evangelized; the third son is the evangelist who accomplishes his task by following God's commandments; the other brothers are those who reject their pastoral calling.<sup>26</sup>

✓ Another Protestant convert, Davidi Malangidila similarly "embezzled" a story, "The Slaves who Became Apes." In this tale, a group of slaves, seeking to escape their perpetual suffering transpose themselves from a human to an animal species and become apes. In terms of the story's traditional moral economy, this switch is seen to be cowardly since the slaves run away from, rather than face up to, their difficulties. For Malangidila, however, the story carries a different meaning. In his view, the slaves represent Christians who have fled Satan's world in order to seek shelter in God's kingdom.<sup>27</sup>

Mission periodicals printed such traditional stories but with their new Christian exegeses appended. A well-known proverb separated the story from its explanation: "If you use a proverb, you must be able to explain it."<sup>28</sup> With this proverb, the Kongo Protestants proclaim the superiority of their new Christian analogical method. The interpretation that follows after the proverb is a demonstration that those who have "spoken" or written the story can explain it properly. The proverb, relying on indirection, can also politely imply that non-Protestant practitioners tell stories but cannot explain them properly or systematically.

5 In using such methods of "the Congo parable" (as such stories became known in English mission discourse),<sup>29</sup> these early evangelists weave together the "folktale" and the proverb and redirect their value and power toward a new enterprise. They also did much the same with the dream. Dreams had always been popular and were interpreted as predictions of future events. Kongo catechists began collecting, writing down, and publishing records of dreams in mission periodicals. These were then explicated as Christian allegorical visions in which each element in the dream was linked analogically to some aspect of Christian belief.<sup>30</sup>

The new Kongo Protestant interpretive matrix is made from grafting together the "folktale," the parable, the dream, and the proverb.

In so doing, several intellectual fields are aligned in new ways and generic boundaries are redrawn. The "folktale" and the Bible, for example, become intellectual neighbors, both sources of hidden meaning that can be revealed by using the same method of interpretation in which stories are extrapolated in a parable-like fashion. Both sets of texts ("folktale" and Bible) are applied in the same way and their shared methods of interpretation confer on them a kinship. This idea of approaching the Bible through "folktale" is, of course, very Bunyanesque. As much criticism has shown, Bunyan, prior to his conversion, was an ardent consumer of ballad, popular narrative, and folktale. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is consequently a mixture of romance and biblical form in which the latter "disciplines" the former. Harold Golder has demonstrated this point in relation to the episode of Giant Despair in which Christian and Hopeful trespass on the Giant's land and are imprisoned.<sup>31</sup> In this episode, Bunyan takes several folktale elements (namely the outline of the well-known story, Jack the Giant Killer, and the folktale formula of the two brothers) and freights these with doctrinal "ballast." This doctrine is introduced by means of a series of metaphors associated with religious melancholy. For example, the by-way that leads Christian and Hopeful from the narrow way and into Giant Despair's land betokens a turning aside from the true road into a side road of indulgence. Christian and Hopeful are prevented from returning to the true road by driving rain that mounts into a small flood, a symbol of doubt and despair that at times threaten to overwhelm believers.<sup>32</sup> Through this doctrinal "ballast," Bunyan is able to contain the worldliness of the folktale and turn it toward more spiritually edifying ends.

However, at times, the attempt to import doctrinal issues is not so subtle and, in many instances, Bunyan inserts his "theology" insistently and "raw" into the text. For example, in his discussion with Mr. Talkative, Faithful delivers himself of an extensive lecture on the relationship of faith and works and the conviction of sin as a necessary precondition to salvation.<sup>33</sup> As we have seen in the previous chapter, Kele readers circumvented these dollops of theology and foregrounded the narrative "skeleton" of the story. Under such treatment, the story loses its ideological padding and the narrative bones of the story stand out.

In seeking to expunge the theology, African readers were not necessarily attempting to make Bunyan less religious. Indeed, they could have been doing the opposite. By taking out the theology, they could in fact have been making the book more amenable to religious exegesis. As we have seen for Kongo Protestants, a precondition for religious analysis



was a "clean" story with the interpretation happening outside the boundary of the narrative. Attempts, then, to "abridge" the theology, could in fact have originated in this form of exegesis that presupposed an uncluttered story as a necessary prerequisite for hermeneutic investigation. This strategy of interpretation also serves to make the story more allegorical. As Kaufmann has pointed out, *The Pilgrim's Progress* is not consistently allegorical and often breaks out in lengthy "literal-didactic" excursions.<sup>34</sup> It was precisely these sections that the Kele and Kongo Protestants weeded out.

Such interpretive techniques proved to be enduringly and tenaciously popular among Kongo and Kele Protestants. William Millman, who worked at the mission station Yakusu, reported in the early 1900s that he had translated forty of Aesop's fables, but burnt the lot after being questioned by a young man if they were God's word.<sup>35</sup> Millman interpreted the comment as ignorance on the questioner's part, which it could well have been. But it might also have been an interesting generic classification at work in which a fable and the Bible belong together because they both use similar literary and explanatory techniques.

By burning his translations, Millman attempted to withstand popular opinion and taste. Many missionaries of necessity gave in and attempted their own forms of "embezzlement" by colonizing existing African forms. Particularly from the post-First World War period when ideas of "de-Westernizing" Christianity became more widespread, mission thinking and practice produced a rich stream of "mimicry." Jesus, for example, became an "African storyteller."<sup>36</sup> Missionaries became "Christ's medicine men," while Charles Wesley found himself described as an "ancestor in the tribe of Christ."<sup>37</sup> Missionaries received advice on how to make their forms look "old and familiar," or, as another mission commentator said, "There are other ways in which we can be NATIVE. We can learn their proverbs and love their ancient history and bring it into our talks with them."<sup>38</sup> This mimicry came full circle when in the 1950s, BMS missionaries indicated that there was an urgent need for a book of "African Fables with Christian Applications."<sup>39</sup> What they were requesting was "the Congo parable," a genre originally pioneered by Kongo catechists in the nineteenth century. It was a form that Mata had clearly mastered. Just prior to the departure of the second Zombo trip in July 1899, the new church at San Salvador was inaugurated. There were extensive celebrations with many sermons, speeches, eulogies, and prayers. Mata was one of the speakers. After telling a travel story of a previous

expedition, he concluded with a number of "Congo parables," which Gwen Lewis found "entirely incomprehensible to Europeans."<sup>40</sup>

Mata, then, practiced different Kongo Protestant reading strategies. One of these involves the "Congo parable" technique in which a folk story is taken (or extracted from other texts) and then subject to Christian exegesis. It is, of course, very similar to the exegesis applied to parables, but its distinctiveness is to subject non-Christian material to this form of interpretation. British Baptists at San Salvador likewise brought with them a range of reading strategies. With regard to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, one of these was an inherently dramatic technique of reading in which one imagines oneself as a character. From the report of the Zombo trip, we know that Mata added this method to his hermeneutic repertoire. We also know that British Baptists were aware of the "Congo parable." Gwen Lewis might initially have found them incomprehensible, but from the early 1900s, the form was being reflected in the *Missionary Herald* and in BMS publications.<sup>41</sup> It was presumably one of the Congo forms that Camden Roaders likewise followed with interest. The Baptist call in the 1950s for a book of "African Fables with Christian Applications" was a belated recognition of the importance and durability of the form. Baptists had finally adopted Mata's hermeneutic as their own.

**John Bunyan Luthuli***African Mission Elites and The Pilgrim's Progress*

In the introduction to his Xhosa translation of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Uhambo lo Mhambi* (1868), Tiyo Soga, a missionary of the United Presbyterian Church in the Eastern Cape, in present-day South Africa, begins by welcoming the reader and provides some advice on how to approach the text.

Folks! Here is a book for you to examine. The book tells the story of a traveler who walks the road which many of you would like to travel. Accompany the traveler whilst slowly trying to make acquaintance with each other—stopping to take rest whilst listening to things the traveler tells and reports to you; move along with the traveler to his destination, the end of his journey.<sup>1</sup>

The advice is fairly specific: take things slowly, do not rush, read carefully and thoughtfully. Stop and think about what you have read. Read all the way through to the end and do not skip anything along the way. Take time to know the main character and become his friend. The advice is recognizably evangelical and instructs the readers on how to place themselves in the text.

Giving advice on how to read was something that Soga did quite often. In 1862 in the editorial of a new newspaper, *Indaba*, he gave specific instructions on how to read the publication.

Those who have no pocket money should go to the forest and bring home dry wood which will be good as fuel so that the head of the family on newspaper day when the fire-wood is

burning well will lie on his back on the upper side of the hut and place one leg over the other and proceed to open the newspaper saying, 'My family, will you please listen to the news.'<sup>2</sup>

Elsewhere in the editorial he provides further—but more implicit—advice on how to read. He likens the newspaper to a visitor and outstanding conversationalist. He also compares it to a corn-pit that provides nourishment, or a container where treasures and valuable things are kept. Both of these metaphors supply readers with suggestions of how to approach this new medium of communication.

The advice to readers in Soga's introduction to *The Pilgrim's Progress* is likewise multifaceted. Readers are invited to situate themselves in multiple audiences. On the one hand, they are urged to see themselves as part of an international evangelical community while, on the other, being reminded of the text's local application. In terms of the first prerogative, Soga's introduction shares many of the standard features of evangelical editions of Bunyan. We hear, for example, that this book comes second only to the Bible. Like all evangelical editions, this one includes a minibiography of Bunyan ("an artisan who specialized in making buckets") that condenses his experiences as set out in *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and traces the arc of his conversion from reprobate sinner ("he sinned as if he wanted to get to the root of all sin") to firm believer. We hear how he becomes a preacher and how he was imprisoned. The reader is informed that "there are many nations that have read this book in their language although these were not known during the lifetime of the author." The reader joins an international community marked by their belief in the word of God and their friendship with John Bunyan: "In all the nations through which the word of God has found its way, there is no place where John Bunyan is without friends, friend who would be grateful to him if he were to rise from the grave." Through Bunyan, readers may be converted and, in so doing, join a worldwide public and insert themselves in a global history.<sup>3</sup>

But Soga does not only address his readers as members of a world religion. He also speaks to them as Xhosa Christians having to navigate a tangled world of local politics. This imperative has left a number of traces in the introduction. For example, in discussing Bunyan's delinquent youth, Soga writes: "As a boy, he was an incurable idler—a master of dirty games like cursing people with property, use of ob-

scenities, lying and criticizing all that is good." As his autobiography makes clear, Bunyan did indeed commit all manner of wickedness.<sup>4</sup> Cursing those with property was not one. In the Eastern Cape, however, this "sin," which called attention to those who were not redistributing their wealth as tradition required, was well known: to curse the wealthy was to show evidence of envy and possibly even of practicing witchcraft against the propertied. Such murmurings were often directed at "hoarders" who "stingily" refused to redistribute their property as social custom demanded.<sup>5</sup> Soga's father had been one such person. "Old Soga," as he was known, had been among the earliest converts to Christianity. He maintained very strong ties to the chieftaincy and had eight wives, but, at the same time, he gathered around him a small band of likeminded men who took advantage of the new religion in order to accumulate property, unimpeded by older constraints.<sup>6</sup> On occasion, Old Soga—and possibly his sons—must have borne the brunt of such "envious" cursing.

In alerting his readers against sin, Soga sets out both evangelically defined "universal" transgression and then more locally defined variants: in this case, the "sin" of the idle intimidating the industrious. To Xhosa Protestants, such threats (which combined forms of "heathen" witchcraft with criticism of their aspirant lifestyle) were especially repellent and fully deserving of being defined as "sin-worthy." Having read Soga's introduction, a Xhosa Christian, who initially formed part of a tiny minority, might be strengthened to stand firm against such "bullying."

The introduction offers readers several other such routes into local affairs. For new converts living in a para-literate environment, aspects of Bunyan's life would have provided points of identification. Such readers might have noted that in Bunyan's household "books were not many because both [his and his wife's] family were poor." Similarly, converts in a situation where the spoken word carried great weight would have understood how the words of a sermon "pierced through his heart and . . . overwhelmed [him] with fear." The notion that Bunyan had been upbraided by a "female witch" may also have had local resonances, as did the fact that "he gave up friendship with all heathens" after he heard God's call. Satan also tempts Bunyan in a locally recognizable form: "he tried all the proverbs in his power to confuse, stop and distract this servant of God."

In his introduction, Soga suggests that people can be united not only by what they read but, crucially, how they read it. Not only might

the content of the text assist believers and create new ones but common methods of interpreting the text could also weave people together. Soga could have had little idea of how successful this strategy was to be, since he died a few short years after the translation appeared. However, as the critic A. C. Jordan has noted, Soga's translation was to exercise an influence on written Xhosa literature comparable to that of the Authorized Version on English literary history.<sup>8</sup> His translation, as well as its English original, was to form a powerful theme in the lives of the African elite in the Eastern Cape.

One of the major problems confronting this elite was the routes it was to forge into a modernity from which many wished to exclude it. On the one hand, members of the mission elite had to distinguish themselves against a chiefly class and to invent new forms of authority for themselves. On the other, they chafed under white-dominated mission institutions, subject to the mixed message of nineteenth-century Protestantism, which preached equality of the spirit but seldom of the body. Beyond the mission and chiefly world, the African elite faced the acrid racism of the settler world, ever ready to condemn the "educated native" for wishing to rise above his feudally ordained station. One pressing need in such circumstances was to fashion a public sphere through which an emerging elite might rehearse and refine a self-definitional repertoire of ideas, images, and discourses.<sup>9</sup>

These issues were the sources of endless discussion around the themes of betterment, progress, improvement, "civilization," and so on. The landscape of *The Pilgrim's Progress* was to provide one site in which these debates were pursued. Dominated by the spine of the journey, the story became an alembic that could distill these broader debates and provide an image fluid enough to accommodate very different ideas of where one may be headed. The mnemonic landscape of the book, experienced again and again by numerous audiences in a plethora of media, could in Jürgen Habermas's words, "condense [flows of communication] into public opinion."<sup>10</sup> The image of a familiar landscape dominated by a burdened man on a journey could collate a dispersed audience into a purposive public united by a sense of going forward, even if the destination imagined varied considerably.

This chapter examines how the Eastern Cape elite in South Africa came to use the text in this way. We begin by tracing the story of the Xhosa text's translation. We then attempt to construct a history of how it was read by examining the reading methods that were forged by both pupils and teachers at Lovedale, the alma mater of most of the Eastern

Cape elite. Finally, we examine how the African elite used *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a political resource between the 1880s and 1940s, the heyday of the text's influence.

On 21 November 1866, Tiyo Soga noted in his journal: "Quarter past nine o'clock, night.—Finished, through the goodness of Almighty God, the translation of the first part of Pilgrim's Progress, my fingers aching with writing." To a colleague, he wrote:

You will be glad to hear that I have got the length of having finished the translation of the Pilgrim's Progress in Kafir [nineteenth-century term for Xhosa]. It is being printed at Lovedale. We applied to the Religious Tract Society for their woodcuts, so as to have it illustrated, and they cheerfully granted our request. I long to see the reception of this noble work by our native Christians, as well as by our people who can read. We publish only the first part of it, and it is all that is finished, until we see how it takes among the people. The reception will indicate whether or not I should complete it. It will be something new for our people. I translated a large portion of it when a student in Scotland; but, as then translated, the Kafir of it would have spoiled the work.<sup>11</sup>

Characteristically for a mission translation, Soga's Xhosa version was done between several points in an international evangelical arena. The first of these was Glasgow, the fiercely evangelical "Gospel City" where Soga trained as a minister in the United Presbyterian Church in the mid-1850s. The second site was the Tyumie Valley in the Eastern Cape, Soga's birthplace and, since 1799, the focus of the earliest mission endeavors in the African interior and the most heavily missionized spot in the inland subcontinent.

These two points anchored a Xhosa-Scottish evangelical world in which Soga grew up and into which his translated text would subsequently flow. Soga himself was born in 1831 against a background of bloody frontier colonial dispossession as the British-controlled Cape Colony sought to conquer the adjoining and independent territory of the Xhosa. His father, Old Soga, as we have seen, was a modernizing traditionalist. He enthusiastically adopted new agricultural methods and cast off customary forms of redistribution. Yet, at the same time, he had eight wives, acted as a councilor to the Xhosa paramount, Sandile, and on at

least one occasion took up arms against the encroaching British colonial regime. His children were funneled toward a more narrowly modern future, and he packed them off for secondary schooling to the nearby Lovedale Missionary Institution, which had been opened by the Glasgow Missionary Society in 1841. Tiyo entered Lovedale in 1844, at the age of twelve, but only two years later, in 1846, he and the staff had to flee as the Tyumie Valley was once again engulfed in war. Soga was taken by the Lovedale principal, William Govan to Edinburgh to complete his schooling. He returned in 1848 and taught for a few precarious years before again fleeing another frontier war. This time he went to Glasgow where he was ordained in 1856. He returned in 1857 with his Scottish wife, Janet Burnside, and took up his position on the Gwali station in the Tyumie Valley where he and his family stayed until 1868. They then moved further into the interior to the station, Tutura, where Soga died in 1871.<sup>12</sup>

According to contemporary reports, Soga's translation was "everywhere welcomed."<sup>13</sup> The quality of the translation was praised: "he has adapted the shades of meaning peculiar to the Caffre [Xhosa] language to the niceties of English ideas." The same reviewer also noted that "the meaning of the text has been most forcibly and strikingly given in expressive native idiomatic form." Another reviewer pointed out that the language is "simple . . . and terse" and characterized the translation as "chaste and classical."<sup>14</sup> Unusually for a mission translation, the book was not abridged and the entire first part was translated (the second part being done by Soga's son, John Henderson, in 1929). The doctrinal parts were precisely rendered, no easy task for a translator working with a recently minted Christian terminology and an unsteady orthography.

The text soon became a great success and went through countless editions. It is still in press today. Its popularity is, of course, largely attributable to the quality of Soga's translation and his own stature as a revered intellectual, preacher, and the first Xhosa ordained minister. However, at the same time, part of its appeal may also be due to the fact that, like the Zulu translation, the book had already cleared a space for itself by the time Soga's translation arrived (although Soga does note that the book would be "something new").<sup>15</sup> The text itself probably first entered the region in 1799 with the Hollander, Johannes Van der Kemp, the first missionary to proselytize in Xhosa country. Van der Kemp was a Bunyan fan and may have disseminated bits of the story and its illustrations via his own broken Xhosa or that of his Khoi (Bushmen) assistants who had long lived on the fringes of Xhosa society.<sup>16</sup> In addition to Van

der Kemp's assistants, there were also independent Khoi evangelists sent by the LMS from Cape Town, who entered the region from the very early 1800s.<sup>17</sup> They proselytized in Dutch and, in all likelihood, would have been familiar with Dutch versions of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, either in its full or abridged tract form.<sup>18</sup>

Evidence of some Bunyan presence in Xhosa society prior to Soga's translation comes from the figure of Sifuba-Sibanzi (Broad-chest). Van der Kemp was a retired military captain and favored the military metaphor. He may consequently have popularized the figure of Great-heart.<sup>19</sup> (In all likelihood, he also drew on Bunyan's *The Holy War*, a text of an epic battle between the forces of Diabolus/Satan and the city, Mansoul. The story is crowded with armed soldiers like Captain Resistance and Captain Conviction.) One person who heard Van der Kemp and/or his assistants preach was Ntsikana, subsequently to become the great Xhosa prophet and saint. In some of his visions, Sifuba-Sibanzi appears as a Christ-like figure and the term today is a common praise name for Jesus.<sup>20</sup> The provenance of the figure could equally be drawn from Xhosa oral narrative tradition where Sifuba-Sibanzi appears as a young chief with a wide chest made of "glittering metal that shone in the sun."<sup>21</sup> These two sets of images, namely that of Great-heart and those from Xhosa oral tradition, may have mapped themselves onto each other.

In the millenarian predictions of Nongqawuse, Sifuba-Sibanzi also appeared. In 1856 this teenage girl prophesied that the dead ancestors would arise. In preparation, all Xhosa were to kill their cattle and destroy their grain in expectation of the day when two suns would rise and the cattle and grain would be reinstated in abundant quantities. These instructions had been brought to her by two spirits who presented themselves as the messengers of Sifuba-Sibanzi and Napakade (the Eternal One).

Significant numbers of Xhosa-speakers heeded the injunction. The resulting devastation and famine accelerated colonial dispossession. Jeff Peires, the major historian of this episode, indicates that Sifuba-Sibanzi draws on both Xhosa and Christian traditions. The form of the name is "typical of the sort of heroic apostrophe which fits in as well with Xhosa praise poetry as with Christian moral tales in the vein of *Pilgrim's Progress*."<sup>22</sup> John Knox Bokwe, like Soga, a Lovedale alumnus and an early documenter of Ntsikana's life, also likens Sifuba-Sibanzi to Bunyan's Great-heart.<sup>23</sup>

When it appeared then in 1868, Soga's translation could enter a

landscape that had already been prepared for it. Through the circulation of bits of the story in Xhosa and Dutch by Van der Kemp and the Khoi evangelists, motifs of the story opened up spaces of recognition into which Soga's text could subsequently flow.

Lovedale Missionary Institution was one of the subcontinent's Bunyan epicenters. The institution was run by Scottish Presbyterians for whom Bunyan was a revered and theologically significant figure. *The Pilgrim's Progress* had had a long history in Scottish Presbyterianism and had been present since the seventeenth century, when it was strongly woven into the Calvinist traditions of covenanting.<sup>24</sup> Bunyan's theology had also played a decisive part in the Scottish evangelical revival, which conferred a distinctive identity on the middle classes (or would-be middle classes) and positioned them vis-à-vis the older landed classes "above" and the working classes "below."<sup>25</sup> The book's emphasis on perseverance, dedication, and spiritual discipline could adumbrate the value system of middle-class evangelicals by casting a critical shadow on the indiscipline of the poor and the laxity of the landed classes. It was also this evangelicalism that had fueled the Disruption of 1843, which split the Established Church of Scotland, the evangelicals breaking away to form the Free Church of Scotland.<sup>26</sup> It was under their mission wing that Lovedale fell after 1843.

Students entering Lovedale were consequently to encounter an environment that was Bunyan saturated and they were to meet him in both Xhosa and English in an array of forums. These included primary school readers, secondary school English literature classes, examination papers and essays, sermons, the events and activities of the Students' Christian Association (SCA), school plays, debating contests, and newspapers.<sup>27</sup> What kinds of reading strategies did students acquire in these various forums and how did these interact with the techniques of interpretation they brought with them from home?

With regard to the reading strategies students brought with them from home, two related techniques are worth singling out. The first of these derived from Protestant religious instruction that most students, particularly by the late 1800s, would have encountered in some form prior to entering Lovedale. The second arose from the world of oral literature. In relation to the first, religious education relies heavily on teaching concepts allegorically. Take, for example, the following instance of how Tiyo Soga conveyed the ideas of Christianity to two

Xhosa enquirers. Soga recorded his interaction with the two men in his diary:

the ideas of the narrow way and the narrow gate and of the broad gate, impressed their minds and lead to a continuation of some interest. They said they liked the narrow way and they never knew that they were in any other—in fact they were in the narrow way—they asked what does a person do who is in the broad way and what does a person do, who is in the narrow way.<sup>28</sup>

In this evangelically derived technique, the inquirers are encouraged to insert themselves in a landscape, that of the Broad and Narrow Way, an image extensively disseminated in the Protestant mission world.<sup>29</sup> They are also asked to perform certain allegorical translations whereby both the broad and the narrow way are interpreted as particular lifestyles.

This ready adoption of an allegorical method by both Soga and his interlocutors could also have its roots in literary methodologies nurtured in riddle and "folktale." Many riddle forms, for example, are mini-allegories in which the listener unknots an enigma by proposing a one-to-one correspondence between the text and the world. Take, for example, this riddle: "I have a sack full of corn. The corn is thrown away and the sack is cooked and eaten." The answer is the stomach of a ruminating animal cooked as tripe. The interlocutor must identify the stomach as the sack and its contents as the corn.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, some riddles require their performers to draw a parallel between a person and the qualities of a bird. Jordan gives the following example:

CH(ALLENGER): Do you know the birds?

PRO(POSER): I do know the birds.

CH: What bird do you know?

PRO: I know the wagtail.

CH: What about him?

PRO: That he is a shepherd.

CH: Why so?

PRO: Because he is often to be seen amongst the flock.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, the owl is like a sorcerer "because he always comes out in the depths of the night to kill other animals." The female dove is a jealous wife "because she never allows her husband to go out without her." The

white-necked raven is likened to a missionary because "he wears a white collar and a black cassock, and is always looking for dead bodies to bury."<sup>32</sup>

Likewise, in "folktales," characters can have certain abstract qualities attached to them. Take, for example, the story of the frog that wants to become like the cows, grazing on the riverbank. The frog bloats itself up to such a point that it bursts. The frog and its behavior betoken stupidity, vanity, or inappropriate and self-defeating ambition. However, the idea of explicitly drawing such links was not generally practiced until the advent of mission rewriting of folktales. Drawing on Aesop's fables or La Fontaine's, the template of the folktale with which they were familiar, many missionaries wrote down stories and attached a moral that made the allegorical weave of the story explicit. For example, in the case of the story of the overreaching frog, a Lutheran mission reader concluded: "What does this folktale teach us? It says that a person should not be vain. When you exalt yourself, others will laugh at you. He who is boastful often ruins the beauty that is within him. Moreover, a person with vanity is never aware of this himself. He will never reach the greatness that he yearns for; he will ultimately die with a bad reputation. He who exalts himself will be laid low."<sup>33</sup>

These techniques would, of course, train anyone to deal with Bunyan, and students who encountered him at Lovedale (or indeed even before entering) must have felt themselves to be on familiar ground. On entering Lovedale, however, students' existing reading techniques would have been supplemented with others as they encountered *The Pilgrim's Progress* in different settings in and around the school. The first of these was the classroom. Here students in the higher levels of primary school would have read Bunyan in their Xhosa and possibly their English readers. The Standard Five Xhosa reader, for example, included several illustrated extracts from the early part of the story. As students entered secondary school, they would have encountered the full text in the English and the Xhosa classes, where it was a setwork from at least 1883.<sup>34</sup>

It is difficult to know exactly how the text was taught. Examinations do give some insight into this topic, and judging from the examination papers, a repertoire of teaching approaches was employed. In many cases, there was a strong emphasis on knowing and recalling content through questions like "Give a description of Vanity Fair, and its history to the arrival of Christian and Faithful"; "Where was the country of Beulah?"; "Who were its inhabitants?"; "To whom did the gardens and

the vineyards belong?"<sup>35</sup> Drilling and memorization were also important. S.E.K. Mqhayi, the great Xhosa writer and dramatist, attended Lovedale and, by the time he was thirteen, could recite the first chapter of the book.<sup>36</sup> In the upper reaches of secondary school, students learned the historical background to the text and had to be able to relate the two. The 1876 Cape matriculation examination, which some Lovedale pupils wrote, asked candidates to "Give some of the virtues and some of the faults of the Puritan literature."<sup>37</sup> Students also had to give an outline and characterize the style of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In some cases, students were required to demonstrate some grasp of allegory: "Give in Xosa a brief account of any four of the scenes which were shown to Christian by the Interpreter (*u-Mtyileli*), and explain the lesson taught by one of them."<sup>38</sup> In addition, they also had to translate portions of the text from Xhosa into English and write a general essay on Bunyan: "Write a Xhosa essay . . . on . . . Bunyan's knowledge of human nature, as shown in *Uhambo*."<sup>39</sup>

In studying Bunyan in the classroom, students were familiarized with a number of reading and interpretive techniques. Significantly, many of these taught the text in a secular way and exposed students to the idea of literature as a field of study in its own right. More strictly religious interpretations of the text occurred outside the classroom, where students would have encountered Bunyan in their extramural activities. Those who joined the popular SCA studied the English text in detail for several months. We do not know how it was taught, but these lessons probably laid great stress on the religious and spiritual import of the text. Students also saw the story represented in magic lantern slides and enacted dramatized excerpts in both Xhosa and English. They might also have heard talks and, at times, sermons that drew material from Bunyan. As Lovedale had a significant number of Sotho- and Tswana-speaking students drawn from the more northerly regions of South Africa, these learners from time to time held their own SCA meetings in these languages. Quite possibly, they made use of the Sotho and Tswana versions of Bunyan. At times, there was a school-wide Bunyan play, notably a Xhosa translation (*Iziganeko zomKristu*) of E. U. Oules, *Scenes Dramatised from Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress*, which was performed on several occasions.<sup>40</sup>

The text also traveled into the immediate environs of Lovedale. A student organization, the Missionary Band, evangelized in the neighborhood, as did the candidates from the Bible School. This institution had been started in the 1920s and trained lower-level evangelists and Bible

women. *The Pilgrim's Progress* was used for reading exercises in English, Xhosa, and Afrikaans, used by "coloured" candidates as a first-language. Bible School students also dramatized bits of the play as part of their training.<sup>41</sup> Both groups, the Missionary Band and the Bible School, quite possibly used excerpts or pictures from the text in their itinerations. Students returning home took their books with them, while the Lovedale Book Depot supplied trading stores in the region with copies of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in Xhosa.<sup>42</sup>

Students were provided with a repertoire of reading techniques: detailed content recall; memorization; recitation and quotation; reading in historical context; allegorical interpretation; sustained textual study; dramatic reenactment; analysis of illustrations and magic lantern slides; evangelical interpretation; allegorical reading and the like. Some of these methods, such as allegorical interpretation, memorization, techniques of quotation, and certain modes of performance, most students already possessed. Others they encountered for the first time at school. How did these various styles and layers of interpretation interact?

The Lovedale Literary Society provides a forum in which we can see some of this complex chemistry at work. The society was a staff/student organization for lectures, talks, debates, and musical items. It met every Friday evening during term time. A detailed set of minutes from 1936 to 1948 survives and allows us insight into its workings. From these minutes, it is clear that the aims and objectives of the society were often fiercely contested, with staff generally seeing it as a vehicle for edifying talks on literature, while students wanted to redefine it as a debating society. The resulting disagreements give us some insight into how students attempted to articulate and implement an alternative set of interpretive procedures that reconfigured the hermeneutic repertoires of both home and school.

Some critics have seen this forum as yet further evidence of the alienated black Englishness of the Lovedale elite.<sup>43</sup> By these accounts, senior Lovedale students "mimicked" the dominant forms of European culture in discussing topics like "The Crusades"; "Wordsworth"; "What Position Does Cromwell Deserve in English History?"; "Whether the Battle of Marathon, or the Battle of Waterloo Has Had More Influence on the World"; "Is Queen Elizabeth Worthy of Admiration?"; "Oliver Goldsmith"; "Life of Sir Philip Sydney"; "Life of Sir Walter Raleigh," and so on.<sup>44</sup>

However, such accounts rely on a partial view of proceedings. These "European" topics made up only a portion of the annual pro-

grams. The remainder was taken up with discussion of local issues of burning concern to an emerging African elite. These local topics ranged widely and included debates on progressive farming methods ("Whether is Stock or Agricultural Farming Best for the Natives of this Country?"; "Is it Justifiable to Kill All Cattle on a Farm Where There is Rinderpest?"); changing gender roles (bride price; monogamy vs. polygamy; should women enter the ministry); the nature of education (should it be academic or technical; in which language; compulsory or not; free or not; could it erase "superstition"); forms of government (chief/monarchy vs. republic); how to shape public opinion (pulpit or press). Questions of what constituted "progress" and "civilization" were also common and appeared in topics like "Though the Bantu are Progressing, They Are Not Progressing Fast Enough"; "Has the Time Come for Heathen Custom to be Put Down by Act of Parliament?"; and "Does Education Remove Superstition?"<sup>45</sup>

The Literary Society thus functioned as one forum for defining the interests of this new African (and largely male) elite. This group occupied a complex social position pinioned between traditional chiefs, white missionaries, and rabidly racist settlers. In relation to chiefs, the elite stressed their modernity; in relation to missionaries, their knowledge of African tradition; and in relation to settlers, their superior claims to "civilization." These issues were often hammered out in the events of the Literary Society, which functioned less as a series of literary discussions and more as a debating forum where the new elite could prepare themselves for leadership and public office. Indeed "debating" came to acquire a wide ambit of meaning that meant more than just standing up to defend an opinion. It was also a shorthand term for a training in the performances of a new elite leadership. Such leadership comprised many levels and skills. Most obviously it was about learning eloquence and self-discipline, or as one Lovedale alumnus told the society, "develop[ing] powers of speech to know how to oppose a person without offending him or her, self-control in speech, politeness and respect."<sup>46</sup> "Debating" prepared students for this leadership: "Many a leader had been fashioned and modeled by this society."<sup>47</sup> The society also forged networks for the future: "The Literary Society is the foundation of our future careers."<sup>48</sup> (Indeed, it was not uncommon for some students to join the society for "CV purposes" without becoming actively involved.) One teacher, Mr. Mdledle (a Lovedale alumnus) informed his audience that the society prepared students for life after school and taught them how to be "cultured." "A cultured man is often



distinguished not by his dress but by what he does and says, a man who faces the situation objectively with coolness, and he that gets into the truth first and gets heated afterwards.”<sup>49</sup>

This notion of leadership was also explored in the discussion and performances of Xhosa literature and drama that featured from time to time on the society program. These performances, which invariably drew the largest crowds, returned again and again to themes of dispute resolution and the political leadership skills it required. The minutes of one production of *Ityala lamawele* (*The Case of the Twins*) by the great Xhosa writer S.E.K. Mqhayi notes that the function of the play “was two fold . . . it was for amusement as well as it brought to light, to those who did not know anything about pure African life, how complicated cases . . . used to be successfully and easily settled by consulting the old sages.”<sup>50</sup> The reference to those “who did not know anything about pure African life” was perhaps a dig at white teachers and missionaries. By contrast to this “ignorant” group, the new male elite apparently possessed such knowledge and could, on occasion, borrow the robes of chiefly power in order to position themselves critically vis-à-vis the white mission authorities.<sup>51</sup>

For the school authorities who ran the Literary Society, its primary and proper function was literary. For these literature proponents, the term “literature” carried a particular meaning compounded from evangelical views of reading overlaid with notions derived from the emerging discipline of English literature. In this amalgam, literature was heavily moralized: on the one hand, it could “improve” its readers and “save” them from corrupting pastimes; on the other, it could show them an instance of an elevated national product to which “their” people could aspire. Students at the society consequently heard comments like the “Bantu are not a leading people because they do not read,” or the “Bantu must read more great literature whether in Latin, English or mother tongue . . . such men as Lincoln rose to the rank of great orators only by reading great literature.”<sup>52</sup>

For the debaters, literature had a role to play but more as a subordinate category that could provide fuel, themes, ideas, and quotations for debate and hence for the preparation of leaders. The distance between the two positions—literature or debating—is usefully captured in some comments from an irritated teacher: “In recent years the whole character of the Literary Society had changed. Formerly one of the great educative influences on the life of the students, it has become merely a

debating society entirely dissociated from direction or guidance by members of staff. These are fatal defects and cannot be allowed to continue.”<sup>53</sup>

The disagreement over these terms (which mostly but not always ran along lines of staff/student) was fueled by other factors: increasing censorship; a ban on discussing “political topics”; greater surveillance of students; cut-backs in resources; militancy among students; racialized conflict between staff and students and within the staff body; and so on.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, however, the disagreement was equally driven by opposing literary “moral economies.” In terms of these competing frameworks, literature came to betoken very different things. For the literature lobby, the category was primary; a resource whose power could, almost single handedly, improve, moralize, and mould the students. For the debaters, literature was a secondary category: a source of quotation, a compendium of messages, subordinate to the larger design of training male leaders. In forging this definition of “literature,” the male students in the society reconfigured their sets of interpretation inherited from school and home. On the one hand, they “borrowed” the authority of literature as a category of value, but, on the other, they wedded it to ideas of performance, eloquence, use of apt quotation, and memorization. This amalgam of techniques in turn functioned as a social “apprenticeship” for positioning oneself vis-à-vis the missionaries, the chiefly authorities, and settler society. It was in short a tailor-made preparation for the local exigencies of African leadership in the Eastern Cape.

Bunyan, who featured from time to time in Literary Society talks, was likewise subject to this mode of localizing analysis. Talks on him (in both his English and Xhosa incarnations) were surrounded by discussion on a suite of local themes close to the heart of the Lovedale African elite. These included local agriculture (“Rotation of Crops”); technology (“Which Does the Country Need Most—Irrigation or Railways?”), “progress” and “civilization” (“Is Westernization of the Bantu Undesirable?”); chiefly and monarchical tradition (“Tshaka [the famed Zulu military leader] and his Successors”; “Was the Execution of Charles I Justified?”); changing gender politics (“Girls Should Not be Educated to the Same Level as Boys”; “Women are Cleverer than Men”); and colonial history and policy (“Was the Dutch Period Beneficial to the Natives of South Africa?”; “Were the Missions Justified to Impose Christianity by Means of Warfare?”).<sup>55</sup> Once pulled into these fields of debate, the meaning of Bunyan’s text could, of course, shift, and his book could provide a

source of insight, illustration, and quotation to underline the arguments of an emerging African elite. Such reading strategies become apparent if we examine the political re-allegorizations of Bunyan that emerged on a sustained basis in the press in and around Lovedale.

Perhaps the best example of this local Lovedale reading strategy comes from the Xhosa newspaper, *Isigidimi samaXhosa*. The date of the passage is uncertain, but probably comes from the 1880s when the African elite yet again had to decide how to cast their vote for the Cape Legislative Assembly. Since 1853 franchise in the Cape Colony was determined by gender, age, property, and literacy, and a fair proportion of the African elite qualified for the vote. At each election, there was considerable debate in the Cape African press on which candidates (who were almost invariably white) to support.<sup>56</sup> Jordan provides a translation of one such instance where a columnist uses an episode from Bunyan to explore the options facing enfranchised Africans.

Readers of *Uhambo lo Mhambi* will remember the story of Christian and Hopeful, the day they were found by Giant Despair. It is said that the giant put them into his castle, into a very dark dungeon, nasty and stinking to the spirits of these two men. Here, then, they lay from Wednesday morning till Saturday night without one bit of bread or drop of drink, or light, or any to ask them how they did.

Now Giant Despair had a wife, and her name was Diffidence: who, when she heard about the prisoners, told her husband 'to beat them without mercy.' True enough, on the following morning they were beaten fearfully. The next night she, understanding that they were still alive, '*did advise him to counsel them to make away with themselves.*' Truly then, the giant did give them this advice, and again he beat them. But they, though tempted by his counsel, finally resolved not to accept it. *If they must die, it must not be by their own hands.*

The columnist then goes on to draw out the lessons of this episode:

We are reminded of this story by a number of men who are at present scattered amongst us, black folk, counseling us how to get out of this slough, this dungeon of suffering into which our community has been cast these past years. We have complained of laws that oppress the black man alone: the branding of

cattle, pass laws, disarmament without even adequate compensation for our guns. We have complained of the imprisonment of our ministers of religion, their being arrested by the police while carrying out their duties to the Word of the Lord. We have been pushed around by so-called location regulations. These and other things have been heavy on our necks, and many of them still remain so, and we do not know what to do about them. And now the time has come to elect men to go to parliament. Among the men who are going to parliament there are those who are going there to add to the burdens we already have. These men make no secret of the fact that they still regard the black man as an enemy, a thing to be treated as an enemy, a thing to be deprived of education grants.

Today, it is those same men who have come to our people and expect that it must be we ourselves who send them to parliament. Hence, we say that they have come to counsel us to do away with our own selves. Giant Despair said, 'I bring you counsel that will help you when I say that you had better kill yourselves.' In like manner these men come smiling up to us and say, 'It is our ardent love for you that makes us say that you had better elect us, the people who will truly destroy you.' Diffidence was enthusiastic about her counsel. In like manner these men are enthusiastic about the counsel they bring to us.

It will be well for us to confer on this matter. The two men we have used as an example conferred before they resolved what to do. The day is very near when we must resolve what to do, hence our suggestion that there must be unanimity among those who have the right to vote. For our part, we say we must not accept the counsel to do away with our own selves. If we must die, it must not be by our own hands.<sup>57</sup>

The columnist addresses a situation of straitened choice and raises question of how to pursue political objectives in an oppressive context. He employs two techniques in this task. First, he shifts the allegorical field of the book. In this account, the text loses its "original" meaning and is de-allegorized. It becomes instead a story about colonial rule in the Cape Colony—the burdens and trials represented in the plot become the burdens and trials of life under colonial oppression. Within this framework,

the writer introduces his second technique, that of re-allegorizing the text by reconfiguring the “data” of the story to render it amenable to a local interpretation. In this account, the story of Giant Despair and his insidious wife is refocused so that it pivots around her attempts to get the two prisoners to kill themselves. From this narrative node, the writer can then leverage the political points he requires. These concern the hypocrisy of colonial rule, where those who oppress and “imprison” black citizens also parade as their benefactors.

The writer can carry out his techniques of de- and re-allegorization because the story is so well known. As such, it becomes an orientation point around which political discourse can revolve. Take, for instance, another re-allegorization that cropped up in a rather different set of circumstances in the 1920s. During these years, a Bunga (or council of chiefs) was set up by the colonial Native Affairs Department (NAD) as a forum of indirect rule. There was considerable disagreement as to whether the institution should be supported or not. A proponent of the scheme, Tennyson Makiwane, progressive farmer and Bunga councilor, wrote in the Lovedale newspaper, *Christian Express*, in 1925. In his letter, he tries to persuade urban Africans that, despite its colonial sponsorship via the NAD, the Bunga is worth supporting:

Our Native people . . . who are afraid to join the Council system on the ground of its control by the Magistrates may well be likened to Christian in ‘The Pilgrim’s Progress’ who at a certain place seeing two lions on either side of the road was afraid to go on his way. But on approaching these he found they were fastened by chains to the ground and could do him no harm. I suggest that much that to outsiders appears embarrassing in the Council system could on closer view be found to be both harmless and innocent.<sup>58</sup>

In both of these examples, the writers assume that readers are intimately familiar with Bunyan’s story. The text consequently becomes something of a public sphere in which political debates of the African elite can be pursued. The text becomes a shared set of references and a taken-for-granted landscape onto which positions can be plotted.

This use of Bunyan as a positioning device among African Protestant elites in the Cape Colony emerges as well in a travelogue from John Knox Bokwe, another Lovedale graduate and public intellectual. On his first trip to Cape Town in 1884, Bokwe, then postmaster at Lovedale, decided to visit the Theatre Royal. Expecting to enjoy an agreeable eve-

ning of culture and upliftment, he found instead a distasteful place full of “rowdies,” probably lower-class white and “coloured” spectators. The two barrooms further offended Bokwe’s teetotaler sensibilities. He longed back to the Lovedale Literary Society: “on Friday night, 3 Oct., while you in the Literary Society were profitably discussing the lives of John Bunyan and John Milton, I was among the rowdies and low characters of Cape Town, who had gone to pass their time in the gallery of the Theatre Royal.”<sup>59</sup> Having bought a cheap ticket in the gallery (the theatre being segregated by money rather than race), Bokwe had to rub shoulders with the working class. Imaginatively, he distances himself from those around him by positioning himself as part of the audience of the Lovedale Literary Society, whose discussions of Bunyan can confer on him a spiritual, moral, and class distinctiveness that proves his superiority to his supposed racial betters. Here again Bunyan is constructed as an orienting point on a political and social landscape.

The journey and landscape in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* likewise provided shorthand points of reference to facilitate political debate. In 1865 one of Soga’s colleagues writing in the press launched an attack on African communities by predicting their extinction since their “indolent habits” would prevent their progress.<sup>60</sup> Using a pseudonym, “Defensor,” Soga responded. At one point, he described the converts of his station as “staunch men, who for consistency of character, considering the ‘Slough of Despond’ out of which Christianity had lifted them, will compare with the multitudes of their white brethren, who can boast of greater advantages.”<sup>61</sup> At first glance, it would seem as though Soga invokes the story as a predictable metaphor for a journey from “heathenism,” “tradition,” and “backwardness” to “Christianity,” “modernity,” and “progress.” The rest of the sentence, however, makes it clear that while Soga calls up a familiar landscape of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, the projected destination lies in the direction of a distinctly African Christianized modernity defined in Soga’s thinking by the idea (current in much mission writing by Africans) that African converts make better Christians than Europeans.

For writers like Soga, the landscape of Bunyan provides the “latitude” for exploring different political destinations. In this case, the “spine” of the journey provided a site of experimentation in which various subjunctive futures could be imaginatively trialed. This image of the purposive journey became a metaphor and flexible shorthand for broader debates on progress, betterment, advancement, “civilization,” and modernity in a hostile world. In 1942 a serial entitled “The Pilgrim’s

Progress" by "Gaoler" appeared in a South African newspaper, *Inkundla ya Bantu*. The series announced itself as being "for the amusement of students . . . but also about the grim realism of the African pilgrim's progress in a hostile world."<sup>62</sup> Indeed the image of the burdened traveler was to become something of a staple genre in southern African literature as a way of criticizing racial oppression.<sup>63</sup>

The political home for most members of the Eastern Cape elite was the South African Native National Congress (after 1919, the African National Congress or ANC). The nature and objectives of this organization formed an ongoing strand in public debate, and *The Pilgrim's Progress* was at times invoked as part of this discussion. The following poem by a woman, *Nontsizi*, appeared in the newspaper *Umteteli wa Bantu* in 1924. The translation is by Jeff Opland.

*The Hill Difficulty the Black Man Scales*

Look! Today I want you to understand  
the essence of our distress.  
Compatriot, wrestle with what I say,  
let's engage in debate.

The Hill can't be scaled! It's slippery.  
I won't mince words, I'll bare my heart:  
to this point in time,  
just what have blacks achieved?

Take the African National Congress:  
we once praised it till our ribs burst.  
Now we go round seeking it:  
"Has anyone seen where's it gone?" . . .

Vying for status is lethal poison  
that weakens Congress from within.  
Hamstrung by people riddled with envy,  
the black man's actions lose all worth.

This Hill Difficulty's got us beat,  
we've tried and tried to scale it:  
it can't be scaled by blacks  
strapped with the millstone of custom.

Envy's an obstacle up this hill,  
money's another obstacle:

so we battle to scale it.  
Old Greyhair, am I wrong?

Unity's an obstacle up this hill,  
so, burdened, we no longer praise it,  
like plains cattle lost in the mist,  
black as crows in our ways. That's us!

Why, my good man, are we slumped at the foot  
of this Hill Difficulty the black man scales?  
You've set your hand to many things  
but which of them still work?

The way you despise and goad traditionalists  
are obstacles up this hill—  
yet how you covet their cash!  
Sweat all you like, you won't reach the top. . . .

This Hill frustrates attempts to scale it,  
lions and leopards ring it;  
the Hill stands firm, our people slip  
on slopes with carpets of cash. . . .

This Hill the black man scales is steep,  
so steep it nearly daunted Christian;  
his mouth frothed with a sloven's foam,  
his ears rang as he scaled this Hill.

And so it is for blacks today:  
we sit on the fence, we won't take a stand.  
We don't even know why we squabble,  
but we bolt our fruit before it's ripe. . . .

Sweat blood, you won't make the top  
of this Hill Difficulty the black man scales;  
you don't love the Nation, only bargains.  
That's the truth. Have I got it wrong?

Our customs abandoned, we're left empty-handed,  
in this generation apostasy's rampant.  
I've said it before: scratched and bleeding,  
we won't make the top of this Hill.

We agree!<sup>64</sup>

In this poem, Nontsizi addresses the political context of the 1920s, when the ANC, a largely elite organization, was riddled with internal problems. The poem lays these out: disunity, lack of delivery, internecine political rivalry, corruption, venality, greed, contempt for the less-educated followers of "tradition," and so on. The poem is addressed to a "Com-patriot" and, as such, is intended to jolt discussion within an African elite public sphere. This debate is facilitated by means of a Bunyan landmark, Hill Difficulty, which Christian must scale on his journey. In Nontsizi's poem, she explores the Hill as a symbol both of the colonial obstacles that Africans must overcome and of how these obstacles are exacerbated by political disunity within the ANC. In this poem, the landscape of *The Pilgrim's Progress* provides a backdrop against which to enter a debate about political strategy and direction.<sup>65</sup> At the heart of such discussions, lies the idea of the journey as an analogue for political activity.

This notion of the political journey was to become a powerful metaphor later in the twentieth century, as the ANC led the antiapartheid struggle in and outside South Africa. Bunyan's influence itself started to wane after the 1940s, as the ANC acquired a mass-based following whose rank-and-file members had seldom encountered *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Yet, the secularized idea of the struggle as a purposive and teleological journey remained strongly imprinted on ANC discourse. At times, its Bunyan dimensions reappear. The work of "Rebecca Matlou," *nomme de guerre* of Sankie Nkondo, now Sankie Mthembi-Mahanyele, at the time of writing, Minister of Housing in the ANC-led government, furnishes an apt example. In her poetry, Nkondo often invokes a Bunyan-like landscape. Prison is referred to as a "grim den" and "the dungeon den of grim death."<sup>66</sup> The poem "Swim Comrade" is arranged around the idea of crossing a river to the heaven of freedom. The poem "Bent Back" features a hunch-backed figure going along a path.<sup>67</sup> In "The Bivouac," a composite "freedom fighter" says: "I am the wanderer warrior / who walks on a road / laden with hot charcoal / I tread on hot rock / that always cuts and bleeds my toes."<sup>68</sup> This idea of the struggle/path and its link to Bunyan emerges explicitly in a poem entitled "This Path":

Child of the soil  
Child of own destiny  
cross this path  
cross the sword  
ride the lion's back and hold the mane  
bound on with shoulders high

sky in heavens light the path  
echoes from this thorny bush guide the way  
Luthuli, Kotane, Mandela, Sisulu trod this path  
Pull hard, hack the prickly shrubs  
burden beads on your brow  
pilgrim yoke on your back  
will balm the people's tortured heart  
and bid the sod to seed freedom.<sup>69</sup>

In this poem, the history of the ANC is played out against a biblical and Bunyanesque landscape of a difficult path along which a series of ANC notables make a burdened journey. The poem urges a new generation to pick up the burden and follow the same route. By inserting the ANC into such a landscape, Nkondo reworks a trope whose history goes back to the reading and intellectual formations that had crystallized around *The Pilgrim's Progress*. By the 1970s, of course, such invocations of Bunyan were rare and, as indicated earlier, the book's favored position in the public sphere of the African elite did not last beyond the massification of the ANC in the 1940s. The book did appear occasionally as a reference in some worker-based newspapers but such invocations came via the British trade union movement upon whom Bunyan and Nonconformity generally left a strong secular imprint.<sup>70</sup> The text's wane around this period is usefully illustrated by the case of Albert Luthuli, head of the ANC between 1952 and his death in 1967 and, after Mandela, one of South Africa's most noted political leaders. Luthuli's father was christened John Bunyan Luthuli.<sup>71</sup> Luthuli's own biography *Let My People Go* (1962), however, shows no evidence of or interest in Bunyan and in the text he uses only his father's first name.

The fact that the apartheid government which came to power in 1948, ruled out the use of translations in African language classrooms in pursuit of ethnic purity, only hastened the demise of the text. Under this new ruling, texts in translation could no longer be recommended for African language school syllabuses. Unsurprisingly, in 1964, Lovedale dispatched 4,902 copies of *Uhambo lo Mhambi* for pulping, just a few years before the book's centenary.<sup>72</sup>

In retrospect, the "reign" of the text from the 1870s to the 1940s appears short. Its role during this period in the formation of an African elite was, however, considerable. As we have seen, it informed the political discourse of the elite and provided a set of metaphors for debating questions of how to fashion an African modernity. In this task, Bunyan

was applied to political circumstances by means of a set of locally forged interpretive procedures. Through this intellectual grid, the text was filtered and refiltered in homes, schools, and public forums. The motifs that remained behind had sufficient consensual currency to act as points around which public opinion could be shaped.

## 6

### **Dreams, Documents, and Passports to Heaven** African Christian Interpretations of *The Pilgrim's Progress*

In a recent discussion of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in the *New York Times*, a columnist referred to the book as an ancestor of the B movie.<sup>1</sup> Anyone chancing upon the Ndebele translation of the story would have to agree. Turning to the final pages, one encounters a lurid illustration entitled “Ugulahlwa gu ka Naziyo” (“The casting aside of Ignorance”) (figure 15).<sup>2</sup> In the foreground, two white angels have pitched the black body of Ignorance head first into the flames of hell. An owl (the bird of witchcraft) hovers above the smoke as a snake rears its head through the flames, ready to strike the unfortunate Ignorance. In the background, the protagonist, Christian, and his companion, Hopeful, arrive at the gates of heaven, after their arduous pilgrimage from the City of Destruction. In the illustration, they hand over their documents for inspection to two sentry angels.

This edition was the work of David and Mary Carnegie (and possibly their colleague, Moholo) of the LMS, based at Hope Fountain in Matabeleland in present-day Zimbabwe. The illustrations were executed by C. J. Montague and were probably the earliest instance in which Africans were used to depict characters in Bunyan's story.

At first glance, the picture may appear unremarkable—just another example of predictable mission iconography. In this colonially conceived drama of sin and salvation, the “saved” wear Western-style clothing, while the feminized body of Ignorance has only a loincloth as covering. Spiritual authority is racialized with the angels depicted as white. Yet, when judged against most traditions of Bunyan illustration, the picture becomes more interesting. There are, of course, thousands of