

Grace abounding to the chief of sinners & The life & death of Mr. Badman, (Everyman's library. Theology & philosophy)

John Bunyan

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Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, written during this imprisonment, is the spiritual autobiography of Bunyan, the traveling tinker who became the eminent preacher and author. It is in the genre of Augustine's Confessions and Thomas a Kempis's Imitation of Christ. It is not a detailed account of Bunyan's early life, for it tells us very little of his youth, education, military experiences, and marriages. Written in 1666, Grace Abounding chronicles Bunyan's spiritual journey from a profane life filled with cursing, blasphemy, and Sabbath desecration to a new creation in Christ Jesus. Some commentators on Bunyan's life and work are of the opinion that Bunyan wrote too disparagingly of his early life. George Offor, editor of a three volume compilation of Bunyan's works, observes: A great difference of opinion has been expressed by learned men as to whether Bunyan's account of himself is to be understood literally, as it respects his bad conduct before his conversion, or whether he views himself through a glass, by which his evil habits are magnified. No one can doubt his perfect honesty. He plainly narrates his bad, as well as his redeeming qualities; nor does his narrative appear to be exaggerated.1 Grace Abounding is an autobiography that begins with guilt and despair and ends with a heart "full of comfort," a thankful heart for "grace abounding." Those who have read both Grace Abounding and The Pilgrim's Progress will realize that The Pilgrim's Progress, in substantial measure, is the same life as that described in Grace Abounding, but in allegory rather than straightforward narrative. George Offor makes this point when he quotes a Dr. Cheever: As you read the "Grace Abounding", you are ready to say at every step, Here is the future author of the "Pilgrim's Progress". It is as if you stood beside some great sculptor, and watched every movement of the chisel, having seen his design; so that at every blow some new trait of beauty in the future comes clearly into view.



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