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Family Plays

The Pilgrim's Progress

Drama adapted
by
ORLIN COREY

Based on the
book by
JOHN BUNYAN



The Pilgrim's Progress

The original cast of the Everyman Players enjoyed an extensive national tour, followed by an off-Broadway engagement in New York's Gothic Riverside Church. John Bunyan's "little book," as he called it, is an allegorical adventure story, ablaze with color and character and fueled by the inner urgency of a true spiritual quest. This adaptation utilizes the straightforward English dialog of Bunyan. Largely eliminated is his tendency to interpret and moralize. Instead, the characters carry the story.

Drama. By Orlin Corey from the book by John Bunyan. Cast: 72 roles which may be performed by as few as 15 actors. Christian, burdened by failure and betrayal, determines to flee the City of Destruction in search of a better place. In his wandering, he blunders into the Slough of Despond, stumbles through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and debates with such imposters as Mr. Worldly Wiseman and Ignorance. He discovers the Cross and finds his way, befriended by fellow pilgrims, and after setbacks and failures, he arrives at the Celestial City. Staging may be elaborate or simplified. Medieval-era stylized costumes. Mobile props, puppets, masks and Elizabethan-style pageantry have been used successfully. This play has been performed on traditional stages as well as in churches and cathedrals. Also available: An Odyssey of Masquers-The Everyman Players for design photos. Approximate running time: 1 hour, 50 minutes. Code: PE7.

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adapted for stage

by

ORLIN COREY

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ORLIN COREY

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(THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS)

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From The Playwright

THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS of John Bunyan is a work of genius from a most unlikely source, a poorly educated, guilt-ridden Baptist preacher of seventeenth century England. It was largely written in Bedford Gaol where Bunyan languished for the crime of being a non-conformist preacher.

Here is no black and white morality, no obvious allegory, no trace of conventional piety. It is a work of remarkable humanity and keenly observed realism, a veritable microcosm of perverse mankind. On the surface it is simple enough to be beloved by children, as Dr. Samuel Johnson observed, yet a fascinating favorite of generations of adults ranging from Charles Dickens and Robert Louis Stevenson, to Ernest Hemingway and Tennessee Williams.

John Bunyan's "little book" (as he called it) is an allegorical adventure story, ablaze with color and character, and fueled by the inner urgency of a true spiritual quest, relentlessly plunging forward from incident, entanglement, to escape into new danger, ever onward.

Christian, burdened by failure and betrayal, determines to flee the City of Destruction in search of a better place. Encouraged by Mr. Evangelist he departs the dreadful city, abandoned by his family and friends, his face fixed forward. In his wandering he blunders into the Slough of Despond, stumbles through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and debates with such impostors as Mr. Worldly Wiseman and Ignorance. He also finds help and discovers the Cross and is freed of his guilt and fear. Thereafter he resolutely seeks the Celestial City, befriending fellow pilgrims Hopeful and Faithful. He is held in thrall by Giant Despair, but he survives, and is arrested in Vanity Fair and its glorious promises of false pleasures. So, after many toils, dangers and snares, setbacks and failures, he arrives at the Celestial City where he is welcomed by all the trumpets sounding on the other side.

This dramatic adaptation faithfully follows the adventures, utilizing the straight-forward English dialogue without alteration. Largely eliminated was Bunyan's tendency to interpret and moralize. In performance we discovered that the fascinating characters carried all forward and situation and adventure held audiences in rapt attention.

Everyman's production merged Medieval imagery (such as Hell Mouth, Angels, costume and prop devices) with the flow and flexibility of the Elizabethan stage. In Shakespearean tradition a central stage unit of compact dimensions, contained a curtained inner below for the preparation and revelation of special sights and discoveries. Atop was a three-way stair giving access to the upper level from the sides and rear for spectacular effects such as the Man in the Iron Cage (whose back-lit bars and figure shadowed across the entire audience), or the gigantic figure of a rod-puppet Beelzebub (upwards of twenty-five feet from the floor) presided over Vanity Fair. Designer Irene Corey did extensive research of Medieval manuscripts and I directed the production as a vast

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Elizabethan pageant. Every aisle and level available at each venue - - including balconies of churches and theatres was employed. The oriental scene-changing convention of black-clad stage hands kept all in fascinating flow, styled and timed to story and music in flowing rhythms. Johan Franco's music was based on variations and arrangements of notable hymns, hymns directly influenced by Bunyan's language and metaphors. This was performed and recorded by the United States Army Brass Band and Percussion sections in Washington, D.C. Everyman was given access to the Army Recording studio. On the road the sound system utilized multi-directional Voice of the Theatre speakers to superb effect. We also employed synthesizers to amplify a harp a hundred-fold balanced against the sound of 100 trumpets, at the climax of Christian's entering the Celestial City.

THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS was originally commissioned for the hundredth anniversary of the First Baptist Church of Shreveport. Subsequently it went on an extensive national tour, followed by an Off-Broadway engagement in New York's Gothic Riverside Church, the perfect venue for PILGRIM. It created great excitement wherever it was performed that year and attracted attention abroad where it was long considered for a Cathedrals' tour of Britain.

The production reproduced in this volume is based on the one presented in the Riverside Church of New York City.

Premiered at First Baptist Church, Shreveport,
as staged by the Everyman Players,
February 15, 1970.

OF THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS:

"This is the great merit of the book, that the most cultivated man cannot find anything to praise more highly, and the child knows nothing more amusing."

- - Dr. Samuel Johnson

Dramatis Personae

Christian
John Bunyan-Evangelist
Obstinate
Pliable
Helpful
Death
Worldly Wiseman
Goodwill
Interpreter
Maid-Servant
Sweeper
Man in Iron Cage
Passion
Patience
Man in Terror
Two Shining Ones
Man on Tree
Simple
Sloth
Presumption
Formalist
Hypocrisy
Timorous
Mistrust
Porter
Discretion
Maid
Charity
Piety
Prudence
Apollyon
Shining One
Terrified Man
Pursuing Demon
Demon Dancer
Faithful
Town Cryer
Ladies of Vanity Fair
Gentlemen of Vanity Fair
Carnival People
Vanity Fair Soldiers
Lord Hategood

Clerk of Court
Madame Envy
Miss Superstition
Mr. Pickthank
Jury
Hopeful
Vain Confidence
Giant Despair
Shepherds
Ignorance
False One
Punishing Angel
Atheist
Gardner
Guides to Celestial City
Trumpeters
Bearers of Crowns and Palms
Shadows
Citizens of City of Destruction

Note: Many of these roles may be doubled. In the original production, 72 named roles were portrayed by fifteen players. It would be desirable to have a group of performers trained as supers for the numerous crowds - - notably City of Destruction, Vanity Fair, approaches to Celestial City.

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TEXT

BUNYAN: As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, and I laid me down to sleep; and as I slept I dreamed a dream. I dreamed - - and behold! I saw a man clothed in rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked and saw him open the book and read therein; and as he read, he wept, and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry saying . . .

CHRISTIAN: What shall I do? What shall I do? I am undone by reason of this burden that lieth hard upon me. Moreover, I am for certain informed that this our city will be burned with fire from heaven, in which fearful overthrow both myself, my wife, and my sweet babes shall miserably come to ruin, except some way of escape can be found whereby we may be delivered.

What shall I do to be saved?
What shall I do to be saved?

ANALYSIS/ACTION

(A single light emerges from blackness onto the figure of JOHN BUNYAN, clad in 17th century non-conformist clerical black, holding a large book in his hands. He faces the audience with solemn countenance. As the music falls into background he speaks, and the music alters in character, supportive of his language.)

(CHRISTIAN emerges behind and upstage, desperate, and as described.)

(Slowly the light fades on Bunyan and his book, though he lingers in silhouette-witness to what transpires for a while, before going off. Music continues in desperate quality.)

(Jeers, taunts, cries rise about him from the darkness, such as "Madman" "Lunatic," "Crackpot!" "Fool," "Imbecile!," "Idiot!" "Bedlam," with derisive, howling laughter. Shadows of neighbors beat him, trip him, push him, injure him. He cringes from the mob.)

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(Out of the shadows, as the laughter and ridicule fade to distance, steps Bunyan as EVANGELIST:, simply dressed, a staff in hand, and a Bible. He draws the distraught Christian to him.)

EVANGELIST: Wherefore dost thou cry?

CHRISTIAN: Sir, I perceive by the book in my hand that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to judgment, and I find that I am not willing to do the first, nor able to do the second.

EVANGELIST: Why not willing to die, since this life is attended with so many ills?

CHRISTIAN: Because I fear that this burden that is upon my back will sink me lower than the grave. And, sir, I am not fit to go to judgment, and from thence to execution, and the thoughts of these things make me cry.

EVANGELIST: If this be thy condition, why standest thou still?

CHRISTIAN: Because I know not whither to go.

(EVANGELIST handing him a scroll.)

(Reading from the scroll) “Fly from the wrath to come.” Whither must I fly?

EVANGELIST: *(Pointing)* Do you see yonder narrow gate?

CHRISTIAN: No!

EVANGELIST: Do you see yonder shining light?

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CHRISTIAN: I think I do.

EVANGELIST: Keep that light in your eyes, and go directly thereto: so shalt thou see the gate; at which when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.

(CHRISTIAN looks long, then he begins to run. EVANGELIST watches him, as derisive cries and barking dogs rise in crescendo. CHRISTIAN covers his ears to the abusive, mocking cries and laughter, as they shout "Where are you going?" "The lunatic is running to heaven!" "Stop him!" "Arrest him!" "Restrain him" etc. EVANGELIST now fades away. Two figures emerge in definite pursuit of CHRISTIAN. Music continues sense of chaos and nightmare. The two persist shouting: 'Hi!' "Wait!" "Hold" etc. and finally they overtake the heavily burdened CHRISTIAN.)

CHRISTIAN: Neighbors, wherefore are ye come?

PLIABLE: To persuade you to return with us.

CHRISTIAN: That can by no means be. You dwell in the City of Destruction, and, dying there, sooner or late, you will sink lower than the grave into a place that burns with fire and brimstone. Be content, good neighbors, and go along with me!

OBSTINATE: What! And leave our friends and comforts behind us?

CHRISTIAN: Yes! Because that "all" which you shall forsake is not worthy to be compared with a little of that

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which I am seeking to enjoy. For where I go is enough and to spare.

OBSTINATE: What are the things you seek, since you leave all the world to find them?

CHRISTIAN: I seek an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; and it is laid up in heaven to be bestowed at the time appointed on them that diligently seek it. Read it so, if you will, in my Book.

OBSTINATE: Tush! Away with your Book! Will you go back with us or no?

CHRISTIAN: No, not I.

OBSTINATE: Come Pliable, let us turn again and go home without him. There is a company of these crazed-brained cockscombs, that, when they take a fancy by the end, are wiser in their own eyes than seven men that can render a reason.

PLIABLE: Don't revile. If what good Christian says is true, the things he looks after are better than ours. My heart inclines to go with him.

OBSTINATE: What! More fools still? Be ruled by me and go back! Who knows whither such a brain-sick fellow will lead you?

CHRISTIAN: Nay, but do thou come with thy neighbor, Pliable. There are such things to be had which I spoke of, and many more glories besides.

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PLIABLE: Well, neighbor Obstinate, I begin to come to a point. I intend to go along with this good man, and to cast in my lot with him. But, my good companion, do you know the way to this desired place?

CHRISTIAN: I am directed by a man whose name is Evangelist, to speed me to a little gate that is before us, where we shall receive instructions about the way.

OBSTINATE: And I will go back to my place. I will be no companion of such misled, fantastical fellows!

(He goes, gesticulating.)

CHRISTIAN: Come, Pliable. I am glad you are persuaded to go along with me. Had even Obstinate himself but felt what I have felt of the powers and terrors of what is yet unseen, he would not this lightly have given us his back.

(As he and PLIABLE walk on.)

PLIABLE: Now, neighbor, since there are none but us two here, tell me further what the things are whither we are going.

CHRISTIAN: I can better conceive of them with my mind than speak of them with my tongue. But since you are desirous to know, I will read of them in my book.

(He starts to read.)

PLIABLE: And do you think that the words of your book are true?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, verily, for it was made by Him that cannot lie.

PLIABLE: Well said. What things

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are they?

CHRISTIAN: There is an endless Kingdom to be inherited, and ever lasting life to be given us, that we may inhabit that kingdom forever. *(Reading)*

PLIABLE: Well said. And what else?

CHRISTIAN: There are crowns of glory to be given us, and garments that will make us shine like the sun.

PLIABLE: This is very pleasant.

CHRISTIAN: There shall we see the elders with their golden crowns. There we shall see the holy virgins with their golden harps, all clothed with immortality as with a garment.

PLIABLE: This is enough to ravish one's heart! How shall we get to be sharers thereof?

CHRISTIAN: The Governor of the country hath recorded that in this book. The substance of it is that if we be truly willing to have it, He will bestow it upon us freely.

PLIABLE: Well, my good companion, glad am I to hear of these things. Come on, let us mend our pace. *(He dashes forward.)*

CHRISTIAN: I cannot go as fast as I would because of this burden that is on my back. *(Heavily burdened, trudging behind.)*

(As music cue sounds, they stumble into the deep miry bog called the Slough of Despond. Music is of heavy character. They sink beneath triple black silk banners, tossing upward, handled by six "shadows" in all black.)

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CHRISTIAN heavily burdened begins to sink.)

PLIABLE: Ah, Christian, where are you now?

CHRISTIAN: Alas! I know not!

PLIABLE : Is this the happiness you have told me of? May I get out of this alive, you shall possess that brave country alone!

(Offended, begins to draw back, struggling.)

(PLIABLE climbs out of SLOUGH on side nearer his home, and disappears running. CHRISTIAN continues struggling onward from the City of Destruction. A new figure now emerges from the audience side of the Narrow Gate.)

HELP: What are you doing here?

CHRISTIAN: Sir, I was bid go this way that I escape the wrath to come. And as I was going thither I fell in here.

HELP: But why did you not look for the steps?

CHRISTIAN: Fear followed me so hard that I fled the nearest way and so fell in.

HELP: Give me thy hand. Continue on thy way toward yonder gate. You! May I help you?

(He draws him to safe ground; the tossing banners sink away, and the "shadows" slink off. HELP continues to help others, and so exits. CHRISTIAN bows in gratitude to him, and resolutely continues forward into the house. A new man approaches him, from the town of Carnal Policy.)

MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN: How now, good Fellow, whither away after this burdened manner?

CHRISTIAN: Sir, I am going to yonder narrow gate, for there, as I am informed, I shall be put into a way to be rid of my heavy burden.

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MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN: Hast thou a wife and children?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, but I am so laden with this burden that I cannot take that pleasure in them as formerly.

MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN: Wilt thou hearken unto me if I give thee counsel?

CHRISTIAN: If it be good, I will, for I stand in need of good counsel.

MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN: I would advise then that thou with all speed get thyself rid of thy burden, for thou wilt never be settled in thy mind until then.

CHRISTIAN: That is that I seek for, but get it off myself I cannot. Nor is there any man in our country that can take it off my shoulders.

MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN: Who bid thee go this way to be rid of it?

CHRISTIAN: A man that appeared to me to be a very great and honorable person. His name is Evangelist.

MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN: Beshrew him for his counsel! There is not a more dangerous and troublesome way in the world than is that unto which he hath directed thee. Hear me, I am older than thou. Thou art like to meet with wearisomeness, painfulness, nakedness, peril, lions, darkness, and, in a word, death. These things are certainly true, having been confirmed by many testimonies. Why should a

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man so carelessly cast himself away?

CHRISTIAN: Why sir, this burden upon my back is more terrible to me than are all these things which you have mentioned.

MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN:
How camest thou by the burden at first?

CHRISTIAN: By reading this Book.

MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN: I thought so. It is happened unto thee as to other weak men, who, meddling with things too high for them, do suddenly fall into thy distractions, which distractions do not only unman men, as thine I perceive have done to thee, but they run them upon desperate ventures to obtain they know not what.

CHRISTIAN: I know what I would obtain: it is ease for my heavy burden.

MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN: But why wilt thou seek for ease this way, seeing so many dangers attend it? Especially since I could direct thee to the obtaining of what thou desirest, without these dangers thou wilt run thyself into.

CHRISTIAN: Pray sir, open this secret to me.

(Pointing the way.)

MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN: In yonder village named Morality, dwells a gentle man whose name is Legality, a very judicious man, and a man of a very good name, that has skill to help thee off with such burdens as thine are.

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To him, as I said, thou mayest go and be helped presently. His house is not quite a mile from this place.

CHRISTIAN: Sir, which is my way to this honest man's house?

MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN: Do you see yonder high hill?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, very well.

MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN: By that hill you must go, and the first house you come at is his.

CHRISTIAN: I thank you sir for your fair advice.

(Looking, then decisively.)

(The two men bow to each other, WORLDLY WISEMAN exiting, while CHRISTIAN strains up the steep hill, struggling higher and higher. Thunder sounds, lightning flashes. Pausing, he looks back whence he came, catching his breath. At some distance he sees EVANGELIST making his way toward him, calling.)

EVANGELIST: Christian! Christian! What dost thou there, Christian?

(CHRISTIAN speechless, uncertain, waits for him to approach.)

Art thou not the man that I found crying without the walls of the City of Destruction?

CHRISTIAN: Yes sir. I am that man.

EVANGELIST: Did I not direct thee the way to the little narrow gate?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, dear sir.

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EVANGELIST: How is it then that thou art so quickly turned aside? For thou art now out of the way.

CHRISTIAN: I met a gentleman who persuaded me that I might in the next village find a man that could take off my burden. Now I know not what to do.

EVANGELIST: What said this gentleman to you?

CHRISTIAN: He said he would show me a better way and short to be rid of my burden, not so attended with difficulties as the way, sir, that you set me in. So I believed him and turned out of the way into this, but now I fear danger.

EVANGELIST: Then stand still a little that I may show thee the words of God. *(He produces a scroll, with a text, on it.)*

“Now the just shall live by faith.; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” Thou art the man that art running into this misery. Thou hast begun to reject the counsel of the most High.

(Kneeling before him.)

CHRISTIAN: Woe is me for I am undone!

(Lifting him, and reading another scroll.)

EVANGELIST: Listen. “All manner of sin and blasphemies shall be forgiven unto men. Be not faithless, but believing.” Give more earnest heed to that I shall tell thee. The man that met thee is one Worldly Wiseman, and rightly is he so called, partly because he savoureth only the doctrine

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of this world (therefore he always goes to the town of Morality to church) and partly because he loveth that doctrine best for it saveth him best from the cross. Because he is of this carnal temper he seeketh to pervert others from the right.

CHRISTIAN: Sir, I am sorry I have hearkened to this man's counsel. But may my sin be forgiven?

EVANGELIST: Thy sin is great, yet will the one at the gate receive thee for he has good-will for men. Go, and God speed.

(Blessing him and smiling, EVANGELIST turns to seek others, as CHRISTIAN departs downhill to level ground. MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN, at a distance, waves and calls to him from a distance "Hail Fellow!" but in vain. With his marching theme beneath CHRISTIAN continues forward up to the narrow gate, over which is written "Knock and it Shall be Opened Unto You". He knocks repeatedly, at the inner-below of the mainstage unit. At last a grave person comes from within, calling.)

GOOD-WILL: Who is there?

CHRISTIAN: I am a poor burdened sinner.

GOOD-WILL: Whence come you?

CHRISTIAN: From the City of Destruction.

GOOD-WILL: What would you have?

CHRISTIAN: I am going to Mount Zion that I may be delivered from the