Introduction

The starting point for this special number of *Bunyan Studies* was a one-day symposium at which the objective was to focus on understanding the relationship between faith and work.¹ As Gary Day has recently observed in relation to ‘class’ and Bunyan, the ‘spiritual idiom’ of texts like *The Pilgrim’s Progress* often ‘militates against a social and economic analysis of his society’, relegating interest in the ‘worldly’ to second place compared with matters of faith.² Religious people’s reflections may indeed foreground the immaterial world, but it would be many centuries until ‘secular’ norms would govern the workplace. For people in the seventeenth century, connections between faith and work were likely to emerge in their daily lives, developing their spiritual awareness around how they and others made their living.³ Furthermore, as Day explains of the faith/work connection, when Bunyan does focus on economic factors, it is often with a pronounced element of critique, allowing him ‘to protest against [socio-economic] inequalities’ in his society.⁴ This critique was not particular to Bunyan as such observations on social stratification and wealth commonly feature in religious writings of his period, and the four essays here all have these socio-economic circumstances in mind. They explore the social reality of work through focus on the workplace and workload, or through the ‘class’ system, or through the praxis of labour.

In ‘The Levellers, the Labouring Classes, and the Poor’, John Rees discusses ‘class’ hostility as voiced in Leveller tracts. During the second civil war and early years of the Commonwealth, the Levellers had mass appeal and developed a strong base in the south of England, particularly in London. Post-war, the ‘middling sort’, especially in urban settings, were increasingly prepared to stand up for the interests of tradesmen and women, protecting and defending their livelihood. Their efforts to draw attention to the plights of clothiers struggling to make a living, and their railing against the higher-earning and more powerful merchants and landed classes, are examples of how the Levellers championed this sector of the population.⁵ Rees grounds his observations in a reading of social stratification, specifically identifying characteristics indicating that the ‘middling sort’ were an emerging ‘class’. Despite appealing directly to the mid-ranking workers’ interests, Rees argues that the thinking and campaigning of Levellers led nevertheless to a sense of fraternity with people in more insecure or disadvantaged social groups. As he perceives it, however, the failure of Levellers to grant full rights to servants is evidence of the limits of their programme, and is ultimately disenfranchising. For Rees, economic circumstances
alone cannot fully explain the Levellers’ causes. The revolutionary moment also needs to be taken into account, and Marx and Engels’ analysis of class antagonism helps to explain both the reach and the limits of the Leveller social programme.

In “‘Preached in much pain”: Sick Preachers and Sickly Preaching in Seventeenth-Century England’, Robert Daniel focusses on the ‘labour’ of Puritan clergymen, and how both preaching and pastoral duties could lead to physical and mental exhaustion. His case studies include Presbyterians like Philip Henry (1631–96), Richard Baxter (1615–91), and Oliver Heywood (1630–1702). Changes of direction in religious policy contributed greatly to the insecurity of clergy such as these, who found themselves ejected from their livings in 1662. Other external factors, some economic, such as the declining income of the church, meant that while clergy in the Church of England were more likely than ever before to have received university training, a fair proportion of those below the rank of bishop were also likely to be relatively poor. The clergy in Daniel’s study are a conscientious lot. They embrace their pastoral duties, striving to deliver edifying sermons on Sundays and provide spiritual guidance at the sickbed of local people. Yet the pressures of insecurity and overwork put at risk not only the ability of such men to remain in the job, but also, potentially, their health. Daniel’s essay ends with a call for scholars to take up the challenge of assessing not just what preachers said in their sermons, but how they felt – physically and mentally – when engaged in the work of preaching.

John Milton, John Bunyan and Gerrard Winstanley are the focus of Thomas N. Corns’s essay elucidating scriptural meanings of work. Each was an outlier to contemporary opinion, through Milton’s religious heterodoxy, Bunyan’s Dissenting allegiances, and Winstanley’s involvement in the Diggers’ activist and pamphleteering programme. Whereas there would have been little resemblance in the day-to-day working life of these men to mark them out as a group, each of them plays their own vivid part in the intellectual heritage of Protestantism, with one strand of their thinking addressing the multiple ways that faith overlaps with work, and consequently they relate directly to each other. Winstanley, for example, wrote a vision of common endeavour that informed his approach: ‘I heard these words Worke together. Eat bread together; declare all abroad’. He and others established Digger communities in Surrey between 1649 and 1650 to live out in practice their belief that the land of England should belong to all. Corns situates all three of these thinkers’ works in relation to their theology. Despite some secularisation theories that seventeenth-century thought was becoming less Bible-based, and apparently more individualist, consumerist, bourgeois, and proto-industrialist, it is possible to overstate the degree of change. Milton, Bunyan and Winstanley all look to the Bible for advice
on how to prosper in a spiritual sense, not purely for financial return, because good intentions bring meaning to labour. The errors of Adam and Eve in Eden teach that what God gives he can also take away. Corns articulates the multiple ways of finding meaning in work through this paradigm of deceit and fallenness versus humble commitment to work for its own or for the community’s sake, describing a ‘hermeneutic procedure […] both radical and primarily allegorical’. Each of these writers is trying to understand something quite idealised in terms of how the worker may be judged by his God, and in the writings of all three, work and labour are religiously as well as ideologically significant.9

In her essay, ‘Two Nonconformist Women Printers and Booksellers in the Mid-Eighteenth Century’, Alison McNaught appraises the careers of Tace Sowle (1666–1749) and Mary Fenner (1703?–1772), focussing in particular on their business practices. In Sowle’s case, she became the chief printer/publisher of Quaker writings, while Fenner was a leading printer/publisher of the Congregationalists (or Independents, as they were then called). There was considerable female involvement in the book trade during the seventeenth century. At each stage of the process – production, selling or distribution of the texts – early modern women contributed their business acumen, and their labour.10 Restrictions came into play because only small numbers of women received training as apprentices, and so lacked the formal status to practice the trade. The earlier case of printer Jacqueline De Vautrollier (fl 1540–1611) is one instructive example. She probably learned the trade during her husband’s life, but after his death, when she took over the business and printed under her own name, the Stationers’ Company asked her to stop trading. After her remarriage, to Richard Field, the print shop continued successfully, but we do not know whether Vautrollier continued to be active in the business because the published output bears only Field’s name.11 Many women’s labour is similarly erased from the historical record. McNaught’s study is of women much later in the seventeenth century, after some restrictions on trade had been lifted.12 Yet some aspects of ‘the ‘maleness of the trade’ still existed: Fenner becomes visible as a printer when she is a widow.13 As McNaught shows, it is clear that their affiliation with Nonconformists enabled Sowle and Fenner to run steady businesses in a trade that was highly competitive.14 They therefore achieved long or successful careers (in Sowle’s case, both), where many other women in the print trade fared significantly less well.

Bunyan’s life work meshes faith and labour, so he represents well the themes that emerge overall in these essays. In his autobiography Grace Abounding, where he presents the point at which he becomes a minister and elder in the Bedford congregation, he observes simply: ‘I […] did set upon the work’.15 Most definitions of work focus on
‘salaries, wages, profits’. Bunyan, however, explains his commitment and his talent for the work in which he was engaged in non-monetary terms: ‘being still desired by the Church, after some solemn prayer to the Lord, with fasting, I was more particularly called forth, and appointed to a more ordinary and publick preaching the Word’. Similarly, the essays collected in this special number of *Bunyan Studies* have looked more at the reasons why people work, and the value they place on work, not just treating it as a matter of remuneration. In doing so, they show the importance for the study of work of case-study-focussed accounts of individuals, as these provide insights into their experiences and value-systems. Background and ‘class’ position is a significant factor in assessing work, and Bunyan also is a reminder of why these categories in pre-industrial society are somewhat tenuous. While clear that, relative to some of his peers, Bunyan’s social position was a fairly low one, his first biographer Charles Doe, perhaps inadvertently, shows the difficulties of placing him socially. Consigning him to the ranks of the ‘Mean and Despicable’ through his parentage, Doe nevertheless highlights the advantages that Bunyan had in life, for instance an education. The Bunyan family over two generations had slipped down the social scale, and what Doe is probably therefore accurately reflecting is a drop in status, but despised by many of the measures of the day, Bunyan was not. He was a tinker, but not a vagrant. Despite the difficulties of assessing social stratification in the early modern period, social status is relevant to the understanding of Nonconformity and political protest. Finally, across these essays, there are insights into agriculture, trade and the professions, indicating the interlinking of faith and labour in three very significant areas of the economy.

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Notes


3 For instance, members of Liveries and Companies swore to uphold Christian values, and many of their organisations venerated a saint relevant to their trade. See Charles Clode, *The Early History of the Guild of*


5 F. D. Dow observes that: ‘studies suggest that the expansion of the electorate in the early seventeenth century enabled the substantial middling orders to become involved in the political disputes of their superiors’, Radicalism in the English Revolution, 1640–60 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), p. 5. In relation to the Levellers, Brian Manning notes that ‘Liburne took up the case of the silk-weavers of Spitalfields when they were forbidden by the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London to sell their laces and ribbons’, The English People and the English Revolution (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p. 228.


9 Compare also Corns’s critique of Winstanley’s tough approach to idleness to Waddell’s observation that defences of land rights could exclude outsiders and foreigners, in ibid., pp. 218–222.


13 Bell, ‘Women Writing’, p. 443.

14 For the relative prosperity of the Quakers, see James Walvin, The Quakers: Money and Morals (London: John Murray, 1997).


16 See under ‘work’, 4a, Oxford English Dictionary.
17 Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, p. 76.


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Why is John compared to Paul? They both wrote books and both were in jail. What is Bunyan's first wife's name? Unknown. What does unknown bring for her dowry? 2 religious books. Who is unknown's first child? Mary. What was special about Mary? 'Introduction to English Language aims to give students a broad overview of some of the main areas of study involved in the discipline of linguistics: the study of language, i.e. "- a solid basis in language analysis from which to proceed". Satori Soden, EN1023, 2012, p.1. Unknown have sound understanding of the basic terminology and concepts relevant to the study of languages; a basic critical understanding of the range and variety of traditions and approaches to the study of languages; a have improved basic skills in written expression and critical analysis. The Key Assessment Criteria. Retrieved April 24, 2020.