

BUNYAN'S BELIEFS



This information sheet deals with Bunyan's beliefs. Information about how Bunyan arrived at these beliefs is given in the Biography sheet which deals with his religious crisis. The historical perspective is covered in the sheet on Bunyan's World, and the establishment of Bunyan Meeting is covered in the sheet on the history of the church.

The 17th century Protestant Church in England had a strong Puritan element. However, the 1662 Act of Uniformity required that all ministers should declare publicly their assent to the Book of Common Prayer, and that those not episcopally ordained (made a priest by a bishop), should be deprived of their livings. Consequently some 2000 Puritan clergy were ejected from their livings. In many cases their congregations followed them and together they set up Nonconforming assemblies. These were the forerunners of today's Free Churches. Worship in these assemblies was simple; reading and preaching from the Bible occupied the central place and the prayers were not prepared but of the moment. Such assemblies were illegal and, if discovered, those involved were imprisoned or heavily fined or deprived of their goods and chattels. Many paid dearly for their determination to be free to worship God as their conscience dictated without the constraints of a prayer book.

Set out below are Bunyan's essential beliefs:

- Bunyan's faith was Bible based. He believed the Bible to be the authoritative Word of God in which men and women may discover all that is necessary for their salvation.
- Men and women are at odds with God, wayward and disobedient. The human heart is the source of all that is wrong with the world.
- God in his infinite love and mercy has provided a way back to himself - a way in which men and women can find true peace and a richer, fuller life.
- This is through Jesus Christ who died on the cross to reconcile us to God.
- The Christian therefore should trust Christ, reject the evil ways of the world and strive to be obedient to God's will as revealed in the Bible.
- This is possible through the strength and support of God's Holy Spirit who comes to live within the Christian.
- Christian congregations should be free under God to worship and organise their life without interference from ecclesiastical or state authorities and without being restricted to a form of words laid down in the Prayer Book.

Bunyan stood in the Puritan tradition of the 17th century Church. He underlined the need for conversion and personal faith.

Bunyan Meeting today is a Free Church belonging to the Baptist Union, the Congregational Federation and is an Observer with the United Reformed Church.