
MEETING WITH EVANGELIST

THIS allegory frequently draws its characters from real people who moved across the landscape of Bunyan's life. John Gifford, the pastor of the church in Bedford, was one such person. He was a man who was faithful to his calling, and in so doing, became Evangelist to Bunyan himself.



The people who come into our lives either for good or evil are frequently remembered because of their words or conduct that, in part, have shaped us into what we are today. The first minister of the gospel whose words sank deeply into our souls and awakened us from that fatal ease surely holds an esteemed place in our hearts.

Scripture makes it clear that there are those who are given to the church with peculiar giftings for evangelism (Ephesians 4:11). They may have a more official capacity with

both gift and recognition, or they may be a Sunday school teacher, a youth pastor or just a friend speaking from the heart and doing "the work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5).

The liberal church of today has not changed much since Bunyan's day. Its message is that a sense of danger for one's soul is only imagined and that a burden of guilt is the product of an overly sensitive conscience fed by the religious extremism that is inherent in the preaching of many pulpits across the land—the God who keeps track of our sins in a book somewhere is nothing but a cosmic bully and any who follow this kind of thinking need psychiatric help. Bunyan's Evangelist would surely be singled out as an extremist as he gives the warning, "Fly from the wrath to come." Of course, we recognize these words as those of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:7), who was also deemed an extremist by some, and who consequently lost his head.

The Apostle Paul, in like fashion, reminds those in the church at Corinth that "knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11). It seems quite clear that the message of the evangelist is couched in the understanding that God will deal with the impenitent heart in judgment and in wrath. Yet if the message simply stopped there, how dark and hopeless would our plight be? Evangelist asks, "Dost thou see yonder shining light? Keep that light in thine eye." All is not without hope because Christ is the Light that shines in the darkness and offers Himself freely in the gospel to all who will (by faith) come to Him.
