

John Bunyan's The Holy War

A modern English version

by Thelma H. Jenkins

Foreword by Dr D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones



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First published in 1682

A modern English version: Thelma H. Jenkins

First edition 1976, Second edition 1989, Third edition 2003, Revised edition 2015.

This edition 2023.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data available

ISBN: 978-0-85234-267-1

Illustrations by Lewis F. Lupton

Cover design by Pete Barnsley (CreativeHoot.com)

Evangelical Press, (EP books), an imprint of IOPublishing.

Unit C, Tomlinson Road, Leyland, PR25 2DY, England

Email: epbooks@IOofthose.com

Website: www.epbooks.org

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Part one

**Downfall
and
Redemption**



I

Mansoul listens to the tempter

There was once a fair and beautiful city called Mansoul. This city had been built by the great king El Shaddai for his own pleasure and delight and, of all the things made by this wise and good king, Mansoul was undoubtedly the masterpiece.

In the midst of the city was a famous and stately palace,¹ strong as a castle, yet beautiful enough to be the residence of so great a king. It had been built for this very purpose—that El Shaddai himself might dwell there and rule, alone, in wisdom and love. The wall of the town was exceedingly strong, being built in such a way that no enemy from outside could break in, and no harm could come to the

city, except by consent of the townsmen within. Five gates were set in the walls, for entering or leaving the city and these again, could never be opened by force from outside, but only by the willingness of those inside. The names of the gates were—Ear Gate, Eye Gate, Mouth Gate, Nose Gate and Feel Gate.

When Mansoul was first built by El Shaddai it was in perfect condition. There was provision of everything needful stored within its walls and it had the most excellent law that has ever been formed. There was not one deceitful person within its gates; all its men were true men, all loyal to each other, which was no small blessing. Over and above all this, Mansoul enjoyed the protection, favour and delight of the king's own presence (for so long as it remained true to him).

Now I must tell you that a great enemy arose against Mansoul: a mighty giant, who determined that he would overthrow the great king and have this fair city for his own dwelling. Who was this enemy? The Scriptures call him Satan, or Diabolus. At one time, he had been a high ranking servant of King El Shaddai, enjoying much honour and glory in his position. Sadly, however, his heart was lifted up in pride within him, so that he coveted the position of being next to El Shaddai himself, a dignity and honour that already belonged to the king's beloved son, Emmanuel.

Well, Diabolus plotted with a few of his ambitious companions and they agreed together to revolt against their king and seize the coveted position. How foolish they were, for the king and his son, possessing all knowledge, could not but know of their treason. Diabolus and his companions were convicted of this horrible conspiracy and not only were they cast out of their previous positions of honour and rank, they were also banished eternally from the courts of the king, never to expect any favour from him again.

Realising that they had forever forfeited their honour and the favour of their king, what did these miserable creatures do but add to their

former pride a terrible rage and malice against both El Shaddai and his son. As they roved from place to place, burning to find something of the king's upon which they might revenge themselves, they came at length to the city of Mansoul. Knowing that El Shaddai had built and beautified this place for himself, they were filled with horrible joy at the thought of making an assault upon, and perhaps of taking, the very delight of the king for their own possession.

"Now," they said, "we have found how to be revenged upon the king. Let us take counsel together, and see how we may best accomplish the capture of this city." They forthwith held a council of war and set themselves to answer these four questions. Shall we *all* show ourselves to the town of Mansoul, or send a representative? Shall we let them see us in our present ragged and beggarly condition? Shall we tell Mansoul plainly what we are after, or approach them with trickery and deceit? Shall we endeavour to shoot one of the principal men of the city; that is, the one who may cause us the most difficulty?

"In answer to the first question," said Diabolus, "I say no, we must not all show ourselves, lest we put the townspeople in a fright—because if they take alarm, we shall never win the town, since no-one can enter without their consent. Let a few, or even one, be sent to assault Mansoul and let *me* be that one."

The council all agreed to this and came to their next question. After some discussion, Beelzebub advised that Diabolus should definitely go in disguise—but *what* disguise?

"Why not go disguised as an animal?" suggested Lucifer. "You could take the form of one of those animals over which they have dominion? They would be less likely to suspect such a one of making an assault upon them."

This suggestion was received with applause and it was finally decided that Diabolus should take the form of a dragon, which was a familiar enough sight in those days.

After another lengthy discussion they resolved not to state plainly their intentions because, as we have already remarked, the inhabitants of Mansoul were a strong people in a strong town, who could not be won without their own consent.

“Besides which” added Legion, “if they realise what we are up to, they will immediately cry to their king for help and that will quickly be the end of us. Let us rather approach them with flattering words, lies and promises, pretending things that will never happen and promising them things which they will never receive. This will be the way to win them, inducing them to open their gates of their own accord, for they are an innocent people, quite unused to lying, deceit and hypocrisy. They will, therefore, believe everything we say, imagining it all to be true, especially if we pretend great love for them and great concern for their honour and advantage.”

It was felt that this crafty counsel could not be bettered and all that remained to be decided was whether to shoot one of the principal townsmen and, if so, which one? Everyone agreed that this would be a wise course to take and it was decided, if at all possible, to destroy Captain Resistance, for he was a great man in Mansoul, and the one whom Diabolus and his company feared more than any other. So, the council of war having ended, this evil band then marched against Mansoul, all of them being invisible except Diabolus, who was disguised as a dragon.

Drawing near to the city, they all sat down near Ear Gate while Diabolus blew his trumpet to call for audience. Upon hearing this, the chief men of the town of Mansoul came to the wall to see what was the matter. There were Lord Innocent, Lord Willbewill, Lord Understanding (the Lord Mayor), Mr Conscience (the Recorder) and Captain Resistance. Lord Willbewill was their spokesman and he demanded to know why the town had been roused in this unusual

manner. Meek as a lamb, Diabolus answered, and a very fine speech he made.

“Gentlemen of the famous town of Mansoul! As you can see, I am one who is bound by your king to do you homage and service and this is my very reason for approaching you. I have come to seek *your* advantage, not my own, and to tell you how you may be delivered from the bondage in which you are held, although you are at present unaware of it.”

At this, the men of Mansoul pricked up their ears.

“Bondage?” they said. “Of what bondage does he speak?”

Thus, having their attention and curiosity from the start, Diabolus proceeded.

“I have something to say to you about your king and his laws and how they affect yourselves. I know, of course, that your king is both great and powerful; yet all that he has told you is not true. He has said that if you do so small a thing as to eat the fruit that he has forbidden, you will die. Now that is *not* true; you will *not* surely die! Even worse than that, the very thing he forbids you to do is something that would be of most benefit to you. The tree that he has forbidden you to touch is called ‘the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’, and you cannot imagine how pleasant its fruit is, or how much to be desired it is, while you obey your king’s commandment. You are kept in blindness and ignorance, yet you pride yourselves that you are a free people. You are not free; you are held down and deprived and that for the sole reason that your king will have it so. Why, how grievous it is, that you should be kept back from the very thing that would most benefit you, giving you both wisdom and honour, so that your eyes would be opened and you would be like gods!”

At this point, while Diabolus was still speaking, one of the invisible company shot at Captain Resistance, mortally wounding him in the head so that, to the amazement of the townspeople and the secret

delight of Diabolus, he fell over the wall, dead. Now, he being the only man of war in Mansoul, the people had no more heart to resist, which was just as Diabolus would have it. Then stood forth the one whom he had brought as his spokesman and, making himself now visible to the townsmen, he began to address them as follows:

“Gentlemen, it makes my master and myself happy to see you all listening so quietly and attentively, for we hope between us to give you good advice. You must realise that my master has such great love for you that he is prepared to speak to you for your good, even though he risks the severe anger of the great El Shaddai by so doing. There is, I am sure, little need for me to add to his words. Why, the very name of the tree, ‘the knowledge of good and evil’ will surely convince you. I therefore only add this word, with his gracious permission” (this with an oily smile and a most humble bow towards Diabolus). “Consider his words; look at the tree and look at its promising fruit. Remember also, that as yet you know very little, and to eat of the fruit of *this* tree will give you greatly increased knowledge.”

Now when the townspeople saw that the fruit of the tree was good to eat, most pleasant to the eyes and, above all, a tree that could make them wiser than they then were, they followed this evil advice and picked and ate of its fruit. I forgot to tell you that, as this crafty orator was speaking, Lord Innocent staggered and fell down where he stood, and no efforts could bring him to life again. So both Captain Resistance and Lord Innocent died, these two brave men, who were the finest and noblest in the whole city of Mansoul and, there being none others so noble, all the remaining townspeople yielded obedience to Diabolus and became his slaves, as you will hear. For, upon eating the forbidden fruit, they forgot all about their good king El Shaddai and his law and the solemn warning he had given them. They immediately opened both Ear Gate and Eye Gate and in swarmed Diabolus with his now visible followers.