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*Christ's Presence through $\alpha\nu\alpha\mu\nu\epsilon\sigma\iota\sigma$ in
Seventeenth-Century Nonconformist
Writing*

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Christ's Presence through αναμνησις in Seventeenth-Century Nonconformist Writing

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itaque ex quo te didici, manes in memoria mea, et illic te invenio, cum reminiscor tui et delector in te [Since therefore I learnt to know thee, hast thou still kept in my memory, and there do I find thee, whenever I call thee to remembrance, and delight myself in thee] (Augustine II X.xxiv).

The high number of spiritual autobiographies dating from the seventeenth-century suggests that a strong narrative impetus is a corollary to the tradition, begun in the writings of Saint Augustine, wherein memory corresponds to the soul's presence in God. Indeed, much reformed theology is predicated on the necessity of a believer's nearness to Christ. My reading of nonconformist texts suggests that the conceit of remembrance, through which Christ can be 'brought near', endows narrative (whether spoken in a meeting or recorded on paper and distributed) with a quasi-Eucharistic function, thus enabling these believers to gain the 'benefits' of communion without the dangerously 'popish' elements of sacramental worship.^[1] Critics have established the connection between theology and the literary activity of nonconformists (Keeble); I move beyond these critics, however, to postulate the function of memory as an authorizing conceit.

Memories, like dreams, are inherently personal phenomena. The recording of memory in a literary context thus forces us to examine the extent to which a transcription of a remembered event is an accurate reflection of that experience. Is it not, rather, a reassembling of the past, or even a projection of a desired experience? To borrow Dean Ebner's encapsulation, it 'superimposes upon the welter of remembered facts [...] the unity and order of a present mental outlook'

(Ebner 20). An author's present beliefs necessarily shape or reorganise memories to fit a particular narrative purpose. Therefore, I understand 'memory' in these writings to be a conceit: a necessary tool for literary creation and spiritual understanding. My focus is the spiritual autobiography; yet I draw on a wide variety of nonconformist writings, or 'narratives', including fictional work and sermon treatises in Bunyan's *œuvre* to delineate the shared theological and literary background which prioritises memory as a 'conceit'.

The role of memory in Christian life derives from the gospel accounts of the Last Supper:

και λαβων αρτον ευχαριστησας εκλασεν και εδωκεν αυτοις λεγων,
τουτο εστιν το σωμα μου το υπερ υμων διδομενον:τουτο ποιειτε
εις την εμην αναμνησιν(*Novum Testamentum Graece* Luke 22.19;
'And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them,
saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of
me').^[2]

Luke's use of the word "αναμνησιν" (from αναμνησις: anamnesis) provokes wide theological discussion; possibilities of interpretation emerge both from the context of this gospel and in the writing of Saint Paul. I. Howard Marshall encapsulates the differences between these two New Testament uses: 'in Lk. it is primarily a command to repeat the rite in future, whereas in Paul it has become primarily a command to remember Jesus' (Howard Marshall 804). We see therefore that anamnesis can indicate both the particular remembrance and commemoration of Jesus in the Last Supper and, more generally, a remembrance of him in all aspects of one's own life. Remembrance and its corollary of interpretative possibilities enable a believer to place a Christian framework on the experiences of his life and to recollect and thus relive moments of perceived closeness to Christ. So, as we shall see, the impetus to repetition and remembrance encapsulated in αναμνησις is inextricable from the essential need

to narrate the experience of Christ's presence for seventeenth-century nonconformists.

The validity of the term ἀναμνησις to the nonconformist believers whose writings I discuss might seem questionable; after all, one would not suggest that Bunyan and his contemporaries read the bible in Greek. Yet the use of anamnesis is not simply apposite: it is arguably imperative, since no single English word fully encapsulates the range and theological significance of memory implied in the use of the word in the bible. Indeed, the permeation of all aspects of nonconformist writing, and, furthermore, of nonconformist experience, with scriptural references supports my belief that ἀναμνησις, which ties the act of remembrance to the presence, commemoration and bringing near of Christ, is vital for critical reading of these narratives.

The roots of the spiritual autobiography tradition can be traced to St Augustine's *Confessions*, in which Augustine records the minute changes in his awareness of his spiritual state (passim). This accords with David Carr's argument that life and narrative are inextricable, which Paul Strohm helpfully encapsulates: our practical behavior in the world depends on our ability to narrativize our own actions. As social actors we inevitably stand in "the story-teller's position with respect to our own actions," with "no elements enter[ing] our experience... unstoried or unnarrativized" (Strohm 61).^[3]

A spiritual narrative can interweave experience and the believer's interpretation of that experience to create and recreate in the act of reading an assurance of Christ's presence in a particular moment. This presence exists in many ways: in the moment of the experience, in the moment of remembrance and in the teleology of the predestinarian framework. The ultimate goal of the teleology is to achieve Christ's presence; yet this cannot be achieved without assurance of Christ's presence in one's own life. A believer can never be sure if he is saved, but writing can provide the necessary opposition to enable him to resist despair and to repent

through re-membrance. In Sarah Davy's conversion narrative of 1670, she loses an achieved closeness to Christ because of poor memory:

Many times has the Lord been pleased to come in by a sermon to my soul [...] But oh how dull have I been to remember, and how did my unworthy walking cause those blessed truths to slip out of my mind (Davy 104).

The agency of the Spirit is suggested in Davy's personification of 'those blessed truths' which 'slip out' like a forgotten guest. In *Grace Abounding*,^[4] the soterial function of memory is clear when Bunyan remembers an unfulfilled desire to write which leads to a loss of memory and thus to a loss of assurance:

now I could believe that my sins should be forgiven me; wherefore I said in my Soul with much gladness, Well, I would I had a pen and ink here, I would write this down before I go any further, for surely I will not forget *this*, forty years hence; but alas! within less then forty days I began to question all again (Bunyan GA 27-28).

Paradoxically Bunyan retains enough memory of the event to be able to record it much later, even if the failure to record it immediately leads him 'to question all again'.

For the growing population of nonconformist congregations in the seventeenth century, this Augustinian tradition of self-examination was mediated through preaching texts and reinforced by the reforming theology of John Calvin. Calvin taught that man could only know God existentially; knowledge of God comes from the essential combination of divine revelation and the experience of being human (Ebner 35). Calvin's importance to the theology underpinning reformed belief in England, and his prioritisation of the need for self-awareness, contributed to the rise in spiritual diaries, which provide one model for the autobiography: private searching of one's soul and one's life as a tool in spiritual life might form the basis for a narrative that could be published or distributed for the edification of a wider circle of believers. It is conceivable, and indeed probable, that the framework of spiritual interpretation was ever-present in a believer's mind so that

the ‘memory’ we read on a page has been filtered twice through the hermeneutic process: once as the lived experience is fitted to a theological paradigm and again as it is recalled and reinterpreted in transcription. As part of Michael Davies’s attempt to reassess the severity of Bunyan’s theology, he suggests that the ‘condition of the believer under grace is undoubtedly one of striving for sanctification amid a continual battle against temptation but, should sin occur (or, rather, when it does), it can be accommodated by grace nonetheless (Davies 43). He sees a recognition of the necessary imperfection of any attempt to live a holy life in Bunyan’s ‘doctrine of grace’: it ‘becomes the bottom line not of a harsh and terrorizing theology that merely degrades human nature as hopelessly depraved but of one which accepts human imperfection and offers a reassuring solution’ (44). While Davies’s need to persuade his audience of his theory leads him to suppress the harsh truth of damnation for the majority which is the corollary of the concept of an elect, his suggestion is helpful when we consider the interest in the author’s imperfect state in the narratives of Bunyan and his contemporaries. Davies’s words open up a space, absent in the strictest interpretation of double predestination, for edifying narratives. Re-examination of sin need not simply determine one’s salvation or election but rather might lead to forgiveness and renewed closeness to Christ. In nonconformist writing, one sees that remembering tribulations leads to deeper ‘knowledge’ of God through the reorganising of experience into a narrated ‘memory’ which can indicate Christ’s presence in such moments:

Oh, the great Consolations and enlargements of heart, with fervent desires after Jesus Christ and his grace, which hath often made me thank god for trouble when I have found it drive me neerer to himself, to the throne of his grace (Beaumont 37).

For Agnes Beaumont, a member of Bunyan’s congregation, the very religion which estranges her from her father paradoxically provides the comfort that she needs to live through her earthly despair by dignifying it with the possibility of divine planning. Anne Wentworth, in her 1677 justification of her decision to

leave her husband, uses memory of past nearness to Christ to sustain her for future suffering:

And whilst men have done all they can to break my heart, he has bound up my soul in the bundle of *life* [1 Samuel 25.29] and *love*, and he pleads my cause, and takes my part, and has spoken by his word with power and authority from heaven, saying I shall abide with him, and he with me [John 15.4], and come and sup with me [Revelation 3.20], and never leave me, nor forsake me [1 Kings 8.57] (Wentworth 187).

The perfect tense of the first line ‘have done ... has bound’ moves seamlessly to the present intervention of Christ: ‘pleads ...takes’. Thence it moves forwards to future comfort ‘shall abide’. Yet the syntactical ambiguity of ‘never leave me, nor forsake me’, caused in part by the condensation of many biblical texts into a single sentence, leaves the reader, and perhaps Wentworth herself to whom such a plea would be crucial, uncertain as to whether ‘never leave’ is an imperative from the believer to the Lord, or whether it picks up the present participle ‘saying’ to create an invitation or command from God to the believer. The sustaining thought of heaven is a common motif. Alice Thornton, an Anglican writing in the mid-1600s, desires ‘to be dissolved and so be with Christ’, which leads to the paradoxical wish to ‘die daily and be with God in soul and spirit, loving him with all my soul and a perfect heart’ (Thornton 162).

Some tribulations derive from the source of the comfort which will carry the believer through the suffering. Wentworth encapsulates this in her certainty: ‘[God will also] by a *divine presence* support me in the midst of all those sufferings his work can bring me into’ (Wentworth 186). Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers, Quakers imprisoned in inhumane conditions by the Inquisition in Malta, exemplify such experience (Evans and Cheevers 116-30). The presence of their God is experienced mostly clearly at the times when they suffer torment for him: ‘The Lord was not wanting to us at any time, for power not words to stop the mouths of gainsayers of his truth, neither in revelations, nor visions. Praise be to

his name forever' (127). This remembrance of Christ's presence seems for them to prefigure a future presence which fortifies them for the troubles to come, recalling once more the glancing both backwards and forwards in anamnesis. One particular threat of violence to Evans and Cheevers resonates with imagery that can also be found in Bunyan's allegory *The Holy War*:

For between the eighth and ninth hour in the evening, he sent a drum to proclaim at the prison-gate. We knew not what it was, but the fire of the Lord consumed it. And about the fourth hour in the morning, they were coming with a drum and guns and the Lord said unto me, 'Arise out of thy grave-clothes' (Bunyan HW 122).

Just as Evans and Cheevers remember their experience of Christ to reassure themselves against future turmoil, the remembrance of Emanuel's previous visit persuades the attacked citizens of Mansoul that he will come again to save them.

Bunyan's sermon treatise *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ* answers many of the questions we might ask about the desire to be near to a god whose nearness leads to such tangible danger (Bunyan MW VIII 239-392). Bunyan asserts that '[w]hen Christ is absent from his people, they go on but slowly, and with great difficulty; but when he joyneth himself unto them, Oh! how fast they steer their course, how soon are they at their Journies end!' (239). The syntactic hesitancy of the first clause enacts the difficulty it describes; after the semi colon, however, the pace literally picks up with exclamations following each other like little bullets of surprised joy. Later Bunyan sums up the process of reaching Christ thus:

he that is *come* to Christ, his groans, and tears, his doubts, and fears, are turned into Songs and Praises; for that he hath now received the atonement, and the earnest of his inheritance: But he that is but yet *a-coming*, hath not those Praises nor Songs of deliverance with him, nor has he as yet, received the atonement, and earnest of his Inheritance, which is, the Sealing testimony of the Holy Ghost, through the sprinkling of the Blood of Christ upon his Conscience (301).

Bunyan establishes the ultimate joy of being ‘come to Christ’ in the transformation of rhyming clauses of troubles into the doublet ‘songs and praises’. This state thus becomes the aim for those who are ‘yet a-coming’: all those who are still alive are encompassed in this present participle so their goal must be this unity with Christ in death. So the necessity of being near Christ is inextricable from the allegorical pilgrimage of both parts of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* and of the battle for Mansoul in *The Holy War*. Korshin helpfully comments that

[f]or Bunyan, the pilgrimage of human life is a figuration of the individual’s struggle to achieve salvation; Christian’s story[...] is both pre- and postfiguration of the life and mission of Christ and of the Savior’s perfections (Korshin 218).

As Christian says in the first part of *Pilgrim*, ‘Why, there I hope to see him *alive*, that did hang *dead* on the Cross’ (50): ἀναμνεσις simultaneously reaches forwards to heaven, and backwards to the Passion. The end is Christ and this necessitates, authorises and even glorifies the problems encountered in the spiritual journey of life before death.

Remembering sin and sinful moments enables the believer to revisit those moments with a current awareness of divine presence:

O the remembrance of my great sins, of my great temptations, and of my great fears of perishing for ever! They bring fresh into my mind, the remembrance of my great help, my great support from Heaven, and the great grace that God extended to such a wretch as I (Bunyan GA 4-5).^[5]

Bunyan, with characteristic rhetorical flair, uses the full capacity of the adjective ‘great’ so that, with each repetition, its shift in meaning enacts the movement from an unregenerate state to regeneracy. The coupling of ‘great’ with the first person pronoun on no fewer than five of the six repetitions of the adjective reinforces the hugely personal nature of this journey. Yet the implication of the narrative transmission is an impetus to communication which suggests to the

reader that ‘my’ experience can become your experience. The subtlety of this communicative relationship enables ‘the remembrance of my great sins’ simultaneously to stave off regress in the narrator (to prevent a falling back into ungodly ways) and to edify the reader. We must learn from Bunyan’s experience to examine our own and to find in memory the steps to a similar soterial journey. So anamnesis places Bunyan in communion with God, and this communion extends, through his narrative, to his readers.

When dispute with clergy led to only infrequent ordinances at the congregation attended by Susannah Parr, an Independent writing in 1659, the ‘gap’ is filled by ‘praying, and speaking one to another what God had done for our souls’ (Parr 104). Through speaking of one’s past, recent or distant, one narrates Christ’s presence during the tribulations of life and during one’s striving for assurance of salvation; thus a believer brings Christ to the congregation at a meeting and potentially to the reader of a published text. Autobiography is thus intimately connected to the conversion testimony, in which a believer convinces others of his godliness in order to gain acceptance into a congregation. Parr writes:

They who desired admission into the society were sometimes desired in a private meeting to speak what experience they had of the work of grace upon their souls[...] it being laid down as a ground, that we must have an account of a change from a natural and legal estate, into an estate of grace and believing, of those whom we admitted into communion with us (108).

Since the function of these testimonies is persuasion, we can see how the verity of memories might become subsumed into the need to persuade. Again, therefore, memory must be read as a conceit. We might ask how these largely published accounts differ from private meditations on an experience. There must be an impetus to contain elements of formal proof and the rhetoric of faith in the verbal texture of published works or shared manuscripts which perhaps would be absent from purely private writing.^[6]

What then, is the role of these narratives? If narration can reshape, or is intrinsic to, remembered experience or if, indeed, memory is itself a fundamentally narrative form, we might wonder whether the reading of other people's experience might affect the way that believers experienced their own lives. While predestinarian faith rejects works to the extent that accusations of antinomianism, the 'school of thought which denies any continuing role for the Old Testament Law (Greek: *nomos*) in the Christian life,'^[7] could be (and were) made against believers, narratives found a role as a paradigm for human experience. Wiseman tells Attentive in *Mr Badman* 'All that a man does, he should doe in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, as being commanded, and authorized to doe it by him' (113). Narratives, whether allegorical or autobiographical, invoke through *αναμνησις* the vivid presence of Christ in a believer's actions and thoughts. This has implications for the spiritual life of readers as well as the author. If spiritual growth promoted by someone else's narrative is itself narrated, a text has a potentially never-ending impact, exemplified in one of the few references to non-biblical reading in *Grace Abounding*. When Bunyan reads Luther's 'Comment on the *Galathians*': 'I found my condition in his experience, so largely and profoundly handled, as if his Book had been written out of my heart' (38).

These texts are crucial to the reader's progress on the Christian journey: they can act as a 'godly friend' like Hopeful and Faithful to Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress I*: the relationship between Christian and his fellow pilgrims is essential to the successful completion of their journey.

Then said Hopeful, My Brother, you have quite forgot the Text, where its said of the wicked, There is no band in their death, but their strength is firm, they are not troubled at other men, neither are they plagued like other men (158).

Speaking of a similar episode, N.H. Keeble comments that

Were it not for Christian's insistence that he [Hopeful] remain awake, watchful and actively engaged in rehearsing and assessing his experiences,

he would have succumbed to the lure to forget himself. It is just such an office Bunyan in his marginalia performs for the reader (Keeble 149).

The marginalia explicitly lead the reader to the desired effect of the words on the page. As we have seen, Bunyan's rhetoric likewise guides our response to his narrated experience, drawing us to a 'godly' and thus edifying interpretation of his writing.

The implicit corollary to the moments of doubt I have discussed is the impetus to determine one's soteriological state, even when that state cannot, and must not, be known until after death: 'Therefore this would still stick with me, How can you tell you are Elected? and what if you should not? how then?' (20). These words of Bunyan's in *Grace Abounding* suggest the uncontrollable urge to be able to 'tell' through the questions which become shorter and consequently more desperate. In the preface to his spiritual autobiography, Bunyan's prose, infused with biblical texts, indicates the crucial role of memory in this search for assurance:

It is profitable for Christians to be often calling to mind the very beginnings of Grace with their souls. [...] My God, saith David, Psal. 42.6. my soul is cast down within me; but I will remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar (4).

These prefatory remarks establish the importance of Bunyan's narrated memories before he begins, using a density of interwoven scripture to provide the authority which makes the author's claim that 'it is profitable' undeniable.

By interspersing the narrative of one's own 'beginnings of grace' with references to scriptural authority, fleeting moments of assurance of God's presence can be made permanent or reinterpreted to provide stability for the writer and a template of soteriological experience for the reader:

I remember that one day, as I was[...] considering of the enmity that was in me to God, that Scripture came in my mind, *He hath made peace by the blood of his Cross*, Col. 1.20 by which I was made to see both again, and

again, and again, that day, that *God* and my Soul were friends by this blood; yea, I saw that the *justice of God* and my *sinful* Soul, could imbrace and kiss each other through this blood: this was a good day to me, I hope I shall not forget it (Bunyan *GA* 34).

The necessity of making permanent perhaps arises from the paradoxical attempt to place the eternal present in dialogue with the sequential thoughts and words of a human who lives in a temporal narrative.

A similar emphasis on the need to make these fleeting moments permanent, or perhaps to reorganise one's experience in order to fit into the template provided by other spiritual testimonies, pervades many narratives. Sarah Davy's writing exemplifies a particularly burning necessity to keep the past in the present: 'My soul, forget not his unspeakable love, let it be recorded. Keep in remembrance these choice blessings of a loving Father, bestowed so freely on me in the Lord Jesus Christ the dear Son of his love' (168). The apostrophe 'my soul' leads to a string of imperatives 'forget not...let it...keep it'. The economy of expression in these taut commands provides a contrast to the description of grace, made abundant with a high density of adjectives (choice, loving, dear) and the sheer verbosity in her naming of Christ: 'the Lord Jesus Christ the dear Son of his love'. Davy piles up synonyms for Christ, seemingly unable to end her description, lest Christ's presence in the memory ends as well.

In *The Holy War*, Christ, as Emanuel, is present in the allegory. So Bunyan, as John Knott suggests, 'makes the prospect of consolation more vividly personal than it ever becomes in *The Pilgrim's Progress*' (Knott 159). Indeed, Emanuel's physical absence for parts of the narrative leads to the emphasis of his presence in the memories of the citizens: ἀναμνησις keeps him near for those people who resist the tyranny of Diabolus and thus provides the motivation for the narrative drive towards his physical return in the conclusion. The experience of Christ in the present moment, or in the remembrance of a past moment places the believer on a soterial teleology^[8] which can culminate only in the eternal presence after

death; one's 'knowledge' of Christ's presence leads one to live one's life according to the template of its assumed ending, in salvation or damnation after death. This progression is seen clearly in *Grace Abounding* although the teleological framework that Bunyan thus accepts means that closure can never be reached in his narrative:

Now had I an evidence for Heaven, with many golden Seals thereon, all hanging in my sight; now could I remember this manifestation, and the other discovery of grace with comfort; and should often long and desire that the last day were come, that I might for ever be inflamed with the sight, and joy, and communion of him, whose Head was crowned with Thorn (37).

The anaphoric parallelism of the clauses 'Now had I [...] now could I' enforces the temporal ambiguity; the past (had, could) is made present (now...now) in the act of writing. The polysyndeton 'sight, and joy, and communion' creates a sense of inexpressible felicity, uncontainable except in a piled up combination of experiences. Yet this felicity is tempered by the final syntactic unit 'whose head was crowned with Thorns'. Bunyan reminds us that the bliss of heaven is reached only through the pain of the passion. Narrated memory thus glances back to Christ's presence on earth and forwards to the soteriological purpose of that incarnation.

The cyclical nature of *Grace Abounding* implies that its governing teleology is problematic: one cannot reach a convenient ending to an autobiographical work when one believes that the ultimate ending of salvation or damnation cannot be known until after death. Indeed, Bunyan expresses a resistance to the passage of time at certain points in the narrative; to die at the wrong moment in the cycle would be to die without assurance of salvation:

as I at present could not find my self fit for present death, so I thought to live long would make me yet more unfit; for time would make me forget all, and wear even the remembrance of the evil of sin, the worth of

Heaven, and the need I had of the Blood of Christ to wash me, both out of mind and thought (33).

Bunyan's prose conveys the desperation that can accompany the double predestinarian doctrine. Yet, paradoxically, while narrative can 're-member', and even re-enact, assurance, the corollary of the impossibility of determining one's soterial state before death is that narrative cannot, ultimately, be trusted. This is exemplified in the process in *A Revelation of the Fearful Estate of Francis Spira* whereby the teleology is undermined: the narrative assumes an ending in damnation which is undercut by an afterword which asserts Spira's probable election. Francis Spira, a sixteenth-century protestant who recanted his beliefs, is convinced of his degeneracy: *nothing can bring any benefit to me a Reprobate; but that everything shall tend to my deeper condemnation*' (Spira 76-77), and the entire narrative moves towards his presumed ending in hell. Yet the afterword, written by the bishop of London, asserts that his certainty of damnation is misplaced: it emphasises Spira's 'sweet, humble and charitable speeches' and suggests that his error was principally to 'conclude from present sense, to Gods past Reprobation and future Damnation; both which is hard, if possible, for any man to determine in his own, much more in others cases' (79-80). A reader cannot know which, or indeed if either, man is correct.

Assurance of salvation must be tenuous. One can gain assurance only through interpretation of experience; epistemological certainty is impossible. The need to authorise this interpretation leads many authors to frame such experience with the memory of scripture:

And many more sweet and seasonable *scriptures* was the Lord pleased graciously to bring into my remembrance the mercies of old as a tender and a loving Father who often unto the Lord and spread my condition before the throne of his grace, having much encouragement to hope in his mercy (Davy 173).

So ‘the Lord’ brings the Father to the believer through the spirit-inspired Word: reformed belief accepted that the writers of Scripture were writing the word of God directly since their writing derived from inspiration by the Holy Spirit. As Nuttall has commented, for seventeenth-century nonconformists attention was directed ‘to the nature of religion in the Bible, and more especially in the New Testament, as something individually experienced, a living, personal relationship, open to Everyman, between God and his soul’ (Nuttall 4). What we might call the act of self knowledge or self awareness which is necessary to perceive the personal application of a text or spiritual experience is, for Augustine, inherently connected with the soul’s presence in God. Each leads to and depends upon the other.

These narratives are predicated on the conceit of the author or narrator’s memory; yet the reader can never know the extent to which these memories exist, have been invented, or have been shaped to fit a certain purpose. Further, as with all spiritual writings, the question of Christ’s presence, and whether it is understood to be real or imagined, depends as much on the faith of the reader as of the writer. Indeed, without epistemological certainty, the author himself must rely on his own interpretation to delineate his relationship with Christ. As Beth Lynch comments:

If epistemological shortfall is a defining fact of Reformed faith, faith is also the means by which this shortfall is elided or suppressed – a mode of rhetorical violence which forges verification, hermeneutic continuity, faithful conviction, when there is evidence to support none (Lynch 163).

Bunyan’s use of such ‘rhetorical violence’ has raised questions for many readers of his work due to the vexed question in the post-Reformation period of, to quote Barbara Lewalski, ‘what kind of art may be used in presenting sacred subject matter and as to how sinful, fallen man may write of divine truth’ (Lewalski 11). Rhetoric comprises both the arts of persuasion laid out in humanist rhetorical handbook and, more simply, the use of particular figures and tropes. Bunyan

implicitly affirms the role of such tropes in his work even in the process whereby he rejects rhetoric:

[I] could have adorned all things more then here I have seemed to do: but I dare not: God did not play in convincing of me; the Devil did not play in tempting of me; neither did I play when I sunk as into a bottomless pit, when the pangs of hell caught hold upon me: wherefore I may not play in my relating of them, but be plain and simple, and lay the thing as it was (GA 5).

The almost anaphoric repetition of ‘did not play’ which leads to Bunyan’s climactic ‘wherefore I may not play’ proves how rhetorical Bunyan’s style was, despite his asserted desire to ‘be plain and simple’. This contradiction reflects the anxiety of reformed believers adequately to convey God’s saving message while rejecting the High Style of Catholic and Anglican preaching: in the seventeenth century the style and language in which belief was articulated defined the believer’s religious affiliation. The prefatory poem to *The Pilgrim’s Progress I* reflects Bunyan’s anxiety:

They must be grop’d for, and be tickled too,
 Or they will not be catcht, what e’re you do.
 [...]was not Gods Laws,
 His Gospel-laws in older time held forth
 By Types, Shadows and Metaphors? (3-4).

For Bunyan, the power of words must be exploited fully for the purposes of a godly narrative. Thus, even if we cannot know whether he had read rhetorical handbooks, we can conclude that Bunyan consciously crafts his words in rhetorically forcefully arrangements. Such attention to the arrangement and construction of words suggests that Bunyan’s use of the conceit of memory might be likewise deliberate. The revisions and additions to *Grace Abounding* are, after

all, testimony to an anxiety to re-shape the remembered experience it contains: Bunyan's desire to release the full edifying power of his narrative leads him constantly to amend and amplify the text, to 'edit' his 'memories'.

In *Pilgrim*, Bunyan illustrates the importance of anamnesis through allegory. Christian's failure to remember the key is responsible for the torment he and Hopeful suffer in Doubting Castle: '*What a fool, quoth he, am I, thus to lie in a stinking Dungeon, when I may well walk at liberty? I have a Key in my bosom, called Promise, that will, (I am perswaded) open any Lock in Doubting-Castle*' (118). Just as Christian's key to freedom, to continue his pilgrimage to God's presence, is simply the 'Promise' of that presence, Davy's closeness to God relies upon his closeness to her and response to her prayer. Her narrative gains supreme importance in her spiritual journey and she invokes Christ to enable her to use it to keep him near. Narrative works for her like anamnesis, by making the past inextricable from the future. She should recount 'mercies' and 'talent' so:

the Lord shall give thee leave that they may be *upon record against an evil day, a day of temptation*. For how many precious evidences hast thou lost, for want of *remembering* them? But now, oh Lord, help me to deal faithfully with my soul in declaring thy power and the riches of thy grace in the *daily remembering* of thy mercies (176).

Davy creates distance within her 'self': she uses the narrative to address herself as a second person 'thee...thou...thy'. So her writing simultaneously embraces the reader, encouraging us also to wonder what evidences we have lost and to 'recount them here'. She thus gives the narrative an edifying purpose while maintaining its expressed purpose of the personal need 'to deal faithfully with my soul'. This reversion to the first person pronoun in the final sentence marks a movement in Davy's invocation from a general call to narrative to a personal. Paradoxically, the believer cannot achieve God's presence without personal dialogue predicated on the pre-existence of that very presence.

According to Augustine's premise that *deus creator omnium* [God is the creator of everything], all memories derive from God (Gilson 64). Even memories that do not relate directly to Christ's relationship with a believer can thus testify to that relationship. Any 'memory' incorporated into a narrative gains authority through this connection with God, which is, by its nature, highly subjective: the reader can never know the veracity of the memory itself or of the believer's 'relationship' with God. Wentworth justifies the inclusion in her narrative of an account of the false accusation made by 'four eminent professors of the people called Baptists' through this belief in the potential for re-membered disparate experience to illustrate a perceived intimacy with God: 'And I mention it here because it is a time in remembrance with the Lord' (192). Even allegorical works are mediated through fictional remembrance. In Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, we learn of a remembered dream: 'And as I slept I dreamed a Dream' (Bunyan PP 8). Mr Badman's story is related in a dialogue between Wiseman and Attentive, which relies on Wiseman's memory of events and even of his memory of the reminiscences of others: 'Yet twice I remember he was under some trouble of mind about his condition', and 'Tis true as remarkable; I had it from them that I dare believe, who also themselves were eye and ear witnesses' (Bunyan Badman 131, 136). The invocation of memory thus legitimises narrative.

Protestant prioritisation of the Word of God set down in scripture lends further credence to the importance of ἀναμνησις and its interdependence with Christ's presence in Christian theology. The lawgiving in Exodus 20 is prefaced by the memory of God's redemption of his people from the oppression of Pharaoh. Furthermore, the ἀναμνησις in the Last Supper is itself preface to an even greater act of salvation: the Passion. The remembrance extends both backwards, to the Passover, and forwards, establishing a rite of memory which potentially brings Christ and, crucially, his act of redemption to every believer. This pattern recalls typology, in which scripture illuminates the significance of both historical and current events.

Nonconformists extended the strictest sense of the word, where Old Testament figures and events provide figures or ‘types’ for the New Testament, to use scriptural passages to comprehend their own experience. As Paul J. Korshin shows, typology ‘was based on the notion that the Bible was historically true and that contemporary history was part of a seamless historical fabric continuous from biblical times’ (Korshin 3). Typology helps unify the soteriological teleology, providing, as it does, both prefiguration and postfiguration of prophesied events, so that believers can situate their own lives in a frame stretching back to the Old Testament and forwards to the Last Judgement. The narrative shape implicit in typology links the typological aspect of anamnesis with the structure of nonconformist writing: ‘memory’ places the believer in a pattern of scriptural significance.

Furthermore, typological structures are crucial to nonconformist understanding of the Eucharist; commemoration of the Last Supper simultaneously prefigures the closeness to Christ that the elect will experience after death and re-enacts a prophecy that has been fulfilled in the Incarnation and the Passion. In conclusion to this paper, I pose the following suggestions on the connection of anamnesis with the problematic concept of communion at this time as possible food for future thought.

The significance of the sacrament was particularly important to reformed theology: for Luther, Calvin and Zwingli, rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation precipitated schism with the Roman Catholic church. In the growing nonconformist community in seventeenth-century England, the role of bread and wine is to bring Christ and man together; this relationship, as we have noted, is the foundation for a believer’s life. In the words of E. Earle Ellis, ‘[t]he point is not the substance of the elements but their use as a proclamation of a past event and of a Lord present in the Body of believers’ (Ellis 256). The comparative lack of emphasis on the Eucharist in nonconformist writing thus seems natural.

The dangerously Anglican connotations of the word ‘Eucharist’, hinting at transubstantiation, led to the use of new or more neutral terms for the sacrament: Lord’s Supper; Communion. Both of these terms linguistically convey a physical presence of Jesus with believers that does not depend on tran- or consubstantiation. Communion for nonconformists seems to represent a literal communing with God, sometimes expressed in language which might surprise or even offend the sensibilities of a reader. Anne Wentworth writes that on ‘the 3rd of the 11th month 1670[...] Then was the full communion between Christ and my soul, the love knot, the comely bands of marriage. Then he did espouse me unto himself for ever’ (193). Wentworth’s relationship with God is characteristic of separatist belief, since it is expressed in terms that are deeply personal to her: a battered wife and a Particular Baptist, she seeks a quasi-matrimonial relationship with Christ to replace something absent in her own life. Since, as Augustine suggests, the soul’s presence in God derives from deep memory, experience inevitably colours the articulation of such ‘communion’ (X.xxv).^[9]

Nonconformists thus require the presence of Christ, but reject the Real Presence in the elements. So personal experience is as vital as the bread and wine. This leads me to wonder if narrative can take on the role of the Eucharist in bringing a believer close to Christ. There are instances of nonconformist writing in which Christ’s presence does appear to derive from participating in the Lord’s Supper ‘at his Table’. Bread and wine are unimportant here, as Agnes Beaumont testifies:

And the other thing that I was begging of the Lord for was that he would please to give me his presence their at his Table, which many times before had been sweet sealing ordinance to my soul; And that I might have such a sight of my dying, bleeding Saviour that might melt my heart, and inlarge it with love to him (Beaumont 41-42).

Beaumont’s emphasis on the ‘sight of my dying, bleeding Saviour’ might lead to accusations of popery or idolatry; the resonance with the affective piety of Margery Kempe is undeniable. This reminds us of Bunyan’s ‘pamphlet war’ with

the Quaker Edward Burrough: to refute the doctrine of ‘Christ within’, Bunyan emphasises his belief in the physical reality of Christ with astonishingly corporeal descriptions (Bunyan MW I 7-115, 122-217). Beaumont here validates this potentially dangerous imagery within an authorising framework of a desire for ‘his presence’ to make her heart grow ‘with love to him’. So the presence is distinct from the elements. The ‘Table’ instead becomes a catalyst for a meeting of believer and saviour.

So ἀναμνησις and narrative are inextricable. Narrative does not, for nonconformists, have value in itself, because, as Keeble suggests, the ‘emotional cleaving to God’ which constitutes a saving faith is ‘the gift not of understanding but of grace, the fruit not of study alone but of experience’ (Keeble 178); this was a key anxiety for Bunyan. For biblical and non-biblical texts alike, Christ can be found through anamnesis when reading, but only because of a divine agency which directs the reader to a passage and enables it to speak to him. Bunyan asserts in ‘Come and Welcome’ with characteristic bombast that ‘he saith not, And him that cometh to my WORD; but, And him that cometh to ME. The words of Christ, even his most blessed and free Promises, such as this in the Text, are not the Saviour of the World; for THAT is Christ himself, Christ himself ONLY’ (310). So the authors of these narratives believe that their text can only ‘speak’ if God intends that it should and anamnesis can be an assurance of this intention. While analysis and even simple reading of their work today proves how strongly belief in Christ’s presence can be communicated through the conceit of memory in narrative, the beliefs of the nonconformists resisted full acceptance of the power of their work: ‘*Coming to Christ, is not by the will, wisdom, or power of Man, but by the gift, promise, and drawing of the Father*’ (327).

Endnotes

^[1] The particular theological and doctrinal differences between the various nonconformist groups in the seventeenth century is not of primary importance to my study, so I use ‘nonconformist’ as a term for all Protestants whose beliefs separated them from the Anglican Church. I defend my use of this term with

reference to the OED, which suggests that from the later seventeenth century, especially after the Act of Uniformity in 1662, Nonconformist indicates ‘a member of a Church which is separated from the Church of England.’

^[2] Translation: King James Version.

^[3] Strohm cites David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* (Bloomington, 1986) p. 61, 68.

^[4] In the proceeding discussion the following abbreviations will be used to refer to the works frequently quoted: *GA* - *Grace Abounding with Other Spiritual Autobiographies*, John Stachniewski (ed.) with Anita Pacheco. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998; *HOL* – *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-century Englishwomen*. Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby and Helen Wilcox (eds.). London; New York: Routledge, 1989; *MW* – *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*. Roger Sharrock (ed.). Oxford: Clarendon, 1979.

^[5] The clarity of Stachniewski’s integration of Bunyan’s amendments to the text leads me to prefer his edition to Roger Sharrock’s scholarly edition for Oxford University Press.

^[6] A comparison between public and private writing in this context would be extremely valuable but falls outside the remit of this paper.

^[7] Definition taken from McGrath.

^[8] A sense of ending determined by the doctrine of salvation.

^[9] Cf. Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. L.E.M. Lynch (London, 1961) 222.

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