

Book Report by Amine Amraoui

The Holy War

Made by King Shaddai Upon Diabolus, to Regain the Metropolis of the World, Or, The Losing and Taking Again of the Town of Mansoul (191 pages)

by John Bunyan (1682)

Summary

Ear-gate, Eye-gate, Mouth-gate, Nose-gate, and Feel-gate. These are the gates of Mansoul, symbolizing the senses of a human being. They're the entrances of the surrounding walls that allow the population to let in whatever they wish, and out whatever they deem undesired. These gates are a metaphor for the human senses. Diabolus deceives the occupants to defy El Shaddai (God). This book is an allegory based on Christian theology and eschatology, the characters are different and it is written in a different time, but there are many parallels between them.

Diabolus (Satan) uses his helpers to individually enter the gates and deceive the guards with a message that is similar to what the Devil told Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

They have been deceived into disobeying El Shaddai because they have been convinced that they are his slaves. Shortly after, Emmanuel (Jesus) emerges to wage holy war.

After the Diabolians had been evicted, they tried to deceive the dwellers again. When Diabolus realized that lies and deceit didn't work anymore, he became furious and ordered the Diabolians to storm the gates. War had been declared against Mansoul. The Mansoulians however, did not reconcile.

The Mansoulians and Diabolians waged war and battled back and forth, the weapons they used were arrows, darts, and swords.

In the end, the Mansoulians, Emmanuel, and El Shaddai reaped victory and banished the Diabolians for good. It was a lesson for them to never deviate from the path of God again.

Theme(s)

The Holy War is a Christian allegory, where the personas have the same characteristics of certain people in history, concepts, and ideas. The story is cut from the same cloth as the Bible and Christian eschatological concepts like the fight between Jesus and the Antichrist where Jesus is

the most victorious. The Devil convinced all the occupants they are suffering as slaves under the reign of El Shaddai, but in fact, it was not true at all. The Diabolians are taking advantage of all the Mansouliaus.

The epoch in which it takes place

The era of the story itself is not explicitly mentioned. Fireable weapons are mentioned, I first interpreted these as modern firearms and the story could have taken place between the 13th or 14th century when gunpowder and gun technology spread throughout Eurasia. However later in the story, it became very evident that these weapons were in fact arrows, darts, and swords. In hindsight, I can conclude the story takes place in the Middle Ages.

Location

The fictional town in the book is called "Mansoul" (Man's Soul).

The location and/or town appears to be important considering the symbolism surrounding its name, but it could very well take place anywhere on earth with a town bordered by a wall and gates.

Genre

Christian allegory, Christian novel, Poetry, Socratic dialogue.

The story is an allegory and novel because it represents something else and is a story that had never actually happened but has yet to happen according to Christian and Islamic eschatology. It uses the personification of abstract concepts and conveys these complex ideas in ways that are comprehensible or striking to its readers. The story is about Biblical characters like Jesus, God, and concepts like the Holy Trinity, they are developing during the story and almost all of the characters are developing themselves. That is why this story is a Christian novel. There is a lot of Socratic dialogue, most of the conversations are between two or more people in which participants are forced to think critically, yet independently.

Main characters in order of importance:

EL SHADDAI: The Sovereign of the Universe (El Shaddai is the

Hebrew name of God). Also, the builder and creator of Mansoul, whose image it bears. This is a complex, round character because the role of Shaddai is very dynamic and changes throughout the story.

EMMANUEL: The son of El Shaddai, who lead the campaign to reclaim Mansoul. This is a very round character too; he surprises the reader and is very unpredictable.

THE SECRETARY: One who is equal to Shaddai and Emmanuel, who resides in Mansoul after the victorious conquest of Emmanuel.

DIABOLUS: The deceiver whose crafty lies prompted the fall of Mansoul, and who holds the city against the conquest of Emmanuel.

ILL-PAUSE: The servant of Diabolus who murdered Lord Innocent.

UNDERSTANDING: The first and final Mayor of Mansoul, whose treachery to Shaddai, causes him not to see the light.

CONSCIENCE: The first and final Recorder of Mansoul. Whose sin causes him to forget Shaddai's law at times, and at other times to bewail the sin of Mansoul.

LORD WILLBEWILL: A servant of Shaddai at the first, who shifts his allegiance to Diabolus at the capture of the city.

INCREDULITY: A friend of Diabolus and one of the two mayors under his rule, who escapes execution after the recapture of Mansoul and who leads the army of Doubters against it.

LUSTINGS: A Diabolian who also was a Mayor under Diabolus.

FORGET-GOOD: The recorder under Diabolus, who completely despises the law of Shaddai.

BOANERGES: One of the four first Captains sent by Shaddai against Mansoul.

CONVICTION: The second Captain.

JUDGEMENT: The third Captain.

EXECUTION: The fourth Captain.

CREDESCENCE: One of the five Captains to come with Emmanuel, to join the siege of Mansoul (The fifth Captain).

GOOD-HOPE: The sixth Captain.

CHARITY: The seventh Captain.

INNOCENCE: The eighth Captain.

PATIENCE: The ninth Captain.

CARNAL-SECURITY: The entrapping Diabolian, who causes Mansoul to break fellowship with Emmanuel after He had so graciously saved the city.

Round characters: El Shaddai, Emmanuel, Secretary, Diabolus, Ill-Pause, Recorder, Conscience, Willbewill, Incredulity, Boanerges, Conviction, Credence, Carnal-Security.

These are round characters because of their complexity, deep layers, and development in the story.

Flat characters: Understanding, Lustings, Forget-Good, Judgement, Execution, Good-Hope, Charity, Innocence, Patience,

They are flat characters, because they are mostly very static, can be summoned in one or two sentences, and are also very forgetful.

Side characters in order of appearance:

Mr. No-Truth: He defaced the engraving of King Shaddai, ordered by Diabolus, Mr. Haughty, Mr. Swearing, Mr. Whoring, Captain Self-Denial, Mr. Hard-Heart, Mr. Pitiless, Mr. Fury, Mr. Stand-to-Lies, Mr. False-Peace, Mr. Drunkenness, Mr. Cheating, Mr. Atheism-thirteen, the youngest of the company (Incredulity is the oldest).

What all of these flat characters have in common are their satanic-themed names, because they are all identical Diabolians that use their "power" symbolized by their names to deceive the population of Mansoul. They are all mostly flat characters that do not undergo any changes and can be summoned in less than two sentences.

Title Explanation

The Holy War, according to Oxford Dictionaries, refers to a war waged in support of a religious cause, in this case, Christianity.

The subtitle refers to King Shaddai, who waged war against the Diabolians, to recapture the town Mansoul.

“Nothing can hurt you except sin; nothing can grieve me except sin; nothing can defeat you except sin. Therefore, be on your guard, my Mansoul.” - King El Shaddai

This motto or proverb is trying to tell us that nothing can hurt mankind, except by its own hands, nothing makes God sadder than seeing humanity sin and deviate from the holy path. Shaddai warns Mansoul to be wary of sin because this will be their downfall. The relation of this motto to Bunyan's work is that it is the biggest reason for the invasion of Mansoul, the occupants let their guard down, allowing the Devil to do his work. This motto is told from El Shaddai's point of view, more or less the auctorial narrator, similar to how the Bible is narrated by God.

Time and place

The story was written in the historic era of 1682, in the 17th century. The Golden Age of Western Europe particularly, the age of scientific revolution, art, warfare, and the transatlantic slave trade.

The characteristics of that era are easily retrievable in the book itself. The way of writing, poetry, Calvinistic- and Socratic language, and subjects are mentioned. A few examples are; predominately Christian themes and concepts like Salvation, Redemption, Judgement Day, The Second Coming of Christ, and an even more historically precise level of allegory related to the persecution of nonconformist Christians.

About the author

John Bunyan (1628-1688) was a Puritan preacher and writer, born in Elstow, England. Bunyan had very little schooling. He followed his father in the tinker's trade and served in the parliamentary army from 1644 to 1647. In 1655, Bunyan became a deacon and began preaching. He experienced marked success from the start and was the pastor of the Bedford church. Two times his life was spared, once when he was in the army and a soldier who took his place in battle was killed, and once when he fell out of a boat and nearly drowned. He believed, and the world can testify to the truth, that God spared his life for a special purpose.

Bunyan is the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress* which he wrote in 1676 while imprisoned for preaching without a license. His numerous other titles include *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and *Holy War*. Bunyan died on August 31, 1688, and was buried in Bunhill Fields.

Opinion

Positives

I like the fact that it is about the second coming of Christ, I'm a big fan of this scenario being used in books and movies because it is very underrated and interesting in my opinion. I suggest this book to anyone that may experience spiritual struggles in life. You can have all the wealth in the world, and still, be very discontent inside. This book hits the nail on that particular subject.

Because the town of Mansoul was beautiful, it had everything the people desired. Including, a wall with gates around the town for safety that only allowed things in and out of the town at their command. Akin to the individual who has the ability to allow things in and out of their life at their own will. Because they are in control of most of their life.

Negatives

Not necessarily a negative, but it does not have real, dedicated chapters, it reads as a story that goes on and on, as if one person was talking to another and they just recorded the conversation. So, as you read the book you become very enthralled with it. There were times when I was reading for two hours straight because I didn't want to put it down. That's something I don't like about it because you get lost in the book yourself. But that can be a good thing for some people.

Some characters have confusing names and titles that keep changing in spelling throughout the book, for example, Lord Innocence is sometimes referred to as simply "Innocent" or "Innocency."

Similar works of art

The most obvious example of this is the Bible since it is inspired by it for the most part. It is a symbolic confrontation between God/Jesus and the Devil. I have not read anything else that is similar in essence. One exception is the popular Netflix show "Messiah".

Conclusion and Final verdict

John Bunyan's main goal with this book was that he believed that if books like *The Holy War* were not widely circulated, he would be uncertain of the future of his nation. "If God and his word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy. If the power of the Gospel is not felt throughout the world, anarchy and misery will rule." - John Bunyan.

This story teaches many things we need to know, it shows how Satan challenges all of us every day. It helps Christians and maybe other believers of monotheistic religions understand that they are in a constant psychological battle. *The Holy War* story is full of excitement. A great king, a prince, a fierce deceitful enemy, a castle, armies, and heroic battles.

El Shaddai is God almighty, it is a Hebrew word for God. Prince Emmanuel is Jesus Christ. This name is of unusual significance, it means God with us. Mansoulans, the occupants of Mansoul. Diabolus is Greek for Devil or demon.

Diabolus uses his helpers to individually enter the gates with a message that is similar to the Adam and Eve story, where Eve eats the fruit. He deceives the inhabitants into eating the fruit and opening the gate. The main reason for this is that the Mansoulans had grown accustomed to Shaddai's presence and forgot about it.

This book is a great Christmas gift. It arms a person and their mind to the subtlety that people use to try to manipulate you to do what they want. That is what Diabolus did in this book. He doesn't care about the dwellers of the town itself or you as a person.

The story is told chronologically, except for the first piece of poetry that unpacks and gives a taste of the story early on in the book.