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"THE SUM AND SUBSTANCE OF THE GOSPEL"

The Christ-Centered Piety of Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Introduced and Edited by
Nathan A. Finn and
Aaron Lumpkin

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Profiles in Reformed Spirituality

Charles Dickens's famous line in *A Tale of Two Cities*—"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times"—seems well suited to Western evangelicalism since the 1960s. On the one hand, these decades have seen much for which to praise God and to rejoice. In His goodness and grace, for instance, Reformed truth is no longer a house under siege. Growing numbers identify themselves theologically with what we hold to be biblical truth, namely, Reformed theology and piety. And yet, as an increasing number of Reformed authors have noted, there are many sectors of the surrounding western evangelicalism that are characterized by great shallowness and a trivialization of the weighty things of God. So much of evangelical worship seems barren. And when it comes to spirituality, there is little evidence of the riches of our heritage as Reformed evangelicals.

As it was at the time of the Reformation, when the watchword was *ad fontes*—"back to the sources"—so it is now: The way forward is backward. We need to go back to the spiritual heritage of Reformed evangelicalism to find the pathway forward. We cannot live in the past; to attempt to do so would be antiquarianism. But our Reformed forebearers in the faith can teach us much about Christianity, its doctrines, its passions, and its fruit.

And they can serve as our role models. As R. C. Sproul has noted of such giants as Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards: "These men all were conquered, overwhelmed, and spiritually intoxicated by their vision of the holiness of God. Their minds and imaginations were captured by the majesty of God the Father. Each of them possessed a profound affection for the sweetness and excellence of Christ. There was in each of them a singular and unswerving loyalty to Christ that spoke of a citizenship in heaven that was always more precious to them than the applause of men."[1]

To be sure, we would not dream of placing these men and their writings alongside the Word of God. John Jewel (1522–1571), the Anglican apologist, once stated: "What say we of the fathers, Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Cyprian?… They were learned men, and learned fathers; the instruments of the mercy of God, and vessels full of grace. We despise them not, we read them, we reverence them, and give thanks unto God for them. Yet…we may not make them the foundation and warrant of our conscience: we may not put our trust in them. Our trust is in the name of the Lord."[2]

Seeking, then, both to honor the past and yet not idolize it, we are issuing these books in the series Profiles in Reformed Spirituality. The design is to introduce the spirituality and piety of the Reformed

1. R. C. Sproul, "An Invaluable Heritage," *Tabletalk* 23, no. 10 (October 1999): 5–6.

2. Cited in Barrington R. White, "Why Bother with History?," *Baptist History and Heritage* 4, no. 2 (July 1969): 85.

tradition by presenting descriptions of the lives of notable Christians with select passages from their works. This combination of biographical sketches and collected portions from primary sources gives a taste of the subjects' contributions to our spiritual heritage and some direction as to how the reader can find further edification through their works. It is the hope of the publisher that this series will provide riches for those areas where we are poor and light of day where we are stumbling in the deepening twilight.

—Joel R. Beeke
Michael A. G. Haykin

Acknowledgments

As with any writing project, there were numerous individuals who helped bring this book to fruition. We want to begin by thanking Michael Haykin, the series coeditor who first expressed interest in this project, and Jay Collier, the director of publishing, who remained interested in this project when it became bogged down due to a variety of distractions in both our lives. Jay especially was willing to periodically remind us that we needed to "land the plane," and we likely would never have completed this book without his gentle prodding. Our wives and children have patiently and graciously endured early mornings, late nights, and busy weekends as we have gathered, edited, and written the various portions of this book. We could not be more thankful for our godly wives, Leah Finn and Sara Lumpkin, as well as our wonderful children.

During our work on this book, we have each been part of institutions that are supportive of our call to research and write for the sake of both the church and the academy. For three years I (Nathan) served as dean of the School of Theology and Missions at Union University, which is a delightful community of academic disciples where this sort of book is celebrated. In the final days of the project, I became

provost and dean of the university faculty at North Greenville University, which is an institution that in many ways embodies the sort of Christ-centered piety in which Spurgeon would have delighted.

I (Aaron) began this project as one of the pastors of Imago Dei Church in Raleigh, North Carolina, a Baptist congregation that is uniquely interested in supporting the ministry of research and writing because of its close proximity to Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. I now serve as campus minister at Missouri Baptist University, where I spend much of my time discipling students and cultivating a spiritual atmosphere conducive to Christ-centered piety. We are grateful for our colleagues in each of these places.

We are both proud graduates of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, which under President Danny Akin's leadership is training a generation of pastors and other ministry leaders to own the Great Commission and make its call to global disciple-making the center of their ministry. I (Nathan) served as a faculty member at Southeastern for many years and continue to teach part-time in the school's PhD program. I (Aaron) have taught at Southeastern adjunctively and am working on my PhD under Nathan's supervision. From these vantage points, we have witnessed firsthand the fruit of President Akin's leadership. Like us, he does not always agree with every point of Spurgeon's theology, nor does Southeastern use Spurgeon's name as much as some of its sister seminaries. Nevertheless, we believe Southeastern is the sort of seminary that Spurgeon would have delighted in, and this is in no small part

because of President Akin's vision for the school. Danny Akin is a godly husband, a loving father and grandfather, a devoted churchman, a gifted preacher and theologian, an exemplary leader, a tireless missions advocate, and a beloved mentor. We dedicate this book to him, with thankfulness to God for his life and ministry.

Russell & Sons, "C. H. Spurgeon," n.d., photograph card, 4.125 x 2 in. Published by Russel & Sons, London. Held at The Spurgeon Library, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri.

The Life and Piety of Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892)

According to the late evangelical theologian Carl F. H. Henry (1913–2003), "Charles Haddon Spurgeon is one of evangelical Christianity's immortals."[1] Spurgeon was one of the best-known pastors in church history and perhaps the most famous preacher of the modern era. During his lifetime, he pastored the largest Protestant church in the world: the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. His preaching attracted believers and skeptics from every walk of life in a context where Dissenters from the established Church of England were considered to be of a lower social class. His published sermons were read all over the English-speaking world and continue to provide spiritual nourishment to present-day believers. Most of his almost 140 books were best sellers when they were published, and many of them are still read today.

Contemporary Christians honor Spurgeon's name in many ways. In England, at least two Baptist churches are named in Spurgeon's honor.[2] In

1. Carl F. H. Henry, foreword to Lewis Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1992), 11.

2. Spurgeon Baptist Church in Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire and Spurgeon Memorial Baptist Church on the island of Guernsey.

the American Midwest, an association of Calvinistic Southern Baptist churches is named after the preacher.[3] Several American seminaries own aspects of Spurgeon's legacy. For several years, Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) in Orlando, Florida, hosted an annual Spurgeon Lecture Series dedicated to Calvinistic Baptist life, thought, and ministry, while Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon, sponsors a minister's fraternal named the Spurgeon Fellowship.[4] Spurgeon's name is especially identified with Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, which houses his personal library, sponsors an annual lecture as part of their Spurgeon Center for Biblical Preaching, and renamed their undergraduate program Spurgeon College.[5] Anecdotally, one still regularly finds young men named "Charles Spurgeon," "Spurgeon," or even "Haddon" in honor of the famed preacher.

Not surprisingly, Spurgeon remains an especially beloved figure among pastors, where esteem for him reaches across a variety of boundaries. Though a Baptist, his enduring popularity transcends his own ecclesial tradition. Though a Calvinist, he is

3. For more on the Spurgeon Baptist Association of Churches, see http://sbaoc.org/.

4. The Spurgeon Lecture Series at RTS was part of the school's Nicole Institute of Baptist Studies, which is no longer active at the time of this writing. See https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/the-nicole-institute-of-baptist-studies-at-rts-orlando/. For more on the Spurgeon Fellowship at Western Seminary, see http://www.thespurgeonfellowship.org/.

5. For more on Midwestern's Spurgeon Center, see http://spurgeoncenter.com/.

appreciated by many Arminians and others who would differ with his view of God's sovereignty. Though an Englishman, Spurgeon is admired well beyond the British Isles and even outside the English-speaking world. He has been called the "Prince of Preachers" and the "heir of the Puritans."[6] Many fundamentalists claim Spurgeon as one of their own, or at least a forerunner, because of his separation from the Baptist Union during the Downgrade Controversy.[7] Though there is much to appreciate about Spurgeon, the purpose of this book is to hold him forth as a model of Christ-centered piety as evidenced in his preaching, his voluminous writings, and even his personal correspondence.

Early Life and Ministry

Charles Spurgeon was born June 19, 1834, to John and Eliza Spurgeon in the English village of Kelvedon in Essex. When Charles was around eighteen months old, due to economic hardship his parents

6. See Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers*; Richard Ellsworth Day, *The Shadow of the Broad Brim: The Life Story of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Heir of the Puritans* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Judson, 1934); and Ernest W. Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968).

7. See George M. Marsden, "Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon, A Comparison with English Evangelicalism," in *Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, vol. 10, *Modern American Protestantism and Its World*, ed. Mary E. Marty (Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), 44–45. For Spurgeon's influence on British Baptist fundamentalism, see David Bebbington, "Baptists and Fundamentalism in Inter-War Britain," in *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism in the United Kingdom during the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 95–114.

sent him to live with his paternal grandparents in the nearby village of Stambourne. His grandfather James Spurgeon pastored the Independent church in Stambourne for fifty-four years. The Independents were a Dissenting tradition with roots in the Congregationalist wing of the Puritan movement. James owned an extensive library that included many Puritan works; this library proved helpful to Charles during his formative years. Charles was something of a prodigy, and by the age of five or six he was already reading works such as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* and *Pilgrim's Progress* and reading publicly as part of family worship in his grandparents' home.[8]

After five years with his grandparents, Charles moved back in with his parents, who by this time had relocated to the larger town of Colchester. John Spurgeon was employed as a clerk in a coal merchant's office and was serving as pastor of the Independent church in the nearby village of Tollesbury. Charles continued to spend summers with his grandparents, where he made use of James's library by reading works by Puritan theologians and other Reformed authors. Though godly parents and grandparents had reared Charles in devoutly Christian homes, he was not yet converted by his early teenage years.

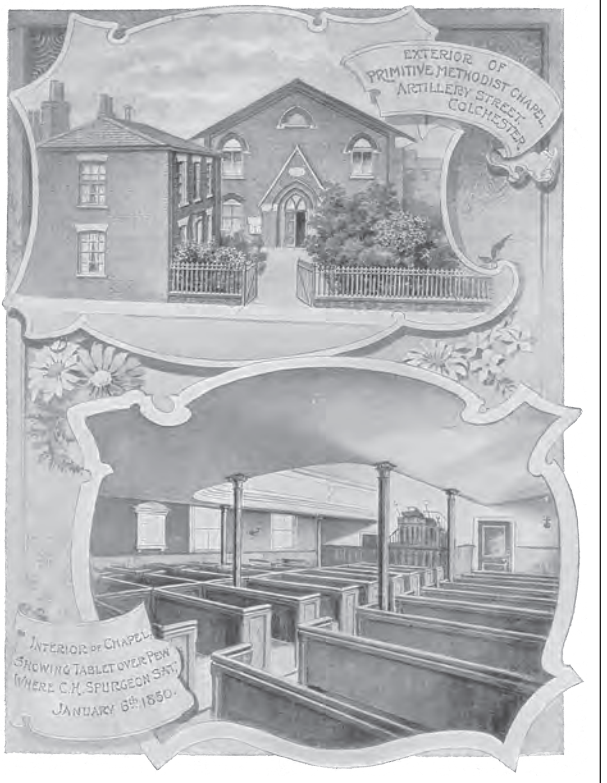
In 1849, at age fifteen, Charles began attending a local academy in the village of Newmarket. By this time, he was wrestling with his sin and need for salvation, influenced by Puritan evangelistic writers such as Richard Baxter and Joseph Alleine. While

8. Arnold Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1985), 6.

traveling back home from Newmarket to Colchester in December 1849, Charles stopped at a Primitive Methodist chapel and was convicted by the sermon. The text was from Isaiah 45:22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Spurgeon recounted his conversion testimony many times, most famously as recorded in his autobiography.[9] Spurgeon's life was radically altered on that day when he turned from his sin and trusted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Spurgeon was not destined to remain an Independent; a few months after his conversion, he became convinced that baptism was for believers only. In May 1850, Spurgeon was baptized by a Particular Baptist minister in the village of Isleham and became a member of that congregation, somewhat to his parents' chagrin. According to Spurgeon, his mother later remarked of his baptism, "Ah, Charles! I often prayed the Lord to make you a Christian, but I never asked that you might become a Baptist." He responded playfully, "Ah, mother! the Lord answered your prayer with His usual bounty, and given you exceeding abundantly above what you

9. *The Autobiography of Charles H. Spurgeon, Compiled from His Life, Letters, and Records by His Wife and Private Secretary* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897–1900), 1:105–8. Peter Morden recently questioned whether or not all the details of Spurgeon's conversion testimony are factually accurate, noting inconsistencies in various recountings. Nevertheless, Morden agreed Spurgeon's conversion was a signal event in his life and dramatically influenced his own spirituality. See Peter J. Morden, *Communion with Christ and His People: The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2013), 50–55.



Primitive Methodist Chapel

C. H. Spurgeon, C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography. Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records. Vol. 1. 4 vols (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897), 107.

asked or thought."[10] Though he had not previously been familiar with the Baptists, Spurgeon remained one for the rest of his life.

Spurgeon almost immediately began to teach Sunday school, where his giftedness for ministry was first affirmed. That fall, Spurgeon enrolled as a student-teacher in an academy in Cambridge, where he joined the St. Andrew's Street Baptist Church. Soon, he became involved in village preaching, an itinerant ministry wherein lay preachers shared the gospel with unbelievers and provided pastoral care without any sort of chapel for Dissenters in small villages.[11] Through that ministry, the small Baptist congregation in the village of Waterbeach called Spurgeon to be their pastor in October 1851. Spurgeon resigned from the academy. His formal schooling was over, though he briefly considered enrolling in the Baptist-related Stepney College in London. Spurgeon attempted to meet with the school's principal, Joseph Angus, at the home of a mutual acquaintance, but at the appointed time a maid showed both men to different rooms, preventing them from meeting. Spurgeon interpreted the maid's error as God providentially leading him away from formal ministerial education.[12] In the two years Spurgeon was a pastor in Waterbeach, the

10. *Autobiography*, 1:69.

11. For more on village preaching, see Deryck W. Lovegrove, "Lay Leadership, Establishment Crisis and the Disdain of the Clergy," in *The Rise of the Laity in Evangelical Protestantism* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 117–33.

12. Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 171–73.

church experienced steady growth and he developed a reputation as a gifted young preacher.

Pastoral Ministry in London

After Spurgeon preached at a regional Sunday school rally in Cambridge, the New Park Street Chapel in Southwark, London, invited him to fill their pulpit in late 1853. New Park Street was the then-present location of the Particular Baptist congregation that had previously been pastored through the years by such gifted men as Benjamin Keach (served 1672–1704), John Gill (served 1720–1771), and John Rippon (served 1773–1836). Though the church owned a sizable building, in recent years the congregation had dwindled significantly as three different pastors served relatively short stints between 1836 and 1853.[13] After making a good first impression and preaching for a trial period during January 1854, New Park Street Chapel called the nineteen-year-old Spurgeon as their pastor in February of that year. He would remain pastor of the congregation until his death in 1892.

Though New Park Street's large sanctuary included twelve hundred seats, soon the meeting-house was not sufficient to accommodate the massive crowds who were coming to hear Spurgeon preach. The sanctuary was expanded about two years after Spurgeon arrived, but even with two thousand seats

13. Drummond estimated the attendance at no more than eighty, while Tom Nettles suggested it may have been closer to two hundred. See Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 189; and Tom Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2013), 70.

now available, the building still was not nearly big enough. During renovations Spurgeon preached at Exeter Hall in the Strand in north London, a large venue with four thousand seats; the crowds exceeded even this sizable capacity. In 1856, the church began constructing a new meetinghouse, and in the interim the congregation met at the newly constructed Surrey Gardens Music Hall on Sunday morning, where almost six thousand people heard Spurgeon preach every week. In October 1857, Spurgeon preached to almost twenty-four thousand people at a special national Fast Day service held in the Crystal Palace, the largest venue in London. One biographer suggests this might be the largest single congregation gathered for the preaching of the gospel up to that point in history.[14]

It was during this season that Spurgeon faced one of his first great trials. On October 19, 1856, during a packed evening service at the Music Hall, someone yelled there was a fire in the building and the galleries were collapsing—but this was not true. Seven people died and twenty-eight others were seriously injured due to trampling as the crowd ran for the exits to escape the nonexistent fire. The papers mercilessly blamed Spurgeon, which drove him into a deep depression that caused him not to preach the following Sunday and even consider leaving the ministry. Fortunately, the Lord brought him out of his depression and gave Spurgeon a renewed sense of pastoral calling. When he returned to the pulpit

14. Bacon, *Spurgeon*, 53.

on November 2, he expressed his resolve to press on by faith:

> God forgive those who were instigators of that horrid act! They have my forgiveness from the depths of my soul. *It shall not stop us, however;* we are not in the least degree daunted by it. I shall preach there [the Music Hall] yet again; aye, and God will give us souls there, and Satan's empire shall tremble more than ever. God is with us; who is he that shall be against us?[15]

In March 1861, Spurgeon's church moved into its new meetinghouse in the Elephant and Castle neighborhood in South London, near the River Thames. The new building included seating for about forty-five hundred and standing space for another thousand worshipers. The congregation was renamed the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Within months of Spurgeon's ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, the membership grew from 313 to over two thousand, hundreds of whom joined by baptism. The membership was almost three thousand by 1864.[16] Long before the term *megachurch* came into common parlance, Spurgeon pastored a gigantic congregation in a major urban center. This remarkable growth would continue throughout his pastoral career. By the end of his thirty-seven-year ministry, the Metropolitan Tabernacle had baptized 14,460

15. *Autobiography*, 2:214.

16. These membership statistics can be found in Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 208–9.

individuals and the church's membership stood at over five thousand.[17]

Ministerial Entrepreneur

Many pastors are gifted preachers, but Spurgeon's ministry was marked by far more than simply a pronounced homiletical aptitude. He was a remarkably creative pastor who used his pastoral labors at the Metropolitan Tabernacle as a launching pad for a larger ministry of teaching, theological education, and mercy ministries. In this way, Spurgeon anticipated later Reformed and evangelical ministers who would establish significant personal ministries that extended their ministry to their local congregation.

In 1855, Spurgeon began to publish his sermons in periodicals, which were transcribed on Sundays and edited by Spurgeon himself the following morning. On Tuesdays, the sermons were reprinted in periodicals all over the English-speaking world. Arnold Dallimore claimed Spurgeon published a new sermon every week until his death.[18] At the conclusion of each year, his sermons were bound together in volumes that are still available under the titles *The New Park Street Pulpit* and *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. Numerous other shorter thematic anthologies of his sermons were also published, both before and after his death. In 1865, Spurgeon began to publish a monthly magazine titled *The Sword*

17. David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody*, A History of Evangelicalism: People, Movements and Ideas in the English-Speaking World (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2005), 41.

18. Dallimore, *Spurgeon*, 191.

and the Trowel, which helped to build his following among like-minded Baptists and other evangelicals. Tom Nettles suggested *The Sword and the Trowel* was Spurgeon's chief means of weekly contact with like-minded friends and even his parishioners.[19] He also wrote numerous letters during his adult life, many of which were subsequently included in his four-volume *Autobiography* (1897–1900), edited by his wife, Susannah, after Spurgeon's death.

In addition to his published collections of sermons, Spurgeon also had an extensive book-writing ministry. He authored dozens of books during the course of his ministry, and many others were compiled after his death. His more famous books include *Morning by Morning* (1865), *Evening by Evening* (1868), *John Ploughman's Talks* (1868), *The Treasury of David* (1870), *Lectures to My Students* (1875), *Commenting and Commentaries* (1876), *All of Grace* (1892), *The Soul Winner* (1895), *Till He Come: Communion Meditations and Addresses* (1896), and *Grace Triumphant* (1904). Nearly all his books were published by one of his church's deacons, Joseph Passmore, and his business partner James Alabaster. A decade after Spurgeon's death, one biographer estimated Spurgeon's printed sermons alone contained between 200 and 300 million words.[20] Almost a century later, another biographer suggested Spurgeon had more religious books in print than any other English-speaking author.[21] Today,

19. Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 399.

20. Charles Ray, *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1903), 449.

21. Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 25, 315.

through the work of evangelical and Reformed publishers, reprint companies, and the internet, nearly all of Spurgeon's books remain available.

In 1856, Spurgeon opened the Pastor's College, a church-based training academy for (mostly) Baptist ministers who could give a clear Christian testimony and already had some preaching experience. Though he did not have a college education himself, Spurgeon taught classes in pastoral ministry at the college; many of his lectures were later published as part of the book *Lectures to My Students.* Between 1856 and 1892, the Pastor's College trained almost nine hundred men, nearly all of whom remained stoutly conservative, evangelical, Calvinistic Baptists into the early twentieth century. Ten men who graduated during Spurgeon's tenure at the college went on to serve as president of the Baptist Union prior to World War I, while alumni served in churches in many other nations including the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, as well as various stations in the West Indies, and South Africa.[22] Today, the school is named Spurgeon's College and continues to train men and women for the evangelical ministry, especially in churches affiliated with the Baptist Union of Great Britain.[23]

Contemporary evangelicals debate the place of mercy ministries and social justice in gospel ministry. Like many evangelicals of his era, Spurgeon's

22. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism*, 45.

23. For a recent history of Spurgeon's College, see Ian M. Randall, *A School of the Prophets: 150 Years of Spurgeon's College* (London: Spurgeon's College, 2005).

vision of faithful ministry encompassed both evangelism and benevolence, each of which was considered essential to faithful ministry.[24] He also founded two different orphanages as a way to combat one of the Victorian era's major social ills. In 1867, the church opened the Stockwell Orphanage for boys; twelve years later, in 1879, a girl's wing was added to the orphanage. Spurgeon also inherited an almshouse ministry that had been established during John Rippon's ministry at the church. The almshouse provided free housing, food, and clothing for needy widows who were members of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. It also operated a school for needy children who could not afford to attend a costly private school (England offered no state-sponsored education at the time). The church's widows served as teachers at the school. In 1875, Susannah Spurgeon began a book fund to provide the poor students at the Pastor's College with a sufficient pastoral library. Many present-day collegians and seminary students no doubt wish for a revival of Susannah's book fund!

Baptist, Calvinist, Evangelical

Spurgeon was a committed Baptist from almost the beginning of his Christian life and remained convinced of so-called Baptist distinctives throughout his ministry. He was a particularly strong proponent of believer's baptism, which he believed was a public profession of faith, a key act of discipleship, an important symbol of the gospel truth, and a necessary

24. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism*, 99; and Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 340.

prerequisite to church membership.[25] Spurgeon was especially concerned with any views of infant baptism that he believed implied baptismal regeneration. For example, in 1864 Spurgeon preached a sermon titled "Baptismal Regeneration" that became arguably his most famous and controversial sermon. He argued that the Church of England's official position was baptismal regeneration, which he considered a popish doctrine.[26] He preached this message at a time when the High Church Tractarians associated with the Oxford Movement were trying to move the Church of England closer to Rome and when several leading Anglican clergymen such as John Henry Newman were converting to Catholicism.[27]

Though a committed Baptist, Spurgeon was also a staunch Calvinist at a time when traditional Reformed theology was becoming less popular among historically Calvinistic Dissenters.[28] Many in Spurgeon's own Particular Baptist tradition, embodied in the Baptist Union (established 1813), were

25. The best introduction to Spurgeon's baptismal views is Morden, *Communion with Christ and His People*, 77–103.

26. See "Baptismal Regeneration," which is available as appendix B in Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 787–802.

27. For more on the Oxford Movement, see C. Brad Faught, *The Oxford Movement: A Thematic History of the Tractarians and Their Times* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2004).

28. Spurgeon's Calvinism is acknowledged by nearly all historians and is a major theme in Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*. See also Iain H. Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1978); Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists, 1771–1892: From John Gill to C. H. Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2006), 337–56; and Morden, *Communion with Christ and His People*, 16–46.

softening their views on election and embracing general atonement.[29] In the years 1832, 1863, and 1873, the Baptist Union was either reorganized or the terms of cooperation were revised to allow for greater theological diversity and to encourage the historically Arminian General Baptists to participate in the Baptist Union.[30] In 1855, just a year after arriving at the New Park Street Church, Spurgeon republished a lightly revised version of the Second London Confession. This confession, which had been written in 1677 and was publicly adopted in 1689, had fallen into disuse among Particular Baptists, including those who continued to maintain a commitment to a Reformed view of salvation. Also in 1855, Spurgeon prepared a catechism that drew on the Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647) and the so-called Baptist Catechism (1677). Spurgeon also evidenced his Reformed theology in his preaching ministry, many of his articles in *The Sword and the Trowel*, and in several of his books.

Spurgeon appreciated the ministry of his pastoral predecessor John Gill, a respected but controversial

29. Though many contemporaries blamed this transition on Andrew Fuller, the key figure in the softening of Particular Baptist Calvinism was Robert Hall Jr. (1764–1831). For a recent discussion of Hall's theological transition vis-à-vis election and the atonement, see Cody Heath McNutt, "The Ministry of Robert Hall, Jr.: The Preacher as Theological Exemplar and Cultural Celebrity" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 110–16.

30. See Roger Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage* (Didcot, Oxfordshire, U.K.: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 2005), 144–46.

figure whom many identified with hyper-Calvinism.[31] However, Spurgeon personally resonated more with the seventeenth-century Puritan authors he had first discovered in his grandfather's library and the emphases associated with Fullerism, an evangelical renewal movement among the Particular Baptists named for Andrew Fuller (1754–1815).[32] Like Fuller before him, Spurgeon's evangelical Calvinism drew the ire of both Arminians, who did not agree with his Calvinism, and hyper-Calvinists, who did not agree with Spurgeon's commitment to evangelistic preaching. Though Fullerism had crippled the influence of hyper-Calvinism among most Calvinistic Baptists, a minority of "Strict and Particular Baptists" continued to embrace hyper-Calvinist sentiments and refused to cooperate with the Baptist Union because they judged it to be influenced by Fullerism, which they considered a declension from historic Calvinism.[33] Spurgeon and Baptist hyper-Calvinists

31. For varying perspectives on Gill's alleged hyper-Calvinism, see the essays in Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697–1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation* (New York: Brill, 1997).

32. See G. Stephen Weaver, "C. H. Spurgeon: A Fullerite?," *Journal of Baptist Studies* 8 (2016): 99–117. For a recent study of Fuller, see Peter J. Morden, *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815)*, Studies in Evangelical History and Thought (Bletchley, Milton Keynes, U.K.: Paternoster, 2015).

33. Strict Communion, the practice of restricting the Lord's Supper to those who have experienced believer's baptism, also factored in to the growing divide. The key studies of the Strict and Particular Baptists are Kenneth Dix, *Strict and Particular: English Strict and Particular Baptists in the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot, Oxfordshire, U.K.: Baptist Historical Society, 2001); and Geoffrey R. Breed, *Particular*

engaged in heated debates about how the doctrines such as election, effectual calling, and particular atonement should relate to evangelism, conversion, and the Christian life.[34]

In addition to his Baptist beliefs and his Calvinist convictions, Spurgeon was also active in broader evangelical circles beyond his own denomination, in part because of his commitment to evangelical activism.[35] Though he was a strong critic of Arminian

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Baptists in Victorian England and Their Strict Communion Organizations (Didcot, Oxfordshire, U.K.: Baptist Historical Society, 2003). See also Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 260–336. Today, many Strict and Particular Baptists adhere to an evangelical Calvinism that is closer to Spurgeon's views.

34. For a fine study of Spurgeon's controversy with hyper-Calvinists, see Iain H. Murray, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1995). Interestingly, while Spurgeon was deeply critical of High Calvinism, he did not believe Gill was a consistent hyper-Calvinist. In his autobiography, Spurgeon said of Gill,

> The system of theology with which many identify his name has chilled many churches to their very soul, for it has led them to omit the free invitations of the gospel, and to deny that it is the duty of sinners to believe in Jesus; but for this, Dr. Gill must not be altogether held responsible, for a candid reader of his Commentary will soon perceive in it expressions altogether out of accord with such a narrow system; and it is well known that, when he was dealing with practical godliness, he was so bold in his utterances that the devotees of Hyper-Calvinism could not endure him. "Well sir," said one of these, "if I had not been told that it was the great Dr. Gill who preached, I should have said I had heard an Arminian."

See *Autobiography*, 1:310.

35. See Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 393–441. For broader historical context related to interdenominational cooperation among

theology, Spurgeon was friendly with a number of Arminian pastors. As long as Arminians remained committed to evangelical doctrines such as justification by faith alone and penal substitutionary atonement, Spurgeon saw them as erring but genuine brothers in Christ. Though he was critical of infant baptism and episcopal polity, Spurgeon maintained friendships with evangelical paedobaptists and partnered with them in pan-evangelical initiatives. George Rogers, a Congregationalist minister, served as the first principal of Spurgeon's Pastor's College, despite the two men's differing views of baptism. Spurgeon invited many prominent non-Baptist evangelicals to preach at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, including D. L. Moody (1837–1899) and A. T. Pierson (1837–1911). The latter, a Presbyterian at the time, supplied the pulpit on a weekly basis during the final months of Spurgeon's life and for several months after his death. Against earlier Baptist practice but reflecting a growing trend among nineteenth-century British Baptists, Spurgeon also practiced open Communion by inviting paedobaptists to celebrate the Lord's Supper at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.[36]

Though part of an ecclesial tradition that has at times been marked by sectarianism, Spurgeon

evangelicals in the Victorian era, see Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism*, 82–116.

36. See Timothy George, "Controversy and Communion: The Limits of Baptist Fellowship from Bunyan to Spurgeon," in *The Gospel and the World: International Baptist Studies*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought, ed. David W. Bebbington (Carlisle, Cumbria, England: Paternoster, 2002), 55–57.

exemplified a Reformed and evangelical catholicity. Though deeply theological, like the great Methodist evangelist George Whitefield (1714–1770), Spurgeon emphasized the common experience of regeneration more than the doctrinal (and especially ecclesiological) convictions of the regenerate. What this meant in practice was that Spurgeon appreciated the universal church to a greater degree than many of his fellow Baptists. Spurgeon remained committed to a Baptist view of the local church, though he did not think denominational distinctives undermined the essential unity of all those who have been regenerated. He is a role model for contemporary believers who wish to emphasize "gospel-centered" evangelical cooperation among believers from differing denominational traditions.

Faithfulness in Suffering

Spurgeon experienced considerable suffering during his lifetime. For example, Spurgeon periodically battled depression in the years after the aforementioned Surrey Gardens disaster. At times, Spurgeon would be so depressed he would miss several weeks of preaching. At least one biographer suggested Spurgeon's depression ran so deep that he would at times question either his salvation or his fitness for ministry.[37] Peter Morden argued that Spurgeon suffered from both clinical depression and spiritual depression.[38] Because of his own struggles with

37. Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 327, 345. See also Dallimore, *Spurgeon*, 226.

38. Morden, *Communion with Christ and His People*, 262.

1

The Power of the Gospel[1]

The gospel is to the true believer a thing of power. It is Christ, the power of God. Ay, there is a power in God's gospel beyond all description. Once, I, like Mazeppa,[2] bound on the wild horse of my lust, bound hand and foot, incapable of resistance, was galloping on with hell's wolves behind me, howling for my body and my soul, as their just and lawful prey. There came a mighty band which stopped that wild horse, cut my bands, set me down, and brought me into liberty. Is there power, sir? Ay, there is power, and he who has felt it must acknowledge it. There was a time when I lived in the strong old castle of my sins and rested in my works. There came a trumpeter to the door, and he bade me open it. I with anger chid[3] him from the porch and said he never should enter. There came a goodly personage with loving countenance; His hands were marked with scars,

1. From "Christ Crucified," *New Park Street Pulpit* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1856), 1:57–58. A sermon on 1 Corinthians 1:23–24 delivered at Exeter Hall on February 11, 1855. All subsequent references to *New Park Street Pulpit* are abbreviated *NPSP*.

2. This is a reference to Byron's poem "Mazeppa" (1819), which narrates a legendary ill-fated love affair between a Ukrainian gentleman named Ivan Mazeppa and a married noblewoman.

3. *Chid* means "to scold."

where nails were driven, and His feet had nail prints too. He lifted up His cross, using it as a hammer; at the first blow the gate of my prejudice shook; at the second it trembled more; at the third down it fell, and in He came, and He said, "Arise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have loved thee with an everlasting love." A thing of power! Ah! It is a thing of power. I have felt it here, in this heart; I have the witness of the Spirit within and know it is a thing of might, because it has conquered me; it has bowed me down.

> His free grace alone, from the first to the last,
> Hath won my affection, and held my soul fast.[4]

The gospel to the Christian is a thing of power. What is it that makes the young man devote himself as a missionary to the cause of God, to leave father and mother, and go into distant lands? It is a thing of power that does it—it is the gospel. What is it that constrains yonder minister, in the midst of the cholera, to climb up that creaking staircase and stand by the bed of some dying creature who has that dire disease? It must be a thing of power which leads him to venture his life; it is love of the cross of Christ which bids him do it. What is that which enables one man to stand up before a multitude of his fellows, though unprepared he may be, but determined that he will speak nothing but Christ and Him crucified? What is it that enables him to cry, like the warhorse of Job in battle, "Aha!" and move glorious in might? It is a thing of power that does it—it is Christ crucified.

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4. From the first stanza of John Stocker, "Thy Mercy My God" (1776), in the public domain.

And what emboldens that timid female to walk down that dark lane in the wet evening, that she may go and sit beside the victim of a contagious fever? What strengthens her to go through that den of thieves and pass by the profligate[5] and profane? What influences her to enter into that charnel house[6] of death and there sit down and whisper words of comfort? Does gold make her do it? They are too poor to give her gold. Does fame make her do it? She shall never be known nor written among the mighty women of this earth. What makes her do it? Is it love of merit? No, she knows she has no desert[7] before high heaven. What impels her to it? It is the power of the gospel on her heart; it is the cross of Christ; she loves it, and she therefore says—

Were the whole realm of nature mine.
That were a present far too small;
Love so mazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.[8]

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5. *Profligate* means "recklessly extravagant, wasteful."

6. A charnel house was a vault used for storing human skeletal remains. Charnel houses were often built near church buildings to house skeletons unearthed while digging graves.

7. *Desert* in this context means "just reward."

8. From the final stanza of Isaac Watts, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" (1707), in the public domain.

2

Chosen in Christ[1]

Let us first see what the King Himself has done.

He has honored Him in every work of grace. In the decree of election, the eternal Father chose His people, but He chose them "in Christ." He made "the man Christ Jesus,"[2] the head of election. Watts has well sung—

> "Christ be my first elect," He said,
> Then chose our souls in Christ our Head.[3]

"According," says the apostle, "as he hath chosen us *in him* before the foundation of the world."[4] Every after-manifestation of grace has also been through the man Christ Jesus. When did Isaiah speak most evangelically? When did Ezekiel most sweetly comfort the people of God? When did others of the prophets dart bright flashes of light through the thick darkness of their times? Surely it was only when they spoke of Him who bore our transgressions and by

1. From "What Shall Be Done for Jesus?," *The Sword and the Trowel* (January 1865): 3–4. The article offers a reflection on Esther 6:6. All subsequent references to *The Sword and the Trowel* are abbreviated *ST*.

2. 1 Timothy 2:5.

3. From the second stanza of Isaac Watts, "Jesus, We Bless Thy Father's Name" (1706), in the public domain.

4. Ephesians 1:4, emphasis added.

whose stripes we are healed. In the great work of redemption, God has honored Christ by laying our help upon Him alone, as upon "one that is mighty." He has "exalted one chosen out of the people."[5] In Bozrah's battle no champion must fight but Jesus, and covered with the blood of his foes, no hero must return in stately triumph from Edom but the lonely One who speaks in righteousness, "mighty to save."[6] He trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Him. In redemption there is but one price, found in one hand, paid by one Redeemer, that price of the precious blood, found in the veins of the Savior and paid down by Him upon the accursed tree. In every other act of grace the design of the King is to honor the Lord Jesus. You cannot taste the sweetness of any *doctrine* till you have remembered Christ's connection with it. You are washed from every sin, but how? You have "washed [your] robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."[7] You are sumptuously arrayed from head to foot; you are appareled as the King's sons and daughters, but who is this that has clothed you? Are you not robed in the righteousness of your Lord Jesus Christ? Up to this moment you have been preserved, but now? You are "preserved in Jesus Christ."[8] The Holy Spirit is the author of your sanctification, but what has been the instrument by which He has purified you? He has cleansed you by the water which flowed with the

5. Psalm 89:19.

6. Isaiah 63:1. Bozrah was an ancient biblical city, near the modern city of Bouseira, Jordan.

7. Revelation 7:14.

8. Jude 1.

blood from the wounds of the expiring Savior. Our eternal life is sure; because *He* lives, we shall live also. We shall behold the face of God with transport and delight, because *He* has gone up to prepare a place for us that where He is, we may be also. The Father has studiously linked every gospel privilege and every boon of the new covenant with the person of Jesus Christ, that in blessing you, He might at the same time honor His own dear Son. "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour;"[9] He shall be the King's almoner[10] to the poor and needy; He shall be the golden pipe through which streams of mercy shall flow to all His saints; His head shall be anointed with the holy oil which shall afterward bedew[11] the very skirts of His garments with the richest drops of perfume.

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9. Esther 6:6.

10. An *almoner* was a court official who distributed alms to the poor on behalf of the ruler.

11. *Bedew* means "to wet with or as with dew."

3

Christ in the Covenant[1]

Again, it was necessary that Christ should be in the covenant because *there are many things there that would be nought without Him*. Our great redemption is in the covenant, but we have no redemption except through *His* blood. It is true that my righteousness is in the covenant, but I can have no righteousness apart from that which Christ has accomplished and which is imputed to me by God. It is very true that my eternal perfection is in the covenant, but the elect are only perfect in Christ. They are not perfect in themselves, nor will they ever be, until they have been washed and sanctified and perfected by the Holy Ghost. And even in heaven their perfection consists not so much in their sanctification as in their justification in Christ.

> Their beauty this, their glorious dress,
> Jesus the Lord their righteousness.[2]

In fact, if you take Christ out of the covenant, you have just done the same as if you should break the

1. From "Christ in the Covenant," *Spurgeon's Sermons* (1883; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 2:404–6. A sermon from Isaiah 59:8.

2. The text is from the hymn "Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness" (1739), by Nicolaus Ludwig, Graf von Zinzendorf, trans. John Wesley, in the public domain.

string of a necklace: all the jewels or beads or corals drop off and separate from each other. Christ is the golden string whereon the mercies of the covenant are threaded, and when you lay hold of Him, you have obtained the whole string of pearls. But if Christ is taken out, true there will be the pearls, but we cannot wear them, we cannot grasp them; they are separated, and poor faith can never know how to get hold of them. Oh! It is a mercy worth worlds that Christ is in the covenant.

4

Union with Christ[1]

Jesus is one with His elect federally. As in Adam, every heir of flesh and blood has a personal interest because Adam is the covenant head and representative of the race as considered under the law of works; so under the law of grace, every redeemed soul is one with the Lord from heaven, since He is the second Adam, the sponsor and substitute of the elect in the new covenant of love. The apostle Paul declares that Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchizedek met him; it is a certain truth that the believer was in the loins of Jesus Christ, the mediator, when in old eternity the covenant settlements of grace were decreed, ratified, and made sure forever. Thus, whatever Christ has done, he has accomplished for the whole body of His church. We were crucified in Him and buried with Him (see Col. 2:10–13), and to make it still more wonderful, we are risen with Him and have even ascended with Him to the seats on high.[2] It is thus that the church has fulfilled the law and is "accepted in *the beloved*."[3] It is thus that she is regarded with complacency by the just Jehovah, for

1. From "Bands of Love: or, Union to Christ," *ST* (September 1865): 374–77.

2. Ephesians 2:6.

3. Ephesians 1:6, emphasis added.

He views her in Jesus and does not look upon her as separate from her covenant head. As the anointed redeemer of Israel, Christ Jesus has nothing distinct from His church, but all that He has He holds for her. Adam's righteousness was ours as long as he maintained it, and his sin was ours the moment that he committed it. In the same manner, all that the second Adam is or does is ours as well as His, seeing that He is our representative. Here is the foundation of the covenant of grace. This gracious system of representation and substitution, which moved Justin Martyr to cry out, "O blessed change, O sweet permutation!"[4] This, I say, is the very groundwork of the gospel of our salvation and is to be received with strong faith and rapturous joy. In every place the saints are perfectly one with Jesus.

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4. Justin Martyr, *The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus*, chapter 9, in John Owen, *Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ* (London: A.M. and R.R., 1684), 140.