

Communion
with
Christ and His People

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The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon

Peter J. Morden

With a foreword by
David Bebbington

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COMMUNION WITH CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE
The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon

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To Nigel G. Wright and Roger Standing

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Foreword

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the greatest of Victorian preachers, is rightly remembered as a doughty Calvinist. He firmly believed in the doctrines of the Reformed faith, not following the growing fashion for vagueness of belief in the later nineteenth century. He upheld what he called ‘the old theology’, the divinity that he read in the authors of the seventeenth century, and wanted the tutors who taught in his college to be ‘Puritans themselves’.¹ Yet Spurgeon was no extremist. He rejected ‘Hyper-Calvinism’ and took comfort from the circumstance that men trained in his college who took the Arminian path away from Calvinism still remained ‘earnestly evangelical’.² His primary concern was that preachers should proclaim the gospel. ‘To waver upon the atonement, or the work of the Holy Spirit, or salvation by grace’, he wrote, ‘is not merely dangerous but fatal to a preacher’s usefulness.’³ The atoning work of Christ on the cross redeemed sinners, the Holy Spirit applied the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice to the lives of individuals and the whole process was the result of divine bounty, not of human merit. These evangelical convictions were the motor of Spurgeon’s ministry.

It was not only the Reformed tradition, however, that moulded Spurgeon. It is one of the merits of this book by Peter Morden that it brings out the diversity of the factors that affected the great preacher. Alongside the seventeenth-century Puritan influences were the intellectual currents flowing from the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. Spurgeon appealed to reason, the most characteristic stance of an Enlightenment thinker. He asserted the strong form of the doctrine of assurance that had come into vogue during the eighteenth century. There was a powerful dose of pragmatism, another prominent symptom of the Enlightenment, about Spurgeon. And he insisted on the importance of common sense, that cardinal virtue of the enlightened age. The opposite, as so often in Spurgeon’s compositions, was lampooned. He ridiculed preachers who ‘affect obscurity’, quoting the latest thinkers, however unorthodox.⁴ They were abandoning the solid, practical common sense that Spurgeon so much admired. Altogether, Peter Morden shows, Spurgeon cannot be understood unless he is located as a Victorian figure deeply swayed by the intellectual legacy of the previous century.

Nor did Spurgeon remain immune to the influences of his own day. While resisting the liberal theological tendencies of the times, Spurgeon was swayed by expressions of the Romantic taste that was growingly attractive in the Victorian era.

¹ *Annual Paper descriptive of the Lord’s Work connected with the Pastors’ College during the Year 1870* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), p. 14.

² *Annual Paper descriptive of the Lord’s Work connected with the Pastors’ College during the Year 1871* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1872), p. 5.

³ *Annual Paper descriptive of the Lord’s Work connected with the Pastors’ College during the Year 1870* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), p. 5.

⁴ *Annual Paper descriptive of the Lord’s Work ... during the Year 1870*, p. 7.

Thus he was friendly with the Romantic art critic John Ruskin, condemned the unpoetic age in which he lived and sometimes gave free rein to his imagination in the interpretation of scripture. Spurgeon esteemed High Church Anglicans who were deeply affected by contemporary cultural trends and, despite his stern anti-Catholicism, even appreciated the writings of the Roman Catholic convert F.W. Faber whose writings were steeped in Romantic sensibility. Spurgeon's theological perspective was tintured by the same approach. He believed in funding Christian ventures by the faith principle that had emerged in the Romantic milieu earlier in the century. His college, he claimed, had 'nothing to rely on but the hand of the Lord'.⁵ Although on occasion he was willing to appeal for funds, Spurgeon normally wished to demonstrate the radical faith that looked to the Almighty to provide. Peter Morden demonstrates that such contemporary attitudes intermingled with the other elements in the formation of Spurgeon's complex understanding.

The result was the rich spirituality that this book expounds with cogency and clarity. Here we find much about prayer and the Bible, about conversion, baptism and the Lord's Supper and about holiness, suffering and Christian service. Spurgeon displayed passionate beliefs about these matters because each was a component of the believer's devotion. Once when listing the qualities of a training college for pastors, he wrote, as his final point, that it should be a place where 'spiritual life is highly esteemed and carefully fostered'.⁶ The aim of preparation for ministry should be to produce not just sound preachers but godly people. At his own college Spurgeon added the requirement that trainees should join in the life of his church, the Metropolitan Tabernacle, by attending, for instance, its prayer meetings. Spirituality could best be nurtured in the fellowship of a specific Christian community. That is why Peter Morden can contend that a good summary of Spurgeon's approach to the spiritual life is 'communion with Christ and his people'. The author's case is highly persuasive.

David Bebbington
University of Stirling,
September 2010.

⁵ *Outline of the Lord's Work by the Pastor's College and its Kindred Organisations at the Metropolitan Tabernacle* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1867), p. iii.

⁶ *Annual Paper descriptive of the Lord's Work connected with the Pastors' College during the Year 1870* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), p. 15.

Preface to the Pickwick Edition

This book is a revised version of my PhD thesis. The desire to pursue doctoral research on the spirituality of Charles Haddon Spurgeon was initially stimulated by Ian Randall, who subsequently became my supervisor. His insightful comments on different drafts of my work have been invaluable. Pieter Lalleman read the whole of the original thesis and his detailed notes saved me from a number of errors. Anil Den and Amanda Woolley read and commented on the chapter on suffering and offered valuable insights based on their respective expertise in psychiatry and psychology. I am especially grateful to Amanda, who went into labour whilst reading the chapter! She later told me, 'At the time I was not convinced by Spurgeon's theology of suffering!' Thank you to Amanda, her husband, Euan, and their beautiful daughter, Anya. I am indebted to my PhD examiners, David Bebbington and Crawford Gribben, and to the chair of my *viva voce*, Peter Stevenson, for their encouragement. I am honoured that David Bebbington agreed to write the Foreword to this book. Of course, I alone am responsible for all the opinions expressed in this study and the errors that doubtless remain.

My research took me to a number of different libraries and archives. I acknowledge the assistance I have received from Steve Taylor of the Evangelical Library, London; Susan Mills and Emma Walsh of The Angus Library and Archives, Regent's Park College, Oxford; and Jean Bowerman and Brett Pitchfork of 'Spurgeons' (formerly known as Spurgeon's Childcare), Rushden. The majority of my research took place in the Heritage Room at Spurgeon's College and I am especially grateful to Judy Powles, the indefatigable college librarian, for all the help she gave me.

This book was originally published by the Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, Regent's Park College, Oxford, in 2010. I especially want to acknowledge the generous help of Anthony R. Cross, the original editor, and I am grateful to Rob Ellis, Principal of Regent's Park, for permission for the study to be reprinted in this Pickwick edition. The illustrations that appear in the book are drawn from the Heritage Room at Spurgeon's College, and are used with permission. Thank you to Dave Lock for his help preparing this illustrative material. I am also grateful to Wipf & Stock for bringing out this Pickwick edition, and for doing such a splendid job with it. I particularly want to record my thanks to Robin Parry, an editor of the Pickwick imprint, Christian Amondson, and Laura Poncy.

Some of the material which takes its place in this study had already appeared in various articles and papers prior to the book's publication in 2010. The substance of chapter 3 was published in the *Baptist Quarterly* as 'C. H. Spurgeon and Baptism; Part 1: The Question of Baptismal Sacramentalism', and 'C. H. Spurgeon and Baptism: The Importance of Baptism', respectively. An early version of chapter 6 appeared as 'The Lord's Supper and the Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon' in *Baptist Sacramentalism 2*, edited by Anthony R. Cross and Philip E. Thompson and published by Paternoster. I read a paper on 'The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon' to

the Academic and Theological Workgroup of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) at the annual gathering of the BWA in Mexico City in 2006, and spoke on ‘Spurgeon and Prayer’ at a meeting of the Scottish Baptist History Project in Glasgow in 2007. I also read drafts of different chapters at various Spurgeon’s College research seminars. On all the occasions when I have written or presented material I received stimulating feedback. Writing my ‘popular’ book, *C. H. Spurgeon: The People’s Preacher*, published by Christian World Revival (CWR), also informed this study. I remain very grateful to all at CWR, especially Lynette and Mick Brooks.

Since 2010 I have produced articles on Spurgeon and prayer for the *Evangelical Quarterly* and Spurgeon and suffering for the *Evangelical Review of Theology*. The J. D. Hughey lectures I gave at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague in the Autumn of 2010 on the subject of Spurgeon’s spirituality were revised and have been published in a special edition of *Baptistic Theologies*. I also taught an intensive elective at Golden Gate Theological Seminary, San Francisco, California, in the summer of 2013. So I have continued to think, write, and speak on the great preacher. Nevertheless, as I have reviewed the MS of ‘*Communion with Christ and His People*’ it still expresses the heart of what I want to say about his spirituality. Hence this reprint.

In September 2007 I started work as Tutor in Church History and Spirituality at Spurgeon’s College, and in September 2013 I became the college’s Vice Principal. Consequently, much of my research and writing into Spurgeon has been undertaken whilst working for the institution he founded in 1856, which now bears his name. Spurgeon’s is an extremely stimulating place to work and I am grateful to all the staff and students for their warm and ongoing support. Most of all, I have to thank my wonderful wife, Anne, and my two wonderful children, Rachel and Joseph. I am grateful to them for more than I could ever say.

This Pickwick edition is dedicated to the two Principals I have been privileged to serve under since 2007, Nigel G. Wright and, from September 2013, Roger Standing. In different ways they have both given me tremendous help and encouragement, and continue to do so. I give thanks to God for all he has done in and through Spurgeon’s College in the past, and look forward to the future with great expectancy.

Peter J. Morden
Spurgeon’s College, London
Christmas 2013

Abbreviations

<i>MTP</i>	<i>Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit</i>
<i>NPSP</i>	<i>New Park Street Pulpit</i>
<i>Sword and Trowel</i>	<i>The Sword and the Trowel</i>



Charles Haddon Spurgeon in 1868.

The engraving appeared in the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* issue 808 (1868).
(Digital image courtesy of the author and used with permission of Spurgeon's College,
London.)

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

On 9 October 1880 the *Boy's Own Paper* published silhouettes of those it considered to be the greatest 'celebrities' of late-Victorian England. Unsurprisingly, the collection included the two most notable prime ministers of the age, William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli, as well as the poet-laureate, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and the essayist Thomas Carlyle. Also pictured, in the centre of the nine silhouettes, was the Baptist pastor Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–92).¹ The bracketing of Spurgeon and, say, Gladstone can seem strange to modern commentators but, as Patricia Kruppa observes, 'many Victorians would have found it appropriate'.² As David Bebbington states, Spurgeon was by far 'the most popular preacher of the day' in an era when religion bulked large in the life of the nation.³ As such he was a 'personality of national standing' in Victorian Britain.⁴

Principally because of the circulation of his printed sermons, Spurgeon's reputation and influence travelled far beyond his British base. As early as 1858, when Spurgeon was only twenty-four, the *North American Review* was reporting that Americans returning from a trip to England were invariably asked two questions, namely, 'Did you see the Queen?' and 'Did you hear Spurgeon?' The paper went on to declare that there was 'scarcely any name more familiar' than Spurgeon's in America.⁵ By 1875 his sermons had been translated into languages as varied as French, Dutch, Telugu and Maori.⁶ Soon to follow were some Russian editions of a

¹ *Boy's Own Paper*, 9 October 1880, in C.H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography: Compiled from his Diary, Letters, and Records by his Wife and his Private Secretary* (4 Vols; London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897–99), Vol. 4, p. 185. The other silhouettes were of the Marquis of Hartington, John Ruskin, the Duke of Argyle and John Bright.

² P.S. Kruppa, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: A Preacher's Progress* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), p. 1.

³ D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 145.

⁴ D.W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Leicester: IVP, 2005), p. 57.

⁵ *North American Review* (Boston: Crosby and Nicholls, 1858), p. 275.

⁶ C.H. Spurgeon, 'Twenty Years of Published Sermons', in C.H. Spurgeon (ed.), *The Sword and The Trowel: A Record of Combat With Sin and Labour For The Lord (Sword and Trowel)* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1865–92), January 1875, p. 7; C. Ray, *A Marvellous Ministry: The Story of Spurgeon's Sermons* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1905), pp. 27–28.

few select messages. These were passed by the Tsarist censor and approved by the Orthodox Church for official distribution.⁷ A staggering one million copies were printed.⁸ Spurgeon also made a significant impact in Australia where he became, as Australian Baptist historian Ken Manley states, a 'household name'.⁹ Many additional examples could be adduced to demonstrate his truly global reach.¹⁰ C.H. Spurgeon was a figure of international importance in the nineteenth century.

This study makes a detailed examination of the spirituality of this remarkable and significant Baptist minister. This brief introductory chapter establishes a working understanding of the term 'spirituality', considers the current state of Spurgeon scholarship and surveys the primary evidence which will constitute the raw material of this study, as well as indicating the direction the argument will take. After some deliberation I have not included a biographical sketch of Spurgeon. Rather, biographical details will be built up step-by-step as the chapters unfold, with the basic timeline of Spurgeon's life established in chapter 2. Each of the nine main chapters (chapters 2 to 10) will examine in detail an aspect of Spurgeon's spirituality and my aim in all of them is to throw fresh light on both the man and his ministry.

The Study of Spirituality

As Philip Sheldrake observes, 'spirituality is one of those subjects whose meaning everyone claims to know until they have to define it'.¹¹ As I have suggested elsewhere, the problem of definition is greater because the term has a secular and general religious use as well as a Christian one.¹² But there are also many and varied

⁷ One of these, published in 1880, is held in Spurgeon's College. See 'Spurgeon's Scrapbooks, Numbered Volumes', Spurgeon's College, Heritage Room (2G), Vol. 4, p. 58 b. The extant numbered volumes of Scrapbooks are, Vol 1, 1856–January 1879; Vol. 2, January 1879–December 1879; Vol. 4, August 1880–July 1881; Vol. 5 June 1881–March 1882; Vol. 6 January 1882–October 1882; Vol. 7, October 1882–April 1883; Vol. 9, October 1883–June 1884; Vol. 12, October 1884–May 1885. Vols 3, 8, 10 and 11 appear to have been broken up and the material placed in different 'Loose-Leaf Scrap Folders'. The three loose leaf folders I have cited from in this study are on shelf 2H. There are also two unnumbered volumes of scrapbooks in similar binding to the numbered ones, 'Spurgeon's Scrapbooks, Two Unnumbered Volumes', 1880–1890; 1890 (2G).

⁸ I.H. Murray (ed.), *C.H. Spurgeon: The Full Harvest 1860–1892* (London: Banner of Truth, 1973), pp. 353-54; M. Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation: Evangelical and Liberal Theologies in Victorian England* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), p. 155.

⁹ K.R. Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists: Growing an Australian Church (1831–1914)* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), p. 109. For more on Spurgeon's influence in the Antipodes, see Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, Vol. 3, pp. 324-29; P.J. Morden, 'C.H. Spurgeon and Baptism Part 1: The Question of Baptismal Sacramentalism', *Baptist Quarterly* Vol. 43, No. 4 (October 2009), pp. 213-14.

¹⁰ Spurgeon, 'Twenty Years of Published Sermons', p. 7.

¹¹ P. Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History* (London: SPCK, 1991), p. 32.

¹² P.J. Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth Century Particular Baptist Life* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), p. 157.

ways of understanding specifically Christian spirituality.¹³ A few of these are so broad as to encompass almost all of human experience and hardly help to establish conceptual limits for the term. On the other hand, other approaches that focus exclusively on prayer and what are termed the spiritual exercises are too narrow for the purposes of this study. Helpfully, as Linda Wilson notes, there is a growing trend among commentators on Christianity to define spirituality as consisting of more than just the interior life.¹⁴ Wilson herself argues that, used in a Christian context, spirituality should be understood as both ‘the way in which a person develops his or her relationship with God’, and also ‘the outworking of that [relationship] in his or her life, both public and private’.¹⁵ Alister McGrath’s understanding exhibits similar concerns. For him, Christian spirituality is to do with ‘the quest for a fulfilled and authentic Christian existence’. It involves the ‘bringing together of the fundamental ideas of Christianity and the *whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of the Christian faith*’.¹⁶ According to these writers, Christian spirituality should be understood as encompassing more than just the interior life of the soul. The concrete ways this interior life is expressed and lived are also important.

The study of C.H. Spurgeon’s spirituality undertaken here follows this broader, but still focused, approach. Using a framework proposed by Sheldrake, spirituality is understood as being concerned with the conjunction of theology, prayer and practical Christianity.¹⁷ This model is helpful in that it encompasses both the inner and outer aspects of the Christian life. Sheldrake’s framework also gives due weight to theology, although it needs to be stressed that theology is not considered in an abstract fashion apart from relationship with God and practical action. Rather, the emphasis, in Sheldrake’s three-dimensional model and in this study, is on how theology and practical action both shape and are shaped by experience.¹⁸ It ought to be noted that the framework for understanding spirituality set out by Sheldrake and adopted here would have been alien to Spurgeon himself who, when he used the term ‘spirituality’, meant by it something akin to piety or devotion, thus focusing on the

¹³ For a brief and helpful survey see A.E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 1-7.

¹⁴ L. Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal: Female Spirituality Among Nonconformists 1825–1875* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), p. 4. Cf. S.M. Schneiders, ‘Christian Spirituality: Definition, Methods and Types’, in P. Sheldrake (ed.), *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (London: SCM, 2005), p. 1; J.M. Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality: From the Wesleys to John Stott* (London: SPCK, 1991), p. vii.

¹⁵ Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, p. 4.

¹⁶ McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, p. 2, italics added.

¹⁷ Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History*, p. 52. Cf. I.M. Randall, *Evangelical Experiences: A Study in the Spirituality of English Evangelicalism 1918–1939* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), p. 2.

¹⁸ Cf. the similar comments of Randall, *Evangelical Experiences*, p. 2.

inner dimension of the spiritual life.¹⁹ But this is not really the problem it might appear to be and the adoption of this different, more recent, model for the study of spirituality is both legitimate and helpful, allowing as it does for an analysis of a wide range of Spurgeon's 'lived experience'.²⁰ What I am understanding as 'spirituality' was vitally important to Spurgeon and it is my own conviction that he cannot be adequately understood without reference to it. 'Spirituality', as defined by Sheldrake, was of crucial importance to the life and ministry of C.H. Spurgeon.

The Study of Spurgeon

Spurgeon has not received anything like the scholarly coverage he deserves. During his lifetime a number of popular biographies were written²¹ and his death in 1892 led to a rush of such books.²² Few of these works rise above the level of hagiography.²³ The opening words of J.D. Douglas's *The Prince of Preachers* give a flavour of the sort of writing many of these books contain. Douglas introduced his subject by stating that Spurgeon 'was in no respect' ordinary. Rather, 'He was great as a man; great as a theologian; great as a preacher; great in private with God; and great in public with his fellow men.'²⁴ Some of these 'tombstone' biographies, for example Douglas's own work and a volume by William Williams, are useful because the writers knew their subject personally and insights can be gleaned from them with regards Spurgeon's personality and friendships.²⁵ The official biography was by G. Holden Pike. Originally published in three volumes, this was a straightforward description of Spurgeon's life and ministry. Described by a contemporary, not unfairly, as 'laborious',²⁶ Pike's work is almost devoid of analysis.²⁷ The four

¹⁹ See, e.g., Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, Vol. 1, p. 145, 'Oh that my spirituality may be revived! My matchless Immanuel, let me see once more Thy face in the temple of my heart.' This quotation from Spurgeon's diary is n.d., but is probably from late 1850 or early 1851.

²⁰ Schneiders, 'Christian Spirituality: Definition, Methods and Types', p. 1. Cf. Randall, *Evangelical Experiences*, p. 2.

²¹ The first book length treatment seems to be G.J. Stevenson, *A Sketch of the Life and Ministry of the Reverend C.H. Spurgeon* (New York: Sheldon and Blakeman, 1857). Cf. the comments of Kruppa, *Spurgeon*, pp. 2-3.

²² See, e.g., R. Shindler, *From The Pulpit To The Palm-Branch: A Memorial of C.H. Spurgeon* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1892); G.C. Lorimer, *C.H. Spurgeon, The Puritan Preacher In The Nineteenth Century* (Boston: James H. Earle, 1892).

²³ [Anon.], *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: A Biographical Sketch And An Appreciation By One Who Knew Him Well* (London: Andrew Melrose, 1903), was one of the few works which was occasionally critical of Spurgeon. See, e.g., pp. vii-viii.

²⁴ J.D. Douglas, *The Prince of Preachers: A Sketch; A Portraiture; And A Tribute* (London: Morgan and Scott, n.d. [1893]), p. v.

²⁵ W. Williams, *Personal Reminiscences of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1895).

²⁶ [Anon.], *Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, p. v.

²⁷ G.H. Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (3 Vols; London: Cassell, n.d. [1892-93]). Throughout this study I have cited from a later six-volume edition of the

volume *Autobiography* appeared at the end of the nineteenth century, compiled by C.H. Spurgeon's wife, Susannah, and his private secretary, Joseph W. Harrald. This comprises material from Spurgeon (both his preaching and writing) which had been previously published in a number of places, together with material written specially by him with an autobiography in mind.²⁸ Harrald and, especially, Susannah Spurgeon inserted their own comments at a number of points but, again, there is hardly any analysis. Used with care, the works cited in this paragraph can provide the researcher with much useful source material, but for critical evaluation one must turn elsewhere.²⁹

Two biographies of Spurgeon produced in the first half of the twentieth century attempt some critical appraisal. These are the studies by William Y. Fullerton and John C. Carlile, published in 1920 and 1933 respectively.³⁰ Both men, like William Williams, were former students of the Pastors' College who had known Spurgeon personally and these books certainly contain some useful personal reminiscences of Spurgeon. The evaluative material they do include often tells the reader more about the author than his subject.³¹ Other works from this period tend merely to repeat the hagiography of the previous century.³² The second half of the twentieth century saw the appearance of a number of biographies of Spurgeon. The longest of these is Lewis Drummond's *Spurgeon, Prince of Preachers*³³ which, unfortunately, is seriously flawed, not least by factual inaccuracies. The best book-length scholarly study is Patricia Kruppa's *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: A Preacher's Progress*. Kruppa breaks new ground in seeking to set her subject in the context of his times, but her work is still limited. It is especially weak in its treatment of Spurgeon's theology.³⁴ One unpublished PhD study worth noting is H.F. Colquitt's study of Spurgeon's soteriology. This is based on a thorough reading of Spurgeon's published

same text, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (6 Vols; London: Cassell, 1894). Pike had also written an earlier one-volume work, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Preacher, Author, Philanthropist* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1886).

²⁸ See the comments of J.W. Harrald in 'Mr Spurgeon's Autobiography. An Interview with Mr Harrald', *British Weekly* 30 September 1897, in 'Maroon Bound Scrapfolders', Vol. 3, Spurgeon's College, Heritage Room, p. 146. The *Autobiography* was also issued in 'monthly shilling parts', the first of which was available in December 1897.

²⁹ It is only fair to acknowledge that many of the works cited or alluded to in this paragraph never set out to offer critical analysis of their subject. Therefore, the comment that they contain little such analysis should perhaps be regarded as more of an observation than a criticism.

³⁰ W.Y. Fullerton, *C.H. Spurgeon: A Biography* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1920); J.C. Carlile, *C.H. Spurgeon: An Interpretative Biography* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1933).

³¹ See, e.g., Carlile's comments on Spurgeon's theology. See *Spurgeon*, pp. 132-51.

³² See, e.g., A. Cunningham Burley, *Spurgeon And His Friendships* (London: Epworth, 1933).

³³ L. Drummond, *Spurgeon, Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1992).

³⁴ Cf. the comments of Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, p. 11.

sermons, but Colquitt's comments are rarely incisive.³⁵ I have written a biography of Spurgeon, *C.H. Spurgeon: The People's Preacher*, which is designed to be an accessible introduction to Spurgeon's life for the general reader.³⁶ Over a hundred years after Spurgeon's death, both a comprehensive study of his theology and a definitive critical biography are badly needed.³⁷

There are a number of smaller studies which reflect on a particular dimension of Spurgeon's life and ministry, and with profit. These include Brian Stanley's examination of Spurgeon's relationship with the Baptist Missionary Society,³⁸ Andrew Bradstock's study of Spurgeon and Victorian 'manliness',³⁹ Tim Grass and Ian Randall's analysis of Spurgeon's approach to the sacraments,⁴⁰ and David Bebbington's work on Spurgeon and the 'common man'.⁴¹ Bebbington has also written, in various places, on the relationship between Spurgeon and the Enlightenment.⁴² I have interacted with all these scholars in this study, often seeking to build on the insights they offer. In my view, the best scholarly work on Spurgeon currently available is by Mark Hopkins. His *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation* contains two chapters on Spurgeon, one of which is a fine, suggestive exposition of his theology.⁴³ At various points in this study I have taken issue with some of Hopkins' judgements, but his work is undoubtedly the place to start for any serious student of Spurgeon. All of the scholars cited in this paragraph have contributed to an understanding of the man and his ministry. Spurgeon was, however, such a complex character that it is not possible to capture the essence of him in a shorter study. Through detailed analysis of the different aspects of his spirituality, this

³⁵ H.F. Colquitt, 'The Soteriology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon Revealed in his Sermons and Controversial Writings' (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1951).

³⁶ P.J. Morden, *C.H. Spurgeon: The People's Preacher* (Farnham: CWR, 2009).

³⁷ At the time of writing, Christian George is pursuing PhD research into Spurgeon's theology at St Andrews University, Scotland. As far as Spurgeon's theology is concerned, this thesis is likely to go some way to filling the scholarly lacuna.

³⁸ B. Stanley, 'C.H. Spurgeon and the Baptist Missionary Society 1863-1866', *Baptist Quarterly* Vol. 20, No. 3 (July 1982), pp. 319-28.

³⁹ A. Bradstock, "'A Man of God is a Manly Man": Spurgeon, Luther and "Holy Boldness"', in A. Bradstock, S. Gill, A. Hogan and S. Morgan (eds), *Masculinity and Spirituality in Victorian Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 209-25.

⁴⁰ T. Grass and I.M. Randall, 'C.H. Spurgeon on the Sacraments', in A.R. Cross and P.E. Thompson (eds), *Baptist Sacramentalism* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), pp. 55-75.

⁴¹ D.W. Bebbington, 'Spurgeon and the Common Man', *Baptist Review of Theology* Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring 1995), pp. 63-75. Bebbington has also contributed 'Spurgeon and British Evangelical Theological Education', in D.G. Hart and R.A. Mohler, Jr (eds), *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), pp. 217-34.

⁴² See, e.g., D.W. Bebbington, *Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), pp. 48-49; 'Gospel and Culture in Victorian Nonconformity', in J. Shaw and A. Kreider (eds), *Culture and the Nonconformist Tradition* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), pp. 57-58.

⁴³ Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, pp. 125-66.

present work seeks to paint a more complete picture of this multifaceted man and uncover the forces that shaped and drove him.

A number of more general works give a degree of attention to Spurgeon. Bebbington's *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* is especially important.⁴⁴ Another book which includes some helpful analysis is Horton Davies' *Worship and Theology in England*.⁴⁵ Usually, however, the coverage given to Spurgeon in both general and religious histories of the nineteenth century is remarkably thin. There are only two references to him in John Wolffe's *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland 1843–1945*,⁴⁶ and none at all in Boyd Hilton's *The Age of Atonement* (which only covers the period 1785–1865).⁴⁷ These are fine works but, given Spurgeon's importance and influence, admittedly as a purveyor of popular religion, the lack of notice accorded to him seems surprising.

Finally, it is important to note the welter of popular and semi-popular books, pamphlets, papers and, more recently, web-based articles, which highlight Spurgeon's Calvinism and speak of him, by turns, as the 'heir of the Puritans' or the 'last of the Puritans'. This tradition was already established by the end of the nineteenth century, in works with subtitles like *The Puritan Preacher*.⁴⁸ Ernest Bacon provides an example of this approach from the second half of the twentieth century. In his biography of Spurgeon, subtitled *Heir of the Puritans*, Bacon states that his subject 'was completely moulded and fashioned by those spiritual giants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Puritans. He stood in their noble tradition, in the direct line of their theology and outlook.'⁴⁹ The writing in this vein is usually polemical and often focuses on the Downgrade Controversy of 1887–88 and Spurgeon's decision to resign from the Baptist Union. This is then used as ammunition to score points in favour of a separatist ecclesiology.⁵⁰ Some studies in this genre, for example those by Iain Murray, undoubtedly contribute to an

⁴⁴ Bebbington, *Dominance of Evangelicalism*.

⁴⁵ H. Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: From Watts and Wesley to Martineau, 1690–1900* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996 [1961–62]), pp. 333–45.

⁴⁶ J. Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland 1843–1945* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 89, 166.

⁴⁷ B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785–1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Lorimer, *Spurgeon*, with his subtitle, *The Puritan Preacher In The Nineteenth Century*.

⁴⁹ E.W. Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967), p. 102.

⁵⁰ Spurgeon's name was invoked in similar ways by Baptist fundamentalists in inter-war Britain. See D.W. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism in Inter-War Britain', in K. Robbins (ed.), *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America, c.1750–c.1950* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 303–304. Cf. H.H. Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), p. 46.

understanding of Spurgeon.⁵¹ Comments such as those cited from Bacon, however, are simply wrong, as this study will show.

Overall, then, the published literature on Spurgeon is uneven in quality and a major, satisfying scholarly study is lacking.⁵² The best of the secondary literature offers insights into particular aspects of Spurgeon, but the whole picture is not painted. What there is plenty of is hagiography and polemic, a significant amount of which is marked by misinformation and lack of depth. There is a consistent failure to capture a picture of Spurgeon which does justice to the cross-currents which fed his life and ministry and get to the heart of the man. This present book seeks to make a contribution to the study of Spurgeon by considering him both in depth and breadth.

Sources Used

As already indicated, I have worked in the main from primary data. This includes the aforementioned four-volume *Autobiography* and the biographies written by those who knew Spurgeon, mainly men who had studied at the Pastors' College. The sixty-three volumes of the *New Park Street / Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, which contain the vast majority of Spurgeon's printed sermons, are indispensable.⁵³ From 1855 Spurgeon's preaching was taken down verbatim by stenographers and then edited, until the last years of his life by Spurgeon himself, for publication. After his death a large cache of sermons remained unissued and so publication continued, ending only in 1917, the final message issued being number 3563.⁵⁴ In his preaching

⁵¹ See, e.g., I.H. Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (London: Banner of Truth, 1966), and *Heroes* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), pp. 261-96.

⁵² Hopkins' *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation* is the work that comes closest to this, but his study of Spurgeon covers only two of seven main chapters. See pp. 125-66 and pp. 193-248.

⁵³ C.H. Spurgeon, *New Park Street Pulpit (NPSP) / Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit (MTP)* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1855-1917). These are now supplemented by T.P. Crosby (ed.), *C.H. Spurgeon's Sermons Beyond Volume 63: An authentic supplement to the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Leominster: Day One, 2009). The majority of the forty-five sermons in this volume appeared in the *Baptist Messenger* between 1877 and 1881.

⁵⁴ C.H. Spurgeon, 'A Cheering Congratulation', *MTP*, Vol. 63, S. No. 3563, Psalm 32.1, n.d., pp. 217-27. There are not quite 3568 sermons. Some of the early sermons were too long for a single issue and were issued in two parts. See, e.g., 'Christ Crucified', *NPSP*, Vol. 1, S. Nos 7-8, 1 Corinthians 1.23,24, delivered 11 February 1855, pp. 49-60. Furthermore, there were a few issues which did not actually contained a sermon. Examples of these include, *NPSP*, Vol. 5, Nos 268-70, pp. 345-68, which are detailed reports of 'The Ceremony Of Laying The First Stone Of The New Tabernacle ...', 16 August 1859; and Vol. 6, S. Nos 331-32, pp. 357-72, which contain 'The Proceedings Of The Great Meeting In The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington', 2 September 1860. Finally, there are sermons in *NPSP*, Vol. 7 which are not by Spurgeon himself, e.g., the expositions of various Calvinistic doctrines which partly make up Nos 385-88, one of which was delivered by C.H. Spurgeon's brother, J.A. Spurgeon, on 'Particular Redemption', pp. 313-18. The meeting at which these expositions was given was on 11 April 1861. When Spurgeon died many sermons remained

Spurgeon sought to stick closely to the biblical text but was also often highly autobiographical. The printed sermons are, therefore, very revealing both of Spurgeon's overall conception of the Christian life and of his spirituality. I have sought to read widely in this vitally important body of material. However, some studies of Spurgeon concentrate on these sermons almost to the exclusion of other sources.⁵⁵ I have tried not to do this and have used a range of other material as well.

Many sermons, talks and 'meditations' by Spurgeon were published outside of the *New Park Street / Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. His book of communion meditations, entitled *Till He Come*, is a vital resource.⁵⁶ A book of prayer meeting addresses was also published,⁵⁷ as were some of the Friday afternoon lectures Spurgeon gave to his Pastors' College students.⁵⁸ Like the sermons in the *New Park Street / Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, these messages were taken down by stenographers and other personal aides and later revised for publication. But Spurgeon also wrote a large number of books. An early work, *The Saint And His Saviour*, is significant in that it sets out his conception of the Christian life.⁵⁹ Spurgeon wrote in a popular, accessible style. His two volumes of daily devotional readings, *Morning By Morning* and *Evening By Evening*,⁶⁰ and two books written under the *nom de plume* of 'John Ploughman'⁶¹ stand perhaps as the supreme examples of this approach. These small, affordable books enjoyed significant sales. Just three years after its publication *Morning By Morning* had sold more than 20,000 copies.⁶² The agricultural John Ploughman's avowed aim was to communicate in both 'plain speech' and 'mirthful vein'.⁶³ By 1897 more than 500,000 copies of the

still to be issued. Publication ceased on 10 May 1917 because of 'difficulties due to war conditions'. See the notices announcing 'Suspension of Publication' in *MTP*, Vol. 63, pp. 216, 228.

⁵⁵ See, especially, Colquitt, 'The Soteriology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon', despite his claim that he has made 'extensive use' of 'many other of Spurgeon's publications', p. ii. In Colquitt's chapters 2 and 3, all the references to primary Spurgeon material except one are, directly or indirectly, from *NPSP / MTP*. See pp. 54-112.

⁵⁶ C.H. Spurgeon, *Till He Come: Communion Meditations And Addresses* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1896).

⁵⁷ C.H. Spurgeon, *Only a Prayer Meeting: Forty Addresses at the Metropolitan Tabernacle and Other Prayer Meetings* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1901).

⁵⁸ C.H. Spurgeon, *Lectures To My Students* (3 Vols; London: Passmore and Alabaster, n.d.).

⁵⁹ C.H. Spurgeon, *The Saint And His Saviour: The Progress Of The Soul In The Knowledge Of Jesus* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1889 [1857]).

⁶⁰ C.H. Spurgeon, *Morning By Morning: Or, Daily Readings for the Family or the Closet* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1865); *Evening By Evening: Or, Readings at Eventide for the Family or the Closet* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1868).

⁶¹ C.H. Spurgeon, *John Ploughman's Talk; Or, Plain Advice for Plain People* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, n.d.); *John Ploughman's Pictures; Or, More of his Plain Talk for Plain People* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1880).

⁶² See Spurgeon, *Evening By Evening*, Preface, pp. vii-viii.

⁶³ Spurgeon, *John Ploughman's Pictures*, Preface, p. 3.

two John Ploughman books had been sold.⁶⁴ Spurgeon was shaping the views and devotional habits of countless Victorian Christians not only through his published preaching but also through his writing. There were many other books, including two biblical commentaries, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*,⁶⁵ which was on Matthew's Gospel, and the multi-volume *Treasury of David*,⁶⁶ which was on the Psalms. The latter work is a particularly important and neglected resource. The production and publication of the seven volumes which made up the *Treasury of David* spanned over sixteen years and in many ways the commentary was Spurgeon's *magnum opus*. These different and varied books yield insights into Spurgeon's spirituality which could not be gleaned elsewhere and I have drawn from all of them, with a special focus on the *Treasury*, which is invaluable because of the way Spurgeon reflected on the nature of spiritual experience as he worked his way through the different Psalms.

Further printed material is available. Spurgeon began his monthly magazine, *The Sword and The Trowel* (referred to as the *Sword and Trowel* in all subsequent references in the main text of this book) in January 1865. He was its editor from its inception to his death, contributing numerous articles and reviews himself.⁶⁷ The *Sword and Trowel* is another vital resource for this study. In 1866 Spurgeon edited and published a hymnal for his church, the Metropolitan Tabernacle, which was entitled *Our Own Hymn Book*.⁶⁸ The hymns and shorter verses included were selected with great care by the book's editor, who also composed a number of the hymns.⁶⁹ *Our Own Hymn Book* is, once again, both a neglected and a revealing resource for the student of Spurgeon. Similarly neglected and even more important are the records of the prayers Spurgeon prayed in the Metropolitan Tabernacle Sunday services. Spurgeon famously rejected any formal liturgy or set prayers and refused to include written prayers in his books of daily readings.⁷⁰ But records of his public, extempore prayers survive because it became Spurgeon's practice, from at

⁶⁴ See *John Ploughman's Almanack* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897). The Almanack was produced on a single sheet.

⁶⁵ C.H. Spurgeon, *The Gospel of the Kingdom. A Popular Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1893). Spurgeon completed this commentary in the last few months of his life. See Susannah Spurgeon's 'Introductory Note', pp. iii-iv.

⁶⁶ C.H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury Of David: Containing An Original Exposition Of The Book Of Psalms; A Collection Of Illustrative Extracts From The Whole Range Of Literature; A Series Of Homiletical Hints Upon Almost Every Verse; And Lists Of Writers Upon Each Psalm* (7 Vols; London and Edinburgh: Marshall Brothers, n.d. [London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1869–1885]).

⁶⁷ Spurgeon (ed.), *Sword and Trowel*.

⁶⁸ C.H. Spurgeon (ed.), *Our Own Hymn Book* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1866).

⁶⁹ Spurgeon (ed.), *Our Own Hymn Book*, Preface, pp. vi-x. A supplement was produced after Spurgeon's death which included some hymns Spurgeon had written after the publication of the original hymnal. See [Anon.] (ed.), *Supplement To Our Own Hymn Book* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1898), p. ii.

⁷⁰ Spurgeon, *Morning By Morning*, Preface, p. vii.

least the early 1860s, to have his Tabernacle stenographers take these down verbatim, apparently to enable him to reflect on his own practice of public prayer.⁷¹ He would have strongly resisted any attempts at publication, but after his death two collections of prayers quickly appeared based on these records.⁷² The stenographers' transcripts were still extant and in possession of the publishers Marshall, Morgan and Scott when Charles T. Cook prepared his edition of Spurgeon's hymns and prayers in the early 1930s.⁷³ I have not seen these prayers cited in any scholarly study of Spurgeon. They are essential reading if his spirituality is to be understood.

This study also seeks to utilise a vast corpus of unpublished material. I have drawn from the archives of 'Spurgeons' (formerly known as 'Spurgeon's Childcare') at Rushden and there is also some helpful manuscript material held at the Angus Library and Archives, Regent's Park College, Oxford. In the main, however, I have worked with the unpublished, primary sources which are held in the Heritage Room (also known as the 'Spurgeon Archive') at Spurgeon's College. Important are the bound scrapbooks and loose-leaf scrapfolders which are held in different places in the archive.⁷⁴ Most appear to have been originally compiled by Spurgeon family members, for example, his sister, Emily.⁷⁵ They contain cuttings from newspapers and magazines and a wealth of other printed material relevant to C.H. Spurgeon, but they also include many letters, both to and from Spurgeon, the majority of which are not catalogued.⁷⁶ Also, there are three bound volumes of letters from Spurgeon which together contain over 400 letters and cards.⁷⁷ In addition to these, there are

⁷¹ C.T. Cook (ed.), *Behold the Throne of Grace: C.H. Spurgeon's Prayers and Hymns* (Marshall, Morgan and Scott: London, n.d. [1934]), pp. 10-11.

⁷² [Anon.] (ed.), *The Pastor in Prayer: Being a Selection of C.H. Spurgeon's Sunday Morning Prayers* (London: Elliot Stock, 1893); D.T. Young (ed.), *C.H. Spurgeon's Prayers* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1905). Prayers recorded in *The Pastor in Prayer* are particularly valuable for being dated.

⁷³ Cook (ed.), *Behold the Throne of Grace*, p.11.

⁷⁴ In addition to 'Spurgeon's Scrapbooks, Numbered Volumes', 'Spurgeon's Scrapbooks, Two Unnumbered Volumes' and the 'Loose-Leaf Scrap Folders', see the four volumes of 'Maroon Bound Scrapfolders', Spurgeon's College, Heritage Room. In the bibliography of this study I have included all these scrapbooks and scrapfolders under the heading, 'Manuscript Material', as they contain written as well as printed matter. Also, of course, the scrapbooks and scrapfolders themselves are unpublished.

⁷⁵ See 'Cuttings on C.H. Spurgeon', Spurgeon's College, Heritage Room (H1.01 and 02). Some were compiled by Susannah Spurgeon, see Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, Vol. 2, p. 33.

⁷⁶ The Heritage Room is a difficult archive to work in. Through no fault of the excellent and overworked librarian many items are not properly catalogued. In the 1980s there was an attempt to tidy up the archive. Some of the changes were positive, with much material being properly logged for the first time. Other changes, for example the breaking up of some of the scrapbooks and the placing of material in ring binders, have been less helpful. I have noted where in the archive the material I am citing is currently held, although it is highly possible that a future reorganisation of the archive will render these references obsolete.

⁷⁷ 'Original Correspondence of Charles Haddon Spurgeon' 1851-1893 (Vol. 1); 1863-1868 (Vol. 2); 1887-1892 (Vol. 3), Spurgeon's College, Heritage Room (4G). Volume One

many other of Spurgeon's letters which are not in the bound volumes or the scrapbooks or folders, but scattered throughout the archive. In letters to his family and close friends Spurgeon often wrote in an unguarded way about issues relevant to this study. Letters written to Spurgeon, together with handwritten recollections of his personality and ministry, also bring insights.⁷⁸

The manuscript materials I have found most illuminating for the early period of Spurgeon's ministry are the notebooks containing outlines of his unpublished, pre-London, Cambridgeshire sermons. Eight volumes are extant,⁷⁹ containing just under 350 'skeletons' from which he preached. Many of these outlines are considerably longer than the ones from which he preached in his London ministry.⁸⁰ A few of the 'skeletons' are included in Volume 1 of the *Autobiography*, and these give an impression of the sort of detail he could include.⁸¹ As with the published prayers, I am not aware of any study that has utilised the wealth of information these outlines contain relative to the formative years of Spurgeon's Cambridgeshire ministry.

The Heritage Room archive has been used by researchers before. For example, Mike Nicholls made use of a number of photographs and drawings to illustrate his book on Spurgeon, which also includes some facsimiles of letters and a sermon outline.⁸² Ian Randall has drawn from the archive in his history of Spurgeon's College⁸³ and in a short paper which examines responses to the more restrictive basis of the College Conference introduced in the aftermath of the Downgrade Controversy, where he makes excellent use of a collection of letters written by members of the Conference.⁸⁴ Both Kruppa and Hopkins spent some time in the archive and cite some of the published and unpublished material in their respective studies, but they do so only sparingly. I do not think that the unpublished manuscript sources have had any significant, shaping influence on their work, with the sole (but very important) exception of Hopkins' chapter and articles on the Downgrade

contains a number of letters not written by C.H. Spurgeon, one from as late as 1909 and one, written by C.H. Spurgeon's father, from 1821. Therefore the description of this volume is not accurate. See, e.g., the letters numbered 161 and 168.

⁷⁸ E.g. T. Cox, 'Notes on C.H. Spurgeon', Spurgeon's College, Heritage Room (B1.17).

⁷⁹ C.H. Spurgeon, 'Notebook Containing Early Sermon Skeletons, Vol. 1', Spurgeon's College, Heritage Room (K1.5); 'Notebooks With Sermon Outlines, Vols 2, 4-9', Spurgeon's College, Heritage Room (U.1). Volume 3 is missing, which seems to have contained 54 outlines, is missing, and appears not to be extant. Volume 8 closes with outline number 377.

⁸⁰ See the comments in Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, Vol. 1, pp. 214, 277.

⁸¹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, Vol. 1, pp. 214-26; 277-84.

⁸² M.K. Nicholls, *C.H. Spurgeon: The Pastor Evangelist* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1982), pp. 29-30; 38-39.

⁸³ I.M. Randall, *A School of the Prophets: 150 Years of Spurgeon's College* (London: Spurgeon's College, 2005).

⁸⁴ I.M. Randall, 'Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the Pastors' College and the Downgrade Controversy', in K. Cooper and J. Gregory (eds), *Discipline and Diversity: Papers Read at the 2005 Summer Meeting and the 2006 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2007), pp. 366-76.

Controversy.⁸⁵ I have sought to make good use of the archive in each of the main chapters of this study. Moreover, I have tried to allow the unpublished resources in the Heritage Room to inform and shape the argument rather than merely using them to illustrate conclusions arrived at by another route. This material has been helpful in overturning some of the established opinions about Spurgeon and in bringing new features to light. This study, then, works with a diverse range of primary evidence – from published sermons and books to unpublished letters and notes – in order to build up a picture of Spurgeon’s spirituality.

The Content of this Book

Examination of Spurgeon’s spirituality is made in nine main chapters. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 focus in the main on issues of spiritual formation. Chapter 2 considers the oft spoken of ‘Puritan atmosphere’ in which Spurgeon was brought up and the way ‘Puritanism’ had a continuing influence on him. Chapter 3 analyses his evangelical conversion and the ways that ‘conversionism’ shaped his subsequent life and ministry. Chapter 4 examines his baptism as a believer and the ways that this and his overall approach to baptism was important for his spirituality. Chapters 5 to 7 focus especially on how spirituality was sustained, with detailed consideration given to the Bible (chapter 5), prayer (chapter 6) and the Lord’s Supper (chapter 7), all of which were crucial in nurturing Spurgeon’s spirituality. Chapters 8 to 10 consider, broadly speaking, the outworking of his spirituality. His ‘activism’ is examined and the link between such activism and spirituality is analysed (chapter 8). His approach to personal holiness and his engagement with a range of other approaches to ‘sanctification’ which were current in the nineteenth century are evaluated (chapter 9). The final main chapter (chapter 10) deals with Spurgeon’s experience of suffering and concludes with an examination of his conception of life beyond the grave where, for the Christian, all suffering would be over. It should also be noted that there are big themes which cross the chapters. Examples of these include the atonement and ‘spiritual friendship’.

The analysis of Spurgeon’s spirituality undertaken in this study reveals him to be a far more complex, multi-faceted figure than is usually supposed. Each main chapter contributes to an understanding of this complexity. Approaches to Spurgeon which portray him as the reincarnation of sixteenth- and seventeenth- century Puritanism, or, conversely, as a typical Victorian fail to grasp either the man or his ministry. Attempts to interpret Spurgeon as an Enlightenment figure standing against Romantic trends in nineteenth-century religious life are, on their own, inadequate, but neither is it right to describe him, without severe qualification, as ‘Romantic’.

⁸⁵ Hopkins, *Nonconformity’s Romantic Generation*, pp. 193-248; M.T.E. Hopkins, ‘The Downgrade Controversy: New Evidence’, *Baptist Quarterly* Vol. 35, No. 6 (April 1994), pp. 262-78; ‘Spurgeon’s Opponents in the Downgrade Controversy’, *Baptist Quarterly* Vol. 32, No. 6 (April 1988), pp. 274-94.

There is important truth in these and other pictures, but, by themselves, they do not capture the angularity, complexity and richness of Spurgeon.

Analysis of Spurgeon's spirituality suggests an alternative theme, one which helps to make sense of the man and his ministry. One of Spurgeon's communion meditations, included in *Till He Come*, was given the suggestive title of 'Communion With Christ And His People'.⁸⁶ In this message Spurgeon set out different ways in which communion, or fellowship, firstly with Christ and secondly with Christ's people, was to be attained, sustained and deepened. What I will aim to show in this study is that the phrase 'communion with Christ and his people' actually represents the integrating theme of Spurgeon's spirituality.⁸⁷

I will argue Spurgeon's spirituality was thoroughly christocentric, with an overriding stress on communion with Christ. This was true both of the inner and outer dimensions of his spirituality. At the point of conversion Spurgeon began to experience communion with Christ and his subsequent spiritual journey represented a quest for yet deeper communion. Even Christian activity, for Spurgeon a crucial outworking of his experience of communion or fellowship with Christ was, in and of itself, a way of experiencing closer communion with Jesus. The Christian life was, for Spurgeon, the 'progress of the soul in the knowledge of Jesus'.⁸⁸ Spurgeon also pursued fellowship with Christ's people. He was not a 'solitary' but sought to live out his faith in close connection with others. For Spurgeon, communion with Christ was often experienced in the presence of other, like-minded believers and for him Christianity had to be lived out, in the church and the wider world. Spurgeon is certainly a more complex figure than is often supposed. His spirituality was moulded by a range of different influences – religious, cultural and temperamental. Nevertheless, analysis of his spirituality reveals a single, integrating theme, albeit one that was kaleidoscopic rather than monochrome. 'Communion with Christ and his people' is the theme which helps us makes sense of the different dimensions of Spurgeon's life and ministry.

⁸⁶ C.H. Spurgeon, 'Communion With Christ And His People', 1 Corinthians 10.16,17, in *Till He Come*, pp. 313-27.

⁸⁷ In this study, where I am referring to the sermon 'Communion With Christ And His People', I begin each word with an upper case letter, but I do not do this when I am using the phrase in a more general sense. Overall, in all quotations from different sources I follow the capitalisation and grammar of the original. In the quotations which appear at the beginning of each chapter, I do not provide a footnote reference if that quotation appears later in the chapter. On the two occasions when the quotation does not appear again I do provide a reference. One further point about quotations can be made. Spurgeon did not use inclusive language. I have quoted Spurgeon accurately but have sought to use inclusive language myself in my own writing in this study.

⁸⁸ The subtitle of Spurgeon's *The Saint And His Saviour*.

Conclusion

This book makes a detailed examination of the spirituality of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Studies of this significant figure in the religious and cultural life of Victorian Britain have failed to do justice to his complexity. Analysis of his spirituality using a range of primary data illuminates the different dimensions of Spurgeon's life and ministry and shows how they fit into the whole. It will be argued that 'communion with Christ and his people' is the integrating theme which ties together and makes sense of the different, and sometimes seemingly contradictory, aspects of Spurgeon's life and work. In this way, this study aims to make a contribution to Spurgeon studies and, more broadly, to an understanding of religion in nineteenth-century Britain.

CHAPTER 2

Puritan Piety: 'A Calvinistic creed and a Puritanic morality'

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born on 19 June 1834 in the small village of Kelvedon, Essex, the first child of John and Eliza Spurgeon (née Jarvis).¹ John was pastor of a small Independent congregation in nearby Tollesbury, but had to supplement his income by working as a clerk to a coal merchant in Colchester. Within a year of Charles Spurgeon's birth the family moved to Colchester and, following the arrival of Eliza, who was born in January 1836,² Charles was sent to live with his paternal grandparents, James and Sarah, in Stambourne, also in Essex. By the time the infant Charles arrived in rural, isolated Stambourne, grandfather James had been minister of the Independent chapel there for twenty-five years. Charles was to stay in the manse with his grandparents, and their unmarried daughter Ann, until 1841. As an adolescent, he would regularly return to his grandparents' home for long holidays and other visits.³ As Mark Hopkins states, the influence of James and Sarah on the young C.H. Spurgeon was 'considerable'.⁴

Charles Spurgeon returned to Colchester to live with his parents and their growing family in August 1841.⁵ He was taught locally at Stockwell House, but in 1848 he was sent to Maidstone, Kent, to attend an Anglican agricultural school. In 1849 he

¹ For biographical details included in this paragraph, unless otherwise stated, see C.H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography: Compiled from his Diary, Letters, and Records by his Wife and his Private Secretary* (4 Vols; London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897–99), Vol. 1, pp. 10-31, 43, 47-55, 96-115; G.H. Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (6 Vols; London: Cassell, 1894, [1892–93]), Vol. 1, pp. 6-31.

² 'Family Register' in 'Spurgeon Family Bible' (*The Holy Bible with the Commentaries of [Thomas] Scott and [Matthew] Henry ...* (Glasgow: W.R. M'Phun, 1852), Spurgeon's College, Heritage Room (Display Case 2).

³ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, Vol. 1, p. 43.

⁴ M. Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation: Evangelical and Liberal Theologies in Victorian England* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), p. 125.

⁵ By 1841 James Archer Spurgeon (June 1837) and Emily J. Spurgeon (April 1839) had been born. See C.H. Spurgeon's handwritten notes reproduced in facsimile, in W.M. Higgs, *The Spurgeon Family: Being An Account Of The Descent And Family Of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (London: Elliot Stock, 1906), p. viii. There were seventeen children in all, although nine died in infancy. See Higgs' chart, 'Pedigree of the Spurgeon ... Family', attached between pp. 32-33 in his *The Spurgeon Family*, and C.H. Spurgeon's handwritten note in the 'Family Register', in 'Spurgeon Family Bible'.

became an usher, or 'junior instructor', at a school in Newmarket, Suffolk. In January 1850 Charles had an evangelical conversion experience, while he was back in Colchester for his holidays. This will be analysed in detail in chapter 3. In the September of 1850 he moved again, to Cambridge, where he taught in another school. Both in Newmarket and Cambridge C.H. Spurgeon stayed with committed, Nonconformist Christians.

As should already be clear, C.H. Spurgeon had a staunchly religious upbringing which predated his conversion. The first half of this chapter examines the influence aspects of that upbringing had on his later spirituality. The focus is on how 'Puritanism' moulded him. After a discussion on the nature of Puritanism, the so-called 'Puritan atmosphere' in which Spurgeon was brought up is considered. It is true that his family were also evangelical, and this evangelicalism and its impact on him will be examined in chapter 3.⁶ Nevertheless, the family were evangelicals of a particular stripe, seeking to stand within what they understood to be the Puritan tradition. The mature Spurgeon identified himself strongly with this tradition. Puritanism is, therefore, a good place to start in any consideration of his spirituality.

The second half of the chapter considers some of the particular ways Puritanism helped to mould Spurgeon. As noted in chapter 1, too much has been claimed in respect of the connection between Spurgeon and the Puritans. Nevertheless, Puritanism was still very significant for his spirituality. It helped shape his approach to the Christian life in both its inner and outer dimensions. This will be shown in detail as the chapter unfolds but some quotations from Spurgeon are helpful in establishing the basic point. In a sermon entitled 'All Of Grace', based on Ephesians 2.8 and originally included in the *Sword and Trowel* for January 1887, Spurgeon stated that the doctrines he preached were those of the Puritans. Furthermore, he stated that his 'experience' endeared these doctrines to him.⁷ On another occasion he wrote of the 'vigorous personal piety of the Puritanic period'.⁸ This was something he admired and sought to emulate. Puritanism was foundational to Spurgeon's spirituality.

⁶ In which a discussion and definition of the nature of evangelicalism will also be offered.

⁷ C.H. Spurgeon, 'All Of Grace', in C.H. Spurgeon (ed.), *The Sword and The Trowel: A Record of Combat With Sin and Labour For The Lord* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1865–92) (*Sword and The Trowel*), January 1887, p. 4. The paragraph in which these comments occur was omitted from the version of this message that was eventually published in the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. See 'All Of Grace', *New Park Street Pulpit (NPS) / Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit (MTP)* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1855–1917), *MTP*, Vol. 61, S. No. 3479, Eph. 2.8, p. 470. All subsequent references to 'All Of Grace' are from the version published in the *Sword and Trowel*.

⁸ Spurgeon (ed.), *Sword and Trowel*, August 1871, p. 368.

Understanding Puritanism

As John Coffey and Paul Lim state, 'Defining Puritanism has become a favourite parlour game for early modern historians.'⁹ Lawrence Sasek writes that the terms 'Puritan' and 'Puritanism' pose 'great and possibly unique difficulties for modern scholarship'.¹⁰ Having noted the difficulties, however, it is necessary to arrive at a working understanding of Puritanism for the purposes of this chapter and, indeed, for the study as a whole. Coffey and Lim suggest the following,

Puritanism is the name we give to a distinctive and particularly intense variety of early modern Reformed Protestantism which originated within the unique context of the Church of England but spilled out beyond it, branching off into divergent dissenting streams, and overflowing into other lands and foreign churches.

Coffey and Lim then proceed to comment on this statement. Firstly, Puritanism was *Protestant*. Puritans affirmed the sixteenth-century Reformation 'slogans' – *sola fide, sola gratia, sola scriptura* (although there was disagreement as to exactly what these entailed in practice) and rejected Roman Catholicism. Indeed, Puritan 'anti-Popery' was especially 'intense'. Secondly, Puritanism was *Reformed*. That is, Puritans aligned themselves with the continental Calvinists rather than the Lutherans.¹¹ Puritans tended to have a Calvinistic theology (although there were exceptions).¹² Usually doctrines such as predestination, election and final perseverance were important, as was the idea of God entering into 'covenant' with his people.¹³ The overarching stress was on God's sovereignty in salvation. Simplicity in worship was also a feature, with Puritans recoiling with 'iconophobic horror from images and elaborate rituals'.¹⁴ All this was recognisably Reformed. Thirdly, *Puritanism originated within the Church of England*, that is, it was formed in the tensions of that particular environment, being, as Patrick Collinson has written, 'one half of a stressful equation'.¹⁵ The Puritans regarded the Reformation in

⁹ J. Coffey and P.C.H. Lim, 'Introduction', in J. Coffey and P.C.H. Lim (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 1.

¹⁰ L.A. Sasek (ed.), *Images of English Puritanism: A Collection of Contemporary Sources 1589–1646* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), p. 1.

¹¹ Coffey and Lim, 'Introduction', pp. 2-3.

¹² J. Coffey, *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in Seventeenth-Century England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2008 [2006]). Goodwin was, unusually, a 'pugnacious proponent of Arminian theology', p. 199.

¹³ The importance of covenant theology for the Puritans, and the nuances of some of the different Puritan approaches to the covenant, with special reference to the situation in Ireland, is highlighted by C. Gribben, 'Defining the Puritans? The Baptism Debate in Cromwellian Ireland, 1654-56', *Church History* Vol. 73, No. 1 (2004), pp. 81-85.

¹⁴ Coffey and Lim, 'Introduction', p. 2.

¹⁵ As cited by Coffey and Lim, 'Introduction', p. 4. Cf. P. Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 143, and *The Puritan Character: Polemics and Polarities in Early Seventeenth-Century English Culture* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1989).

the Church of England as half finished and, as Mark Noll has stated, they wanted ‘to finish the Reformation and finish it now’.¹⁶ In this they were unsuccessful, but in the heat of battle the language of Puritanism was forged and the identity of those who described themselves as the ‘godly’ (‘Puritan’ was, originally, a term of abuse used by opponents) was consolidated.¹⁷ Fourthly, Puritanism came to *spill out beyond the Church of England*; indeed, Coffey and Lim describe Puritanism as a ‘uniquely fissiparous’ and ‘remarkably fluid’ variety of the Reformed faith. Independents and Baptists who separated from the Church of England and Presbyterians who were excluded from it retained their Puritan identity. The godly ‘spilled out’ not only beyond the boundaries of the established church in England but beyond the boundaries of England itself, most notably as different groups of pilgrims sailed for the New World. Finally, Coffey and Lim note that Puritanism has ‘had an enduring legacy, one that fed into Protestant Dissent and Evangelicalism’.¹⁸ Puritanism, then, was complex and multi-faceted. Nevertheless, although it is extremely difficult to define there are identifiable, distinguishing features. The basic understanding stated and expounded by Coffey and Lim is the one that is worked with in this study.

Coffey and Lim give some attention to Puritanism as a movement of spirituality,¹⁹ and K.M. Kopic and R.C. Gleason argue that Puritans were, to a significant degree, concerned with spirituality.²⁰ Certainly, the godly practised a particular form of practical, personal piety, one that was especially intense, with a stress on ‘experimental religion’. Personal and family devotions were emphasised, spiritual diaries were kept and an ‘experimental predestinarianism’ was fostered as encouragement was given to the believer to seek evidence that they were truly one of the elect.²¹ There was also a strong emphasis on communion with God. Geoffrey Nuttall has spoken of Puritanism as a ‘movement towards immediacy in relation to God’.²² This core concern of Puritanism – experimental, Godward-facing piety – was very important for Spurgeon, as will be shown.

It is also important to consider Spurgeon’s own understanding of Puritanism. As Patricia Kruppa observes, Spurgeon himself used the words ‘Puritan’ and ‘Puritanism’ loosely, a point illustrated by the fact that he could describe George

¹⁶ M.A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (London: SPCK, 1992), p. 32. Noll’s focus is on Puritanism in North America, but in this statement he is speaking specifically of English Puritanism.

¹⁷ Coffey and Lim, ‘Introduction’, p. 3.

¹⁸ Coffey and Lim, ‘Introduction’, pp. 5-7.

¹⁹ Coffey and Lim, ‘Introduction’, p. 4.

²⁰ K.M. Kopic and R.C. Gleason, ‘Who Were the Puritans?’, in K.M. Kopic and R.C. Gleason (eds), *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics* (Leicester: IVP, 2004), pp. 23-32. Cf., T. Schwanda, ‘Soul Recreation: Spiritual Marriage And Ravishment In The Contemplative-Mystical Piety of Isaac Ambrose’ (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Durham, 2009), p. 12.

²¹ Coffey and Lim, ‘Introduction’, p. 4.

²² G. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1947), p. 134. Cf. Kopic and Gleason, ‘Who Were the Puritans?’, p. 25.

Whitefield (1714–70) and even John Wesley (1703–91) as being 'part of a great chain of Puritan divines'.²³ In the aforementioned sermon, 'All Of Grace', Spurgeon declared that the doctrines of grace he associated with the Puritans were also the doctrines of Calvin, Augustine, the apostle Paul, the 'Holy Ghost' and Jesus.²⁴ Spurgeon's understanding of Puritan theology could, at times, be breathtakingly broad. His approach was also selective. He had little interest in the political concerns of sixteenth- and seventeenth- century English Puritanism, for example. In a review of a biographical study of Oliver Cromwell for the *Sword and Trowel*, Spurgeon chose to comment for the most part on Cromwell's 'Calvinistic faith'. 'It is time', Spurgeon stated, 'that Cromwell's religion were (sic) in vogue again, that we might see its power under more genial circumstances than those of civil war.' Aspects of Cromwell's Calvinism that Spurgeon highlighted included God's sovereignty, predestination, the covenant and its 'certainty', 'grace' and 'glory', and the Bible, which was the authoritative word of God.²⁵ This understanding of Puritanism, which was by turns both broadly conceived and highly selective, is, of course, part of the problem of identifying Spurgeon uniquely with Puritanism. Nevertheless, when Spurgeon spoke of the Puritans he usually did mean the English men and women of the sixteenth and seventeenth century who fit within the parameters of Puritanism proposed by Coffey and Lim. Moreover, when Spurgeon spoke of Puritanism he tended to have in mind a theology that was both Calvinistic and 'experimental', one which emphasised communion with God and the practical outworking of that communion. When Spurgeon used the term Puritan, then, he had a particular vision of doctrinal, experiential, practical piety in mind. It was this vision that, for him, was the crucial aspect of the Puritan legacy.

Spurgeon's Upbringing: Place, People and Literature

Various aspects of Spurgeon's upbringing helped mould his later, Puritan-influenced, spirituality. Firstly, the shaping influence of *place* can be considered. The history of Essex from the Reformation to the mid-nineteenth century was steeped in 'determined and earnest Protestant Nonconformity'.²⁶ Essex was a main centre of Protestant resistance during the Marian persecutions and during the reign of Elizabeth I the county's Protestantism was further bolstered when large numbers of Dutch and Flemish *émigrés* settled there having fled Roman Catholic persecution in continental Europe. Essex later welcomed Puritan rule. The Independent

²³ P.S. Kruppa, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: A Preacher's Progress* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1982), p. 380.

²⁴ Spurgeon, 'All Of Grace', p. 4. Cf. C.H. Spurgeon to J.A. Spurgeon, 13 February 1855, 'C.H. Spurgeon Letter to J.A. Spurgeon, 13 February 1855', Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford (D/SPU 5), 'My daily labour is to revive the old doctrines of Gill, Owen, Calvin, Augustine and Christ.'

²⁵ Spurgeon, *Sword and Trowel*, January 1883, p. 37.

²⁶ J.C. Cox and H. Round, *Victoria County History of Essex* (London: n.p., 1907), Vol. 2, p. 34, as cited by Kruppa, *Spurgeon*, p. 9.