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MR. VALIANT FOR TRUTH:
THE POLEMIC OF CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON AS PASTOR-
THEOLOGIAN DURING THE DOWNGRADE CONTROVERSY
(1887-1892)

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Thank you to my parents, Jerry and Diane Jessen, for your loving support of my calling.

Thank you to my wife, Jennifer, for your indefatigable care and reassurance.

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PREFACE

“To preach the gospel to myself and to train others to do it is my life’s object and aim.” In a lecture to his students, Spurgeon clearly defined his calling. Preaching and training preachers took the majority of his energies. Those influencing me during this process have taken up this calling themselves and encouraged me in like pursuit. I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Robert Vogel, for his wisdom and guidance throughout my time in the doctoral program. I am greatly honored to have had the opportunity to work with Dr. Thomas Nettles, whose own work on Spurgeon is unparalleled in modern scholarship. Dr. Mike Pohlman has allowed me the privilege to assist him in grading and teaching as this process has moved forward, giving me the opportunity to realize the above calling. I have been forever marked by his influence.

My parents, Jerry and Diane Jessen, have been faithful in Christian ministry for over fifty years, and their legacy extends into a family filled with passionate servants of the local church. Indeed, their legacy is reflected in this particular work. My wife, Jennifer, has been characteristically encouraging and supportive through this entire process, and it wouldn’t have been finished without her. I am also deeply appreciative of our kids, Isabel, Grant, and Haddon, who have been very understanding while their dad spent so much time in front of a screen. I am deeply grateful to Alesia Thayer, who willingly edited each chapter in the midst of caring for aging parents. Finally, thank you to Lakewood Baptist Church for your patience, prayer, and encouragement in my oft distracted pursuit of this degree.

This process has been a labor of love for me. My love for Spurgeon began in college and grew the more I read works by him and about him. During my research and writing, I was petrified to find a scandal in his ministry or skeleton in his closet. No such

scandal was unearthed. Though flawed and deeply troubled at times, Spurgeon really was a godly man and magnificent preacher. My fears revealed a popular bias in historical research: cynicism. Dr. Nettles revealed this bias and advised contentment when godly people live like godly people in history. This advice should be broadly circulated.

This work also furthered and deepened my love for The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The Research Doctoral Studies office led by Dr. Jonathan Pennington and deftly managed by Trey Moss kindly assisted me in my research, writing, language pursuit, and program completion. In addition, they clearly advocated for the mission of all doctoral programs at Southern: the advancement of Christian scholarship for the good of the church and glory of God. I am honored to have stumbled through the program and I am forever a “company man.”

It is thus my life’s aim to preach and train preachers. The work contained in the following pages no more qualifies me to do so than knowing about water qualifies one to swim. But the study of Spurgeon as pastor-theologian reaffirms the nobility and necessity of such a life, thus I humbly follow in his wake.

Jeremy Duane Jessen

Louisville, Kentucky

May 2019

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A country pastor was walking with his daughter through the graveyard adjacent to their small church. As she read the inscriptions on the gravestones she came upon one which read, “Pastor-Theologian.” She asked her father, “Daddy, why did they bury two people there?” This quaint anecdote profoundly illustrates the modern bifurcation of pastoral vocation. Pastors and theologians are entirely different people. At least in the North American evangelical context, theology is a professional discipline belonging to the academy, the seminary, the institution. Pastors are responsible for “practical” matters such as organizational leadership, administration, pastoral care, counseling, and yes, preaching. The pragmatism of modern ecclesial ministry has inadvertently divorced theological scholarship from pastoral ministry.¹

Recently a stream of books, articles, papers, conferences, and academic centers has emerged to combat this false dichotomy. The response has been largely unified, with similar appeals for the pastoral office to be robustly theological, though a difference exists regarding whether an academic writing ministry is necessary. In 2015, Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson published *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision*.² The short but profound work addressed the false division between pastor and

¹ Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 42-52.

² Additionally, Hiestand and Wilson address the *ecclesially anemic* academy and *theologically anemic* church. Their contention is when theologians disembarked from their ecclesiastical moorings to sail into academic waters, the congregational health suffered. Simply put, the health of local congregations suffered when their theologians left the pastorate for the academy. They contend the academy suffered as well, for as post-Enlightenment academic secularization rapidly gained influence, any real theological connection to the local church correspondingly declined.

theologian and posited via historical survey that the pastor-theologian designation has significant precedent. They advanced the *ecclesial theologian* paradigm.

An ecclesial theologian is a *theologian* who bears shepherding responsibility for a congregation and who is thus situated in the native social location that theology is chiefly called to serve; and the ecclesial theologian is a *pastor* who writes theological scholarship in conversation with other theologians, with an eye to the needs of ecclesial community.³

Hiestand and Wilson then released *Becoming a Pastor Theologian* in conjunction with *The Center for Pastor Theologians* (CPT).⁴ CPT hosted their first annual conference in 2015, and the papers presented made up the content of the new work.⁵ Hiestand and Wilson authored chapters as did noted theologians like Peter J. Leithart, James K.A. Smith, Philip Graham Ryken, and Kevin Vanhoozer.

Vanhoozer then co-authored a 2015 work with Owen Strachan entitled *The Pastor as Public Theologian*.⁶ In this work, divergence occurred from Hiestand and Wilson, advocating the pastor-theologian's responsibilities fall exclusively inside a "local theologian" framework. That is, the pastor-theologian finds his primary center of ministry within the local church. He is connected to the academy, but doesn't necessarily engage in a writing ministry *toward* the academy.⁷ Moreover, Vanhoozer and Strachan described

³ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 85.

⁴ Formerly The Society for the Advancement of Ecclesial Theology (SAE) founded in 2006 inside the Carl F.H. Henry Center for Theological Understanding at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Other entities have launched such centers and programs in the past, however. The Center of Theological Inquiry (CTI), a mainline Protestant ecumenical coalition, carried on a nine-year Pastor-Theologian program from 1996-2005. CTI subsequently produced Wallace M. Alston, Michael Welker, and Cynthia A. Jarvis, eds., *Loving God with Our Minds: The Pastor as Theologian: Essays in Honor of Wallace M. Alston* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), and Wallace M. Alston Jr. and Cynthia A. Jarvis, eds., *The Power to Comprehend with All the Saints: The Formation and Practice of a Pastor-Theologian*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

⁵ Todd A. Wilson and Gerald Hiestand, eds., *Becoming a Pastor Theologian: New Possibilities for Church Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016).

⁶ Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015).

⁷ G. Hiestand, "A Taxonomy of the Pastor-Theologian: Why PhD Students Should Consider the Pastorate as the Context for Their Theological Scholarship," *The Expository Times* 124, no. 6 (November 5, 2012): 261–71. This is also the view demonstrated in John Piper and D. A. Carson, *The*

three public spheres or “publics” into which the pastor-theologian *may* speak: (1) the local church, (2) the academy, (3) the culture at large.⁸ They suggested that widespread confusion regarding the role of the pastor in these “publics” led to devastating ineffectiveness for the local church and produced the prevailing false dichotomy between the pastor and the theologian.⁹ Theology rightly spoken into these arenas understandably differs depending on which audience is primary. They described a way forward.

Pastor-theologians must be trilingual, able to speak the language of all three social locations, or at least speak it well enough to ask directions (and give them). Our task...is to argue, first, that pastors must be theologians; second, that every theologian is in some sense a public theologian; and third, that a public theologian is a very particular kind of generalist.¹⁰

For Vanhoozer and Strachan then, the pastor-theologian speaks in a *trilingual* manner. He speaks as a peculiar kind of intellectual (they argue that one need not be an academic to be an intellectual).¹¹ He thus need not engage in an academic writing ministry to affect the academy as an intellectual.¹² He speaks publicly, engaging in theologically informed discourse aimed at the general public.¹³ He speaks primarily as

Pastor as Scholar and the Scholar as Pastor: Reflections on Life and Ministry, ed. David Mathis and Owen Strachan (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), and R. Albert Mohler, *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 105-14.

⁸ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 4. See also David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981). Strachan is the Director of the Center for Public Theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The aim of this particular center is straightforward and helpful. “The CPT has a special goal of strengthening the hand of ministers—and other ministry leaders—for it believes that *the key role in Christ’s kingdom is the pastor-theologian*. The pastor-theologian exists to mediate the hope, wisdom, and power that is “in Christ” to the people of God. In this grand task, the pastor recognizes sound doctrine as his friend, not his foe, and thus preaches the whole counsel of God in order to display the beauty of God in in a postmodern, fractious, secularizing age.” “About Us,” *The Center for Public Theology* (blog), March 9, 2016, <http://cpt.mbts.edu/about/>.

⁹ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 5-15.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹² Hiestand disagrees, “This inevitably pushes many of our brightest divinity students away from the pastorate toward the academy, thus perpetuating the chronic disconnect.” Hiestand, “A Taxonomy of the Pastor-Theologian” (267).

¹³ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 19.

shepherd to the people of God, building them up in the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). For Vanhoozer and Strachan, the primary sphere of influence for the pastor-theologian is the local church and the primary locus of that influence is the pulpit.¹⁴ It is from the pulpit that the pastor-theologian brings truth to bear upon the general public.

In summary, the difference between the Hiestand/Wilson and Vanhoozer/Strachan models is in written academic engagement. Hiestand/Wilson argued for the ecclesial theologian to be present in academic theological discussion and debate. Indeed, they called for the pastor to be a producer of theology for the academy. “The ecclesial theologian represents a return to the days when pastors wrote theology . . . the cutting-edge thought of their day.”¹⁵ Vanhoozer and Strachan argued for pastor-theologians as intellectual generalists, applying theological truth to the immediate sphere of the local church, chiefly through the pulpit, and from there developing that application in the public square.

The Vanhoozer/Strachan model of the pastor as public theologian has a rich historical pedigree. Indeed, authors in either stream of thought describe new attention to the office as “resurrecting an *ancient* vision,” or “reclaiming a *lost* vision.” This is not new. Many point to historical figures who carried out the twofold office in exemplary fashion.¹⁶ Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Edwards are often mentioned as historical standard-bearers for the ancient vision of the pastor as theologian. One name not

¹⁴ “Evangelist: Proclaiming What is in Christ,” in Vanhoozer and Strachan, 156-61. Dr. R. Albert Mohler agrees when he says, “As a theologian, the pastor must be known for what he teaches as well as for what he knows, affirms, and believes. The health of the church depends upon pastors who infuse their congregations with deep biblical and theological conviction, and the *primary* means of this transfer of conviction is the preaching of the Word of God.” R. Albert Mohler Jr., *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 111.

¹⁵ Hiestand, “A Taxonomy of the Pastor-Theologian,” 269.

¹⁶ See Hiestand, *The Pastor Theologian*, 21-41, 133-72, and Hiestand, “The Pastor Theologian in Historical Perspective.” In Wilson and Hiestand, *Becoming a Pastor Theologian*, 81-133. See also Strachan, “Of Scholars and Saints: A Brief History of the Pastorate.” In Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 69-93.

mentioned often, necessitating this particular work, is Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Spurgeon ministered as premier pastor-theologian in Victorian England in a time of immense theological shift, particularly from 1887-1892 during what Spurgeon called “The Downgrade Controversy.”

Two primary historical factors had influenced the Downgrade Controversy. First, after the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* in 1859, an avalanche of evolutionary thought descended upon the church and Spurgeon sought to fight back. His most famous advance against Darwinism came in “The Gorilla Lecture” delivered October 1, 1861 in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. He derided Darwinism in a forceful juxtaposition with biblical revelation, exclaiming, “It is too hard a thing to believe that God made man in his own image, but, forsooth, it is philosophical to hold that man is made in the image of a brute and is the offspring of ‘laws of development.’”¹⁷ The fight against Darwinism would never go away and the cultural propensity toward naturalistic thought continued to seep into the church to Spurgeon’s dismay.

A second factor to influence the Downgrade was the rise of Higher Criticism. In 1878, Julius Wellhausen published *Geschichte Israels*, reconsidering the authorship and authority of the Torah. The Baptist Union initially fought against Higher Criticism, but their tenacity waned as time went on. John Clifford, a prominent leader in the Baptist Union, eventually adopted the “New Thought” toward biblical authorship. In his oddly titled book, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, he flatly denied biblical inerrancy: “It is not God’s way to give us an absolutely inerrant Bible, and he has not done it.”¹⁸ Higher Criticism began to gain substantial ground in Spurgeon’s circles. At Lancashire Congregational College, a considerable controversy arose over the inspiration of

¹⁷ Charles Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography*, vol. 2: *The Full Harvest 1860-1892*, rev. ed. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2006), 133.

¹⁸ John Clifford, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1899), 49.

Scripture, but both professors teaching to the contrary quietly retired. W. Robertson Smith was dismissed from Aberdeen College in 1881 for his views regarding Higher Criticism but was given a professorship at Cambridge and his views were not deemed problematic. With the waves of Higher Criticism now crashing on the shore of orthodoxy, Spurgeon defiantly rose to stand against the tide. His voice echoed from the pulpit of The Metropolitan Tabernacle and thundered into the public square.

Thesis

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to answer the question: what was the polemic of Charles Haddon Spurgeon during the Downgrade Controversy? This question is best answered using the Vanhoozer/Strachan paradigm of the pastor-theologian. Using their taxonomy, Spurgeon's theological discourse both inside and outside the Metropolitan Tabernacle is given context. He is an exemplary model of the pastor as a public theologian. Addressing Spurgeon's polemic in this fashion produces numerous accompanying questions. From what theological perspective was Spurgeon speaking? Was Spurgeon truly trilingual during the Downgrade? From a rhetorical perspective, how did he speak to the academy, the public at large, and his congregation during this time? How significant was his preaching ministry as the locus of his pastoral theology and public rhetoric during the Downgrade?

This dissertation argues that Charles Haddon Spurgeon served as a model trilingual pastor-theologian in his polemic against theological liberalism during the Downgrade Controversy from 1887-1892. The implications of this study are far reaching. The bifurcation of the pastor and theologian was gathering steam in post-Enlightenment Victorian England and Spurgeon stood alone as a particular kind of intellectual generalist. His controversy also demonstrates that capitulation to cultural ideology and doctrinal divergence did not begin with modern controversies over inerrancy, the atonement, or morality. Thus, modern pastor-theologians are not the first ones to wrestle with these

things. Spurgeon offers great instruction, encouragement, and fuel for resolve in such critical matters.¹⁹

Charles Haddon Spurgeon as Pastor-Theologian

This dissertation limits research to the years between 1887 and 1892. Several reasons informed this decision. First, the sheer volume of the Spurgeon corpus necessitates delimitation in order to do meaningful research for a single dissertation. Second, while Spurgeon was no stranger to conflict, the Downgrade Controversy was the most volatile and public. Thus, observing Spurgeon through the lens of the pastor-theologian is particularly valuable during this period. In addition, in order to establish a taxonomy for understanding Spurgeon as a pastor-theologian, a brief examination of the Vanhoozer/Strachan model was undertaken. This examination includes comparison and contrast with Hiestand/Wilson and their counterparts. This work includes a modest analysis and application of the rhetorical category of polemic to further define the modes in which Spurgeon spoke as a trilingual pastor-theologian.

Observing Spurgeon using the Vanhoozer/Strachan taxonomy and polemic filter necessitates investigation of four areas. First, a biographical overview of Spurgeon is necessary to understand his theological influences and perspective.

Secondly, using Vanhoozer/Strachan trilingual categories to observe Spurgeon begins at the academy. Aside from the Metropolitan Tabernacle itself, the ministry closest to Spurgeon's heart was the Pastor's College. Founded in 1857, he often referred to it as the first born and most beloved of his many ministerial endeavors. Records of the college

¹⁹ Spurgeon says, "It is Bible or no Bible, Atonement or no Atonement, which we have now to settle. Stripped of beclouding terms and phrases, this lies at the bottom of the discussion; and every lover of the Lord Jesus should feel himself called upon to take his part in an earnest contention for the faith once for all delivered to the saints." C. H. Spurgeon, "This Must Be a Soldier's Battle," *The Sword and The Trowel*, December 1889, 634.

are widely available in *The Sword and Trowel* as well as in the published addresses of *Lectures to My Students* and *An All-Round Ministry*.

Thirdly, after the academy, Spurgeon addressed the general public as pastor-theologian. The primary place to investigate his public interaction is in *The Sword and Trowel* monthly magazine. Spurgeon's letters are also informative as to his public interaction. These are accessible in various formats, many of which are contained in archival collections.

Finally, Spurgeon's influence as pastor theologian reached its zenith in his Metropolitan Tabernacle pulpit ministry. This dissertation examines his sermons from 1887-1892 in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, the most comprehensive collection of his sermons available.

The Pastor as Public Theologian: A Taxonomy

Chapter 2 is a discussion of the pastor-theologian ministry model and why that particular model is applicable in assessing Spurgeon. To begin, chapter 2 addresses the widespread identity crisis which exists among modern pastors. Simply put, pastors commonly struggle to understand who they are and what they are supposed to do. Competing ideologies and expectations require contradictory behavior from the modern pastor. In response, several authors posit the need for a discussion regarding the pastor as theologian. Chapter 2 examines two of the most prominent, the Hiestand/Wilson and Vanhoozer/Strachan models, adopting the Vanhoozer/Strachan taxonomy with which to view Spurgeon. Vanhoozer and Strachan posit the focus of the pastor-theologian as building the local church as God's tri-lingual public witness to the ever-expanding kingdom of Christ. The pastor-theologian speaks in a tri-lingual manner, but the locus for his speech is the congregation over which he presides. Spurgeon is a distinguished model of this office. It was from a foundation of doctrinally robust, expositionally faithful

ministry that all Spurgeon's subsequent ministry endeavors grew. He was a pastor-theologian in the Vanhoozer/Strachan paradigm par excellence, and he trained others to follow in his wake.

The Pastor as Polemic Rhetorician: A Filter

Chapter 3 briefly addresses the rhetorical category of polemic in an effort to understand the particular ways in which Spurgeon spoke as a trilingual pastor-theologian in controversy. Simply put, Vanhoozer and Strachan's taxonomy demonstrates that Spurgeon was a pastor-theologian, and an examination of his rhetorical moves shows *how* he spoke as such. Chapter 3 provides a general overview of the theory of polemic rhetoric as well as a comparison of Marcelo Dascal's work on polemics with Arthur Schopenhauer and Richard Weaver. Such an examination will provide a sufficient filter for Spurgeon's polemic rhetorical method. Dascal distinguishes polemic strategy between discussion, dispute, and controversy. In a discussion, the goal is to establish the truth or disseminate information. In a dispute, the goal is to gain rhetorical victory over the opponent. In a controversy, the goal is to persuade an audience to accept one's position on a particular issue. In his preaching, teaching, and writing, Spurgeon primarily adopted the polemic strategy of controversy, seeking to persuade all in his hearing to take his position. Comparing Dascal to Schopenhauer and Weaver produces a sufficiently clarified filter to see the manner in which Spurgeon spoke as a trilingual pastor-theologian.

The Beginning of the Pastor-Theologian

Chapter 4 covers the historical context in which Spurgeon ministered as pastor-theologian. Spurgeon's childhood, spent in the company of nonconformist family members and the puritans within his grandfather's library, powerfully influenced his

doctrinal trajectory as an adult.²⁰ Following his dramatic conversion, his early years of ministry were extremely fruitful. He preached in the pulpit of New Park Street until the coming crowds overextended the facilities, which were able to hold only 2,000 at maximum capacity. Eventually, he moved to the Surrey Gardens Music hall with a seating capacity of 10,000 to hold his services. The seats were filled for three years there until the Metropolitan Tabernacle was completed, holding almost 6,000 people who heard Spurgeon preach his first sermon in that grand pulpit on March 31, 1861. His ministry expanded and continued there for over thirty years, until he died on January 31, 1892.

The Battles of the Pastor-Theologian

Chapter 5 attends to Spurgeon in controversy. Spurgeon found himself embattled at many points in his ministry. He regularly engaged public media outlets over their harsh treatment of his ministry, but especially so during The Media Controversy (1854-1857). He censured Thomas Lynch's hymnal over doctrinal errors during The Rivulet Controversy (1856). He plainly responded to the evils of slavery during The Slavery Question Controversy (1860). He allowed John Andrew Jackson, a fugitive American slave who had escaped to England, to testify at New Park Street before rising himself to denounce slavery from the pulpit. During the Baptismal Regeneration Controversy of 1864, he noted he could accept no baptism apart from believer's baptism. After a brief visit to the various conflicts in which he was engaged, the majority of the chapter addresses the Downgrade Controversy. This controversy was, without exaggeration, the most damaging to Spurgeon. Following Spurgeon's death, his son remarked that the Baptist Union was indirectly responsible. To Archibald Brown, head of

²⁰ Spurgeon says, "In my time, it was a dark den—but it contained books, and this made it a gold mine to me. Here I first struck up acquaintance with the martyrs and especially with 'Old Bonner' who burned with them; next with Bunyan and his 'Pilgrim'; and further on, with the great masters of Scriptural theology, with whom no moderns are worthy to be named in the same day." C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography*, vol.1, *The Early Years, 1834-1859* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2005), 11.

the Baptist Union at the time, Thomas jabbed, “The Baptist Union almost killed my father.” Brown retorted, “Yes, and your father almost killed the Baptist Union.” Surgeon’s dear wife Susannah also agreed that the Downgrade took a toll on her husband, calling it the “deepest grief of his life.” Spurgeon was not the only one to feel the weight of the conflict, however. The Downgrade signaled a theological slide in British Evangelical thought away from the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the penal substitutionary atonement of Christ, and the holiness of the church. Spurgeon spoke as a public theologian from the pulpit of the Metropolitan Tabernacle against such a slide, but the office of pastor-theologian was itself sliding away from the influence it assumed decades earlier.

A Public Theologian in The Downgrade Controversy

Chapter 6 reveals Spurgeon as “Mr. Valiant for Truth,” a defender of orthodoxy at a time of desperate necessity. He spoke, using Vanhoozer’s language, in *trilingual* fashion. He spoke at an intellectual level both in his Pastors’ College and in multiple external interactions. He addressed the public through his weekly published sermons as well as the *Sword and Trowel* monthly magazine. Most central to Spurgeon’s trilingual effectiveness as pastor-theologian was his ministry locus in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. His collection of sermons to that assembly stands alone as the largest set of works published by a single author in the history of Christianity. Again, due to the mass of the corpus, messages delivered between the years 1887 and 1892 are the only ones under examination here. Such an examination reveals a forthright commitment to the authority of Scripture and the centrality of Christ’s atonement.

Modern Implications

Chapter 7 is an attempt to apply the ministry of Spurgeon as pastor-theologian to the modern pastor-theologian. The setting of modern pastoral ministry can still be

described in controversial terms. A brief survey of current controversy reveals a situation similar to Spurgeon's Downgrade. Thus, as the current evangelical landscape drifts and changes over issues of morality and cultural preference, may this work persuade a new generation of pastor-theologians to follow in Spurgeon's steps and be valiant for the truth.

CHAPTER 2

THE PASTOR AS PUBLIC THEOLOGIAN: A TAXONOMY

A widespread identity crisis exists among pastors. Cultural ideologies outside the church and congregational expectations inside the church create paradoxical pastoral paradigms. Some define pastoral ministry using entrepreneurial corporate strategy. He must be a CEO, a visionary leader, a planner, an influencer, a producer, a salesman. Others identify him as a rebellious social activist. He must be a protestor, an advocate, a cultural warrior, a man against every establishment. Still others describe his duty in pragmatic imagery. He should be an administrator, a specialist, a multi-tasking middle-manager. As additional concepts appear, the pastor is forced to inquire which paradigm, if any, is valid. To which reflection should he turn to understand his identity, responsibility and calling. Into this confusion the paradigm of the pastor-theologian brings clarity.

In recent years, many monographs and articles have taken up the charge to delineate the pastor's role as theologian for the local church.¹ The title *pastor-theologian* was adopted, giving categorical structure and direction to the discussion, while at the same time maintaining roots in church history. Indeed, many argued for the historical

¹ Christopher Beeley notes, "Church leadership is theological in its origin, definition, method, and ultimate aims." Christopher A. Beeley, *Leading God's People: Wisdom from the Early Church for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 97. R. Albert Mohler is clear when he notes, "In fact, there is no dimension of the pastor's calling that is not deeply, inherently, and inescapably theological. There is no major question in ministry that does not come with deep theological dimensions and the need for careful theological application. The task of leading, feeding, and guiding the congregation is as theological as any other conceivable vocation." R. Albert Mohler Jr., *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World*, new ed. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 108. See also James Montgomery Boice, "The Preacher and Scholarship," in Samuel T Logan, *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011), 91-104; John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 92-134.

pedigree of the pastor-theologian, decrying the modern church for separating what God joined together. A call was therefore made to resurrect this ancient vision of the pastor-theologian, grounding the identity of the pastor in Scripture and church history. The pastor-theologian should competently influence the culture for the sake of the gospel, contribute to theological debates within the academy, and shepherd the church in truth. The argument for pastor-theologians has been made most convincingly by two sets of theologians: Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson from Calvary Memorial Church as well as Kevin Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan.

The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate the need to change current popular models of the pastorate. This chapter posits understanding the pastor as a theologian, examining the Hiestand/Wilson and Vanhoozer/Strachan models of the office, and adopting a particular pastor-theologian taxonomy with which to view Spurgeon.

A Necessary Discussion

In his foreword to *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision*, Timothy George notes, “Theology divorced from life is arid intellectualism. A Christian life not based on sound principles will end up in sterile activism or sentimental fluff.”² His basis for such a statement is found in the 1623 work of William Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, wherein theology is defined as “the knowledge of living to God.”³ Theology, or divinity, and the Christian life were never meant to be separated, in George’s eyes. The Christian minister was long a “Master of Divinity,” a shepherd to those living before God. Sadly, modern devolutions in theology and vocational pressures upon the pastoral office have bifurcated historically pastoral responsibilities. Theology

² Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 7.

³ William Ames and John Dykstra Eusden, *The Marrow of Theology* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1968), 2.

belongs in the academy, and pastors should be pragmatic, commercially entrepreneurial chaplains.⁴ This bifurcation necessitates a discussion of the proper role of the pastor.

An Identity Crisis

The identity crisis among modern pastors is significant yet unremarkable. It is a common problem. Pastors regularly struggle to recognize who they are and what they are supposed to do. Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson lament, “Perhaps no profession in the modern world suffers from a greater lack of clarity as to the basic requirements of the job.”⁵ They believe this lack of clarity has produced high levels of burnout among pastors as well as a proliferation of methods to conceal burnout, whether through self-medication, disengagement, or complete resignation.

We’ve somehow lost the script that tells us who we are, what part we play, what to wear, when to come on stage, what to say, who to interact with. In the case of the pastoral vocation, this is an especially acute problem because we’ve lost touch with the ancient traditions of the church. What was once a readily accessible and compelling vision of the pastorate is now buried under six feet of dirt.⁶

To resurrect an historical paradigm of the pastor as theologian, Hiestand and Wilson created the Center for Pastor Theologians in 2006. The precise focus of the center is to assist pastors in the “study and written production of biblical and theological scholarship, for the ecclesial renewal of theology and the theological renewal of the

⁴ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 20. See John M. Frame, *John Frame’s Selected Shorter Writings*, vol. 2 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2014). Frame describes his own vocational struggle between the church and the academy in his study of theology, claiming an academic “captivity” of theology. Michael Lawrence agrees when he notes, “The church has become enamored with business practice and psychological method. Her leaders are expected to be CEO’s, *not pastor-theologians*. The church’s public gatherings are designed to be events that appeal to the outsider, rather than assemblies that give corporate expression to our identity as the people of God. And our habits of thought tend to be shaped more by polling data, the blogosphere, and the image-driven nature of television than they do the Bible. The thoughts of God and his glory, our nobility and depravity, and this world’s value and transience—thoughts that shaped and characterized the minds of previous generations of Christians—rest lightly, if at all, on the church today.” Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 110. See also David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 106-14.

⁵ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 7. Ironically, part of the problem is considering the pastorate as merely a *profession*.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

church.”⁷ Simply put, The Center for Pastor Theologians exists to help pastors in the intellectual leadership their calling demands. Their claim is that modern pastors are erroneously expected to be masters of numerous tasks and systems, so long as those tasks and systems are not theological in nature. “Intellectually speaking, we [modern evangelicals] expect pastors to function, at best, as intellectual middle management, passive conveyors of insights from theologians to laity.”⁸ That is, pastors are not to contribute to theological conversation and debate, they are merely supposed to translate complicated truths to their congregations in an understandable manner. Hiestand and Wilson are not alone in their assessment of the pastor as theological middle management, however. Kevin Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan echoed the assessment in their work, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*:

Too many pastors have exchanged their vocational birthright for a bowl of lentil stew (Gen. 25:29–34; Heb. 12:16): management skills, strategic plans, “leadership” courses, therapeutic techniques, and so forth. Congregations expect their pastors to have these qualifications, and if pastors have an MBA, well then, so much the better. In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that newly installed pastors so often complain that their seminaries failed to prepare them for the “real work” of ministry. Meanwhile, seminaries race to catch up to new expectations, reforming their curricula in ways that result in an even greater loss of theology in the church.⁹

Vanhoozer and Strachan struck similar chords to Hiestand and Wilson. They, in fact, dedicated their work to the pair, the Center for Pastor Theologians, and its multiple fellowships. Vanhoozer and Strachan suggested the intellectual identity of the pastor as theologian has been in jeopardy because of public sentiment and popular opinion “act as obstacles and temptations, hindering progress toward their vocation of bringing others to maturity in Christ.”¹⁰

⁷ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 10. See also The Center for Pastor Theologians, www.pastortheologians.com.

⁸ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 11.

⁹ Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3. See Eph 4:14.

Much like Hiestand and Wilson, Vanhoozer and Strachan also made clear that the bifurcation of the pastorate and theology came not only at the hand of a pragmatic public, but also an austere academy. Historical factors discussed later in this work played a role in the shift of theology from the church to the academy, and the results were catastrophic. “The would-be pastor-theologian wrestles not with flesh and blood, but with institutional powers and academic principalities.”¹¹ The abundance of commentaries on biblical books and topics are often written by academic theologians *for* academic theologians. Thus, “It is often difficult to translate or apply these technical treatments of specialized topics to the everyday needs of one’s congregation.”¹² So, the pastor has been relegated to the role of intellectual middle management, and yet he is unable to perform well in that role because the academy is keeping scholarship to themselves.

Institutional powers and academic principalities have put asunder what had originally been joined together under God: theology and church life, biblical studies and theology, pastor and theologian. While theologians shoulder the primary responsibility for demonstrating the importance of doctrine for discipleship, pastors cannot afford to neglect theology or to wait for someone to broker peace talks between biblical scholars, systematic theologians, and practical theologians.¹³

Two key contributing factors helped to construct this dizzying confusion of the pastor’s identity: a lack of biblical familiarity with the pastor’s role and an ignorance of church history where this role has been consistently filled—though less so over time. According to both sets of authors, these factors produced a kind of anemia in the modern evangelical church and academy.¹⁴ The modern church suffers from theological anemia caricaturing theology as erudite academics, having nothing to do with “real life.” The

¹¹ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 6.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 7.

¹⁴ See Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Some Pastors and Teachers: Reflecting a Biblical Vision of What Every Minister Is Called to Be* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2017), 686, who notes that Christian ministers (in his opinion) are rarely experts in theology because theological schools “neither taught it nor believed it” (686). See also Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 116-25.

modern academy suffers from ecclesial anemia, forgetting that theology has been and must be created by and for the local church. It is to these factors that this work now turns.

A Lack of Biblical Theology

In Vanhoozer and Strachan's volume on the pastor-theologian, Strachan first addresses a lack of scholarly focus on the connection of "covenant officers" of the Old Testament to the pastor-theologian of the New Testament. He then acknowledges the connections made between the *munus triplex* (trifold office) and Christ's fulfillment as prophet, priest, and king.¹⁵ Finally, he presses the connection further to the office of pastor, suggesting that for want of a biblical theology, the office of pastor-theologian has broken loose of covenant moorings.

Prophet, priest, and king. Strachan posits the threefold Old Testament offices of prophet, priest, and king as the pattern for New Testament pastoral identity.

The pastor is no recent innovation, but the occupant of the office that is the realization of the ministry of past figures. The pastor is the inheritor of the privilege and responsibility of leading the people of God, specifically, via the new-covenant ministry of reconciliation. . . . This divine appointment too requires pastors—like prophets, priests, and kings before them—to speak God's Word to God's people, intercede to God on behalf of the people, and model the wisdom of salvation life.¹⁶

Priests served a mediatorial role in the Old Testament, demonstrating redemption in *theological* authenticities. Strachan notes, "They showed the people who they were, drawing their attention to their uncleanness and to the bloody solution to this problem."¹⁷ In the New Testament, pastors do not lead the church to draw near to God via law and sacrifice, but instead through the preached Word and finished sacrifice of Christ.

¹⁵ The *munus triplex* has long been used by systematic theologians to describe the person and work of Christ. Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 483-520; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 356-412; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 1999), 2:462-608.

¹⁶ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 39.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

The law is fulfilled. The rituals are retired. The bloody sacrifices have ended. But in all the preaching, teaching, counseling, training, visitation, and so forth, the pastor, like the priest ministering grace before him, offers gracious provision on behalf of the people: all of Christ for all of life.¹⁸

Similarly, Old Testament prophets were spokesmen for God, declaring his will and ways to his people. Strachan observes, “Through declaration, exhortation, scorching rebuke, and entreaties to taste God’s lavish mercy, the prophets interpreted the times through an unflinchingly theocentric perspective.”¹⁹ The prophet thus served the people of God by revealing the character of God in fiercely theological speech. Strachan believes the New Testament pastoral office is comparable but anchored in the person and work of Christ.

The pastor, as one captured and enraptured by biblical doctrine and theological truth, takes up the prophet’s mantle, calling the church to remember the covenant and to be transformed by the grace that pours from it. All this is a ministry of words—not words for their own sake, but words invested with the authority of the divine. The pastor’s preaching ministry is the ministry of God’s truth: the way and life of Jesus Christ.²⁰

Strachan points to the models of Simon Peter, told by Christ, “Feed my sheep” (John 21), and the apostle Paul, speaking not “in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” (1 Cor 2:3–5). Paul, Strachan adds, trained the next generation to be theological prophets, guarding the good deposit entrusted to them” (2 Tim 1:14).²¹

¹⁸ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 52.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 44. See also 2 Chron 20:20; 29:25; 36:15-16; Jer 1:9-10; Hag 1:12.

²⁰ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 59.

²¹ See also Jonathan Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical-Theological Study*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 42 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017): “The use of the title ‘man of God’ indicates that Timothy’s preaching ministry will likewise stand in a line of continuity with the ministries of God’s authoritative speakers throughout history, stretching back through the apostles, Jesus himself, and ultimately to the ministry of the Old Testament prophets” (60). Griffiths points to several additional examples of the connection of the New Testament pastor to the Old Testament prophet: John the Baptist (Luke 1:15-17), Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophetic trajectory (Heb 1:1-3), Peter’s sermon at Pentecost as an echo of Joel 2, Paul’s Corinthian connection of himself to Moses, and Timothy as ‘man of God’ (2 Tim 3:17). He concludes, “In sum, there is a biblical-theological line of continuity that runs from Old Testament prophets, finds fulfillment in Christ and then extends out from him to the church – and especially to the apostles, their agents and *successors* whose work it is to preach God’s word” (66).

The king served as a representative of God in divinely-granted wisdom (1 Kings 3; Acts 13:22), subordinate to God himself as they led his people. The New Testament also carries a pattern of subordination, according to Strachan. “Pastors are not kings. They do, however, participate in Jesus’s kingly office; but . . . Jesus’s kingdom does not come in Caesarean power but in cruciform weakness.”²²

Thus, for Strachan, the pastorate is a biblically cohesive theological office. Strachan is not alone in his assessment. Timothy Laniak agrees, using the motif of the shepherd or undershepherd to summarize the theologically cohesive nature of the pastorate.²³ The trifold offices of prophet, priest, and king serve to anchor the New Testament pastor in covenantal moorings as he serves, shepherds, and speaks to the people of God. Strachan’s understanding echoes John Frame and Vern Poythress, authors advancing a *triperspectival* understanding not only of Christ’s person and work, but of the New Testament pastoral office as well.²⁴ Strachan shows that an ignorance or lack of

²² Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 54. Strachan notes that nowhere in the New Testament is the illustration of the pastor-theologian as subordinate king clearer than in 1 Cor 1-2. “Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor 1:28-25). God, in Christ, has turned wisdom on its head.

²³ Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 20 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006). Laniak addresses the prophetic, priestly, and kingly roles of the pastorate through the comprehensive motif of the shepherd. Thus, the New Testament pastor finds thematic grounding in the shepherd-prophet, shepherd-priest, and shepherd-king. Laniak shows that Moses was a prophet of YHWH (Hos 12:13), an intercessor between God and his people (Exod 32:32), and a kingly leader (Num 27:16-17). Laniak summarizes his leadership using the familiar term *undershepherd* (77-93), a concept picked up by Peter in his instructions to the elders in 1 Pet 5:1-4 (232-34). He summarizes his argument by saying, “Shepherd leadership is comprehensive in scope. For the sake of convenience, we have in places summarized the inter-related pastoral roles as protector, provider and guide. To be a good shepherd—and this is consistently the biblical concern—means to be accountable for the lives and well-being of the sheep. For this reason, the designation is used for prophets, priests, and kings in the Old Testament, and for ruling elders in the New Testament church” (247). Thus, Laniak sees a direct correspondence between the offices of prophet, priest, and king to the shepherding motif in both Old and New Testaments. See also Derek Tidball, *Ministry by the Book: New Testament Patterns for Pastoral Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 234-46.

²⁴ John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013), 20-31; Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987); Vern S. Poythress, *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 39-41; Gerry Breshears, “The Body of Christ: Prophet, Priest,

awareness of the pastoral office as inherently theological has contributed to the identity crisis among modern pastors.

A Lack of Historical Awareness

A lack of biblical theology is not the only contributing factor in the modern pastoral identity crisis. History, according to both Hiestand and Wilson as well as Vanhoozer and Strachan, is replete with evidence of the pastor as theologian. Both sets of authors include acute treatments of church history in their work in an effort to summarize the development, rather, the degeneration of the pastor-theologian over time. In Hiestand and Wilson, the data is spread through five major historical movements until “The Great Divorce: The Demise of the Pastor Theologian in Europe and North America” is complete. They also use three classifications to mark their understanding of history—clerical theologians, nonclerical theologians, and monastic theologians.²⁵ Vanhoozer and Strachan take a broader approach, examining seven periods of history with a view to those who held well the office of pastor-theologian. Their research overlaps Hiestand and Wilson to a degree, but their concentration does not shift during the moments in history when the office began to change. Both sets of authors pay particular attention to the nineteenth century as a pivotal time in the ecclesial and academic landscapes, however. As put by Hiestand and Wilson, “What was once viewed as a single occupation came to be seen as two distinct—and mutually exclusive—vocations.”²⁶ For the purposes of

Or King?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37, no. 1 (March 1994): 3–26.

²⁵ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 23. Hiestand and Wilson clarify by saying, “Arguably, all theologians up until the Enlightenment can be classified as “clerical” insofar as all theologians saw themselves as serving the church. Yet our aim in recounting the larger narrative is to highlight the extent to which theologians throughout history worked in formal ecclesial contexts and carried shepherding responsibilities for congregations and parishes (i.e., priests, pastors, bishops, etc).” The compilation is quite extensive, spilling over into an appendix listing both prominent and obscure pastoral figures from history and his identification as a clerical, nonclerical, or monastic theologian. The authors worked from three major collections of theological texts: Jacques-Paul Migne’s *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, Alexander Street Press’s *The Digital Library of Classic Protestant Texts*, and its companion, *The Digital Library of the Catholic Reformation*.

²⁶ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 42.

brevity and generality, this work will rely on the historic designations of Vanhoozer and Strachan, but additional resources will serve to affirm their survey.

The early church. Vanhoozer and Strachan categorize the period of the early church from the end of the apostolic period to around 500. Hiestand and Wilson split this period using figures or institutions (Apostolic Fathers to Constantine: 90–300; Constantine to the Monasteries: 300–600). Both sets of authors admire Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130–202) and his major work *Against Heresies*. Hiestand and Wilson along with Irenaeus address “nonclerical” theologians Justin Martyr (c. 100–165) and Origen (c. 184–253), both valued apologists and powerful preachers.²⁷ This period of sweeping historical and theological shift brought the councils of Nicaea (325) and Chalcedon (451). Athanasius (c. 296–373) was the bishop of Alexandria during the Nicene controversy, and he played a monumental role in securing for the church a biblical understanding of the Trinity.²⁸ Augustine of Hippo (c. 354–430) was the broadly acclaimed North African bishop who authored, among his many writings, *The City of God*, a defense of Christianity in the midst of tumultuous secular ideology, and *Confessions*, his own autobiography.²⁹ John Chrysostom (c. 347–407) was by far the most illustrious preacher of this period, earning the nickname *Golden-Tongue* for his rigorous, compelling,

²⁷ See also Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). On Origen, see also Dargan, *A History of Preaching*, 1:35-59.

²⁸ Hiestand and Wilson note, “Somehow, amid the political and ecclesiastical turmoil, he managed to almost single-handedly secure the triumph of Nicea’s homoousia (“one substance”) formula in the East. It is difficult to overstate the importance of this one bishop when it comes to the establishment of Trinitarian orthodoxy.” Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 28-29.

²⁹ On Augustine, Hughes Old comments, “In his homiletical work, Augustine gave first importance to expository preaching. This was quite consistent with his whole theological system. Augustine had a strong theology of grace, and a strong theology of grace leads to a strong emphasis on revelation. Sermon after sermon we find our preacher intent on nothing so much as explaining the Holy Scriptures, for there it was that God revealed himself.” Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 345-46; see also 347-98. Dargan lauds Augustine, saying, “Among the great theologians and preachers of early church history, whether considered in regard to character, abilities, and work, or in regard to enduring influence and fame, no one stands higher than Aurelius Augustinus.” Dargan, *A History of Preaching* 1:100, 101-4.

theological exposition of Scripture. “For Chrysostom, the pastor was a teacher: the pastorate was a theological office that steered the people safely to God.”³⁰

The medieval period. Vanhoozer and Strachan limit the period of medieval pastoral ministry to the years between 500 and 1500. Hiestand and Wilson demonstrate how the monastic emphasis in the pastor-theologian during this era was a major shift from the clerical theologians of the early church, ultimately leading to a bifurcation of spiritual journey and theological pursuit. Benedict (c. 480–550) worked to establish the monastic ideal in his *Rule of St. Benedict* and provided structure to the burgeoning movement. Gregory the Great (c. 540–604) helped to form the liturgy of the church in this period while writing several significant works detailing the pastoral and theological care of the people of God. The famed Archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm (c. 1033–1109) exemplified the transition of theologian’s role from cleric to bishop to professor.³¹

Arguably no medieval theologian was more momentous than Thomas Aquinas (c. 1224–1274). As a member of the Dominican monastic order Aquinas travelled to Paris for theological training, and upon completion of his degree he taught theology throughout Italy before returning to the University of Paris as professor. His written production was massive, and his pivotal *Summa Theologiae* provided a systematic

³⁰ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 74. Hughes Old says about Chrysostom, “Without doubt the most universally respected of all preachers, the golden-mouthed John remains the crowning example of how the faithful preaching of the Word of God ever purifies and enlightens the Church so that the Lord of the Church is glorified.” Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*. vol. 2, *The Patristic Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 171-2. John Broadus additionally notes, “Admit what you please, criticize as you please, and the fact remains that Chrysostom has never had a superior, and it may be gravely doubted whether he has had an equal, in the history of preaching.” John Albert Broadus, *Lectures on the History of Preaching* (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2004), 77.

³¹ Hiestand and Wilson note, “His *On the Incarnation of the Word* was completed in 1095, and his most important work, *Why God Became Man*, was finished in 1098. This later work rejected the earlier ransom theories of some of the Eastern Fathers (Origen and Gregory of Nyssa) and was influential in shaping Reformational views of the atonement and, as a consequence, still shapes Protestant thought today. As many letters written during his bishopric reveal a Christian theologian thoroughly engrossed in ecclesiastical affairs. Arguably, Anselm was the most important theologian between Augustine and Aquinas.” Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 32.

treatment of Christian theology that is still influential in both evangelical and Catholic circles. It is upon figures like Aquinas that the history of the pastor-theologian turns. While clerical theologians existed and engaged in theological enterprise, according to Hiestand and Wilson, it is at this time that the university became the locus of theological production.³²

The Reformation. In 1517, an Augustinian monk and theology professor at the University of Wittenberg launched a reclamation of the office of pastor as theologian in concert with the Protestant Reformation. Hiestand and Wilson agree, “The Reformation seems to have funneled Protestant theologians away from the universities and back into the churches in a way that represented a reversal of the previous era.”³³ The nonclerical theologians of this era are some of the brightest in Christian history. Philipp Melancthon (c. 1497–1560); Martin Bucer (c. 1491–1551); William Tyndale (c. 1494–1536); but none was as influential as the aforementioned Augustinian, Martin Luther (c. 1483–1546). Luther received his doctorate in theology from the University of Wittenberg in 1512 and began a professorship that would bring him to a point of personal and professional crisis. He zealously engaged the New Testament works of the apostle Paul, particularly Galatians and Romans. As a result, he simultaneously reclaimed a biblical soteriology and declared war on the Catholic paradigm of the Christian life. His separation from the Catholic Church became public in 1517, and he subsequently faced papal condemnation and exile. In the midst of such strife, Luther wrote multiple

³² See Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*. vol. 3, *The Medieval Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 408-36; Dargan, *A History of Preaching* 1:238-41.

³³ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 37. See also Sinclair Ferguson, who notes, “A principle that all of the Reformers (in England, Scotland, and all throughout Europe) held with great conviction began to fall increasingly into disuse from about the end of the seventeenth century: all biblical theology is ultimately pastoral, and all pastoral ministry is ultimately theological.” Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Some Pastors and Teachers: Reflecting a Biblical Vision of What Every Minister Is Called to Be* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2017), 685.

commentaries, theological tracts and treatises, lectures, and sermons. His sermons at Wittenberg from 1510 to 1546 numbered over 3,000. He was a passionate theologian, and able preacher.³⁴

Many followed in Luther's wake as the Protestant Reformation gathered steam in Europe. Ulrich Zwingli (c. 1484–1531), Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), and John Knox (c. 1513–1572) were notable pastor-theologians and contributors to the Reformation as it spread from Europe to the United Kingdom. The preeminent pastor-theologian of the Reformation, however, was John Calvin (c. 1509–1564). As a young theologian, he produced *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a work that brought attention to his theological acumen and rhetorical skill. Calvin came to his pulpit in Geneva through the aggressive intervention of William Farel, who had read *The Institutes* and constrained the young theologian to the pastorate rather than solitary scholastic research and writing. Calvin established one of the most comprehensive expositional pulpits in history. He produced commentaries on almost every book in the Bible as a result of his relentless exposition. Beyond his commentaries, he produced numerous other theological volumes along with the first study Bible ever produced, *The Geneva Bible*, which dominated the French Reformation and ultimately ended up in England becoming perhaps the most influential English Bible of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³⁵

The Puritans. In their treatment of church history, Hiestand and Wilson move

³⁴ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*. vol. 4, *The Age of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 3-42; Broadus, *Lectures on the History of Preaching*, 122-26.

³⁵ I contend that Calvin was a pastor-theologian and church-building artisan par excellence. The ecclesiology of John Calvin fueled his pastoral ministry in general and his preaching in particular. See Jean Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 2 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 4:3, 2. His ecclesiology established his view of the pastorate, which was for him the only locus of true preaching. His sermons were sermons, not merely elaborate theological treatises to appeal only to the scholastic mind. J. D. Benoit says of him, "Theologian though he was, Calvin was even more a pastor of souls. Theology was for him the servant of piety . . . his thought is always directed toward life; always his pastoral concern appears." Jacob T. Hoogstra, ed., *John Calvin, Contemporary Prophet* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959), 1:51. See also Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, 4:90-133.

from the Reformation to the Enlightenment and its negative effects on the pastor-theologian while, this author believes, neglecting important positive responses to the downward trajectory. Vanhoozer and Strachan direct attention toward these groups, namely the English Puritans and those attached to the ministry of Jonathan Edwards. The English Puritans were a late sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century movement of pastor-theologians marked by vigorous Calvinism and the reformed Christian life. As pastor-theologians, they were consumed with the application of doctrine to the lives of their hearers. Vanhoozer and Strachan summarize the Puritan pastorate well. The pastor was a “theologian who brought all the force of biblical doctrine to bear on the lives of his needy people. The Puritans defined theology in churchly terms.”³⁶

The list of pastor-theologians in this movement is thus extensive, as eminent Puritan scholar Joel Beeke would point out. “‘Doctrine for life’ was a constant emphasis in the writings of the Puritans, who were almost all highly trained theologians as well as pastors of churches.”³⁷ Richard Baxter (c. 1615–1691), William Perkins (c. 1558–1602), John Bunyan (c. 1628–1688), John Owen (c. 1616–1683), Stephen Charnock (c. 1628–1680), and Thomas Watson (c. 1620–1686) headline a broad list of productive theologians who were at the same time devoted pastors.

The Puritans, we see, took theological and intellectual dominion of the created order, setting themselves up as the chief interpreters of life and thought in this world. With the Lutheran and Reformed pastors of the Reformation period, they would have boggled at the suggestion that they, as pastors, were inadequate to act as theologians for their people. They might have asked, “Who else *but* the pastor is capable for these things?” For the Puritans, and for many thousands upon thousands of ministers in the church’s history, pastoral work was not an escape from theological work but the call to instantiate truth in the life of the church. For the Puritans, theology cannot be anything but public: the people of God living to God

³⁶ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 80.

³⁷ Joel R. Beeke, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 6. See also William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying with The Calling of the Ministry*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1996); Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, 4:251-329.

by living out God's truth.³⁸

Perhaps the West's greatest connection to Puritanism can be seen in the life and ministry of one often called "the last of the Puritans," Jonathan Edwards (c. 1703–1758) and the followers of his New Divinity.

The Edwardseans. Edwards produced the bulk of his theological contributions while maintaining a difficult but thriving pastorate in New England. His view, according to Vanhoozer and Strachan, was that the pastor carried out "divine business." That is, the pastor's role was to aim all things Godward in his ministry. He was to act toward people from God or toward God from people. Regardless, God was the aim and goal. His means of accomplishing this aim was through the preached Word each week. In Puritan fashion, Edwards would expound a text and turn to the doctrine contained in that text and apply it clearly to his hearers. "The New Divinity" was comprised of Edwardsean pastor-theologians who carried on Edwards' intentionally theological ministry.³⁹ They wrote extensively, like their founder, while in pastorates throughout New England. Vanhoozer and Strachan cites historian E. Brooks Holifield in his description of their accomplishments.

The Presbyterian Jonathan Dickinson attained an international reputation for blending Calvinism and revivalist piety. Samuel Johnson in Connecticut was equally at home with Anglican sacramental theology, British moral thought, and philosophy. Cotton Mather wrote the history of New England, James Blair and William Stith the history of Virginia, and Jeremy Belknap the history of New Hampshire. Jedidiah Morse was America's leading geographer. Francis Allison and John Witherspoon popularized Scottish philosophy. John Clayton and John Bannister in Virginia prepared botanical reports, while Jared Eliot wrote on iron and field husbandry in New England. Edward Taylor, Timothy Dwight, and Conowry Owen stand out as colonial poets. Toward the end of the century, lawyers and

³⁸ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 82.

³⁹ Douglas Sweeney noted, "Clearly then, Edwards' world was strikingly different from ours. Its pastors worked as theologians. Its theologians worked as pastors. People expected ordained clergy to spend the bulk of their time in study, preparing to minister the Word to them in depth and rich detail." Douglas A. Sweeney, *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word: A Model of Faith and Thought* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 30. See also Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 5, *Moderatism, Pietism, and Awakening* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 248-93.

political theorists took the lead, but for most of the period the clergy were America's intellectuals.⁴⁰

Following this time, both sets of authors speak in disheartened tones regarding the drastic change to the pastoral office. Once viewed as a single office, the pastorate came to be seen as two separate and distinct occupations.

The modern “turn.” Hiestand and Wilson point to the Enlightenment as “the decisive event” leading to the demise of the pastor-theologian in Europe. In North America, they lay the blame at the feet of the Revolution and the Second Great Awakening. Vanhoozer and Strachan agree with Hiestand and Wilson's North American assessment, especially as it relates to the Second Great Awakening and the harm that followed. Both bemoan the tectonic shift on both sides of the Atlantic following the age of the Puritans. It is during this period the vocation of pastor-theologian fragmented into two separate professions.

The Enlightenment, according to Hiestand and Wilson, was birthed in the wake of scientific advancement and cultural volatility in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. French philosophers (*philosophes*) like Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot mounted a fierce attack against the institutional church. The church responded, but to no avail. The conflict initiated by the *philosophes* served to rapidly expand the gulf between ecclesial theologians and the academy. Hiestand and Wilson demonstrate that the new emphasis on science and the elimination of the church's influence was now believed to be the path to solving societal ills. The church was seen as a part of the

⁴⁰ Vanhoozer and Strachan continue, lauding the Edwardsean age as almost the end of an era of pastoral theology. “America's intellectuals' would not necessarily stick to the preaching class today. Yet this summation deserves reflection. There is something vibrant, something alive, in Holifield's reconstruction. Something moves and breathes in this summary that sleeps in the present day. Pastors were once theologians, and theologians of intellectual confidence, not merely spiritual confidence. They were often their community's best-educated citizen: learned generalists. They spoke authoritatively on a wide range of matters. They believed that they were in the *best* position for this kind of work, because God's Word interpreted the world authoritatively.” Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 86.

problem, not part of the solution.⁴¹ An additional result of this combination was a devaluation of Christian theology and its influence on the culture as a whole. Hiestand and Wilson lament the historical shift and make obvious the issues those seeking to be pastor-theologians were forced to address.

The effect of the Enlightenment on Christian theology cannot be overstated. The Enlightenment reshaped the scholarly and cultural consensus regarding the ontology of the Bible and the place of theology within the wider culture. The English deists, the French *philosophes*, and other radical Enlightenment thinkers generally despised or minimized the Bible. In the wake of the Enlightenment, the Bible was no longer a sacred text and theology was no longer the queen of the sciences.⁴²

This reality was especially pervasive with the rise of German textual criticism, source criticism and an academic approach to the study of Scripture. German scholarship relegated the Bible to a place of cultural artifact rather than revelation from a sovereign God. “Ultimately, an academic view of Scripture eclipsed an ecclesial view of Scripture; the study of the Bible and theology within the university context has never been the same.”⁴³ Notably, it is during this historical confluence of influences, both evolutionary and critical, that Spurgeon waged ecclesial war during the Downgrade Controversy. He was a solitary pastor-theologian fighting against post-enlightenment destruction of biblical authority in his church and the denomination to which his church belonged.

The North American reality wasn’t any better. The era of Jonathan Edwards and the famed Edwardseans was the era of the First Great Awakening. Preachers in that movement didn’t necessarily have to be connected to a local church to engage in evangelism. Vanhoozer and Strachan point out, “one could emulate Whitefield, the tireless outdoor celebrity evangelist, and with Wesley claim the world as one’s parish.”⁴⁴ When the Second Great Awakening began in America, the pattern of ecclesially

⁴¹ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 44.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 45.

⁴⁴ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 87.

disconnected preaching and teaching expanded through the ministry of Charles Finney. Vanhoozer and Strachan point to Finney in particular as exemplar of a new public theology, wherein Puritanical, theologically verbose homiletics was dismissed for sentimental, theatrical, methodologically effective preaching.

Both sets of authors exploring the degeneration of the pastor-theologian cite the work of Nathan Hatch, particularly his *Democratization of American Christianity*, regarding this time in American history. Hatch, they note, points to an aggressive anticlericalism in American society. Birthed in the Revolution and aided by the ecclesially disconnected preachers of Second Great Awakening, Americans demanded an equality between pastor and congregation. “Neither kings nor theologians were needed any longer; people who could govern themselves could read the Bible for themselves.”⁴⁵ In America, then, these authors show the other side of the European Enlightenment. American academicians certainly followed in European footsteps, divorcing theology from the pastorate, but an additional step took place in The Awakenings, a divorce of theology from the church itself.

In one generation, America went from a nation featuring a carefully guarded pastoral office—marked by learning, communal stability, and staunch theological preaching—to one in which disestablishment reigned and highly gifted populist communicators like Finney dominated. At the same time, the increasingly secularized American academy, like its European forebears, expanded and made territorial claims over the intellectual life of the country. The theologians suffered from this momentous cultural shift, yet the pastors took it still harder. Theology had become a specialist’s discipline, not a generalist’s, as was formerly the case. Many pastors either ignored these developments, focusing instead on their local church work, or waved a white flag.⁴⁶

“Waving the white flag” for many pastors in the late eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries meant a focus on practical methodology (like Finney’s *Methods*) rather than theological acumen. The result was a clergy separate from its theological

⁴⁵ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 48-49.

⁴⁶ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 89.

moorings. As Vanhoozer and Strachan point out, “The church’s evangelistic apparatus was strong, but its theological muscles had atrophied due to disuse.”⁴⁷ Also, many pastors and churches became increasingly focused on social issues.

Glimmers of hope. Vanhoozer and Strachan are quick to point out that while many American evangelical churches and movements had abandoned the pastor-theologian paradigm, some pastors remained committed. In the twentieth century, men like Harold John Ockenga, pastor of the historic Park Street Church in Boston, was eminently committed to rigorously theological expository preaching and pastoral ministry. He left the pastorate for the academy, ironically seeking to train young pastor-theologians at Fuller Seminary alongside Carl F.H. Henry. Vanhoozer and Strachan list several others who either followed his example or served as contemporaries: D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Sinclair Ferguson, Tim Keller, John Stott, and John MacArthur.⁴⁸ While many modern figures have stood against the bifurcation of the pastor-theologian, these are far from a majority. The historical shift of rigorous theological production from the pastorate to the academy has produced a dreadful anemia.

Ecclesial and Academic Anemia

A lack of biblical theology and an ignorance of the vocational shifts of church history has produced an anemia in the church and in the academy.⁴⁹ The church suffers from theological anemia, caricaturing theology as erudite academics having nothing to do with “real life.” The academy conversely suffers from ecclesial anemia, forgetting that

⁴⁷ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 91.

⁴⁸ On Lloyd-Jones, see Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 6, *The Modern Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 935-52. On Ferguson, Keller, Stott, and MacArthur, see Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 7, *Our Own Time*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 134-57; 460-90; 551-57.

⁴⁹ *Academy* refers to Christian colleges, seminaries, and divinity schools.

theology has been and must be created by and for the church.

Ecclesial anemia. Hiestand and Wilson originally took up the phrases “ecclesial and academic anemia” in an effort to demonstrate the drastic results of the vocational split of the pastor-theologian, and Vanhoozer and Strachan echoed the lament in their work as well. For Hiestand and Wilson, the theological anemia of the church is most clearly observable at an ethical level. Borrowing an Augustinian paradigm, they point to the connection between belief, love, and subsequent action. They note, “Love does not arise in a vacuum; it emerges out of our belief about the Good.”⁵⁰ The essence of Christian theology, they assert, is to say right things about God in order to bring about right affections and actions in the people of God. This is a fundamentally theological pastoral responsibility.

...the burden of maintaining the theological and ethical integrity of the people of God is inevitably linked to an office within the church, not to a group of people with intellectual gifting. Insofar as pastors bear the day-to-day burden of teaching and leading God's people, *they simply are the theological leaders of the church*. As goes the pastoral community, so goes the church.⁵¹

Hiestand and Wilson thus lay the blame of a theologically anemic church on the shoulders of theologically anemic pastors. If the church indeed follows the trajectory of pastoral leadership, then the feeble state of ecclesial theology is a pastoral liability. Hiestand and Wilson believe that pastors come by this deficiency honestly as they have been increasingly categorized as theological “middle men” or “brokers” who mediate between the academy and the church.⁵² In this categorization, the pastor is not expected

⁵⁰ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 54.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁵² Defining the “broker-theologian,” Hiestand and Wilson lament, “In the contemporary division of labor between academy and church, the underlying assumption has been that academic theologians are best positioned to provide theological leadership to the church, and that pastors are best positioned to apply this theology in a local context. Per this paradigm, when pastors need theological training or help, they are to look to the resources of the academy. Thus, to be a pastor (indeed to be a pastor-theologian) is to be a pastor who has accessed and mastered the theology produced in the academy and is capable of translating and passing it down to average folks in the pews.” *Ibid.*, 61. Their perspective is borrowed from the work of David Wells in his *No Place for Truth* where he explains the intersectionality of theology. “First, there is the world of learning into which theology taps; second, there is the Church for

to create and contribute to theological discussion and debate. Instead, the academy is responsible for production and the pastor should decode these complicated matters for the congregation. Hiestand and Wilson argue that such a lack of theological production from the desk of vocational pastors is a cause of ecclesial anemia. For them, it is a mistaken division of labor to relegate the pastoral office as servant to the academic. They argue instead for pastors to move from the second-tier, middle-management position to the production/supply side of the theological enterprise.⁵³

Vanhoozer and Strachan add another contributing factor to the pastoral liability for a theologically anemic church. They point to several “pictures that hold pastors captive,” or over-arching metaphors that characterize the pastor’s role and responsibilities. Many of these artificial metaphors come from the surrounding culture rather than inspired Scripture. Therapeutic models picture the pastor as a therapist, psychiatrist, life coach, motivational speaker, or personal guru.⁵⁴ Leadership metaphors caricature the pastor as a CEO, management guru, strategic planner, marketer, or visionary architect.⁵⁵ For both sets of authors, the pastoral office is inherently theological. The secular metaphors infecting and affecting pastoral identity must be replaced with a

who theology is constructed; and third, there are the intermediaries who, in the modern context, often become small worlds unto themselves but who must work within this matrix—scholars who mediate the world of learning and the pastors who broker what results to the churches.” David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 6. Hiestand and Wilson point out that Wells isn’t alone in his “broker” paradigm. They additionally point to Mohler, Piper, Carson, Vanhoozer, and Strachan who hold to an inherent connection between theology and pastoral brokerage ministry. They ultimately disparage the difference between the pastor-theologian and the broker-theologian. The pastor-theologian is a producer of material, while the broker-theologian merely dispenses material produced by others. They argue for the pastor-theologian over and against the broker-theologian.

⁵³ Hiestand and Wilson specifically note, “The broker vision pushes pastors into a fundamentally second-tier, middle-management role with respect to theology. Per this vision, pastors are no longer expected to generate fresh theological syntheses in light of contemporary intellectual challenges; this is the role of theologians in the academy. We pastors are to appropriate and disseminate the results of theological scholarship, nor actually engage in it ourselves . . . At least some pastors must pass beyond the broker vision and move to the supply side of the theological enterprise.” Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 62-63.

⁵⁴ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 9.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

proper model.

Academic anemia. Again, both sets of authors argue that while the church is anemic regarding theology, the academy is just as anemic regarding its ecclesial connectivity. This, they argue, is due to two particular realities. First, the academy often sets itself apart from (even above) the local church in an act of independence. Second, the academy is often viewed as irrelevant in the ecclesial community, a perspective (whether real or imagined) that originated in the historical abandonment of the pastoral office as theological. Regarding independence, the academy took over as the locus of theological reflection and contribution while simultaneously separating itself from ecclesial moorings. Eventually the historical trajectory of the academy strayed from theology altogether.

At their founding, the universities were informed by a Christian framework that shaped the methodological framework of the schools and made ample room for doxological and ecclesiological projects. But in the wake of modernity, the larger university context is no longer—in the main—a hospitable home for evangelical Christian belief (or even orthodox belief generally). This has tended to push much of evangelical theology into an apologetically constrained and pastorally muted posture.⁵⁶

Academic theologians have separate publications, associations, and societies. Indeed, academic theology as a discipline is only possible as independence from the church is realized.⁵⁷ Because of this historical reality, theological objectives of academic theologians were naturally different than those regularly engaging in ecclesial concerns and community. As this separation occurred, the ecclesial community increasingly began to see academic theology as merely academic, and thus having no bearing upon their lives.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 67.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 69. Hiestand and Wilson define academic theology as “a unique kind of theology developed and sustained within an academic social location and driven by academic questions and concerns.” *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Vanhoozer and Strachan continue, “The perception that academic scholarship is abstract and ‘theoretical,’ disconnected from the issues of daily life, neither relevant nor necessary for ‘practical’

The need for a discussion about the pastor as theologian has thus been made clear. A lack of biblical familiarity with the pastor's role and an ignorance of church history where this role has been consistently filled has produced a dreadful anemia in the modern church and academy.

Contrasting Taxonomies

Both sets of authors have taken the lead in advancing the pastor-theologian paradigm from history. Both sets of authors see their task as a resurrection of the ancient paradigm from which church history has deviated. Their views are remarkably similar, but they diverge at the point of academic engagement. Hiestand and Wilson call for the pastor to be a producer of theology for the academy, where Vanhoozer and Strachan argue for the pastor to be a particular kind of generalist, applying theological truth to the immediate sphere of the local church. To establish a helpful taxonomy with which to view the pastor-theologian and therefore Spurgeon as an example of such, both sets of authors must be contrasted.

Hiestand/Wilson

Hiestand and Wilson propose a threefold taxonomy of the pastor-theologian. That is, they categorize the pastor-theologian using three different models: the local theologian, the popular theologian, and the ecclesial theologian. For Hiestand and Wilson, the local and popular paradigms are already active in modern evangelicalism. It is the ecclesial theologian they believe lacks a presence and must be recovered.⁵⁹

The local theologian. Hiestand and Wilson view the local theologian as the most popular among those advancing the pastor-theologian model. The local theologian

ministry, is perhaps the single greatest prejudice against theological education." Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 5.

⁵⁹ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 80.

is “a theologically astute pastor who ably serves the theological needs of a local church.”⁶⁰ In this model, they describe the pastor as one with a good working knowledge of theology, an avid reader, reflective, thoughtful, and widely sought after for counsel and guidance on theological matters. The distinctive of this model is the congregational focus of the pastor-theologian’s efforts. The local theologian is primarily producing work for his own congregation.⁶¹

The popular theologian. Hiestand and Wilson define the popular theologian as one who writes theology (an activity not inherent to the local theologian) to bridge the gap between the academy and the local church. Here, they give category to Wells’ “broker” model, or the “middle-man” paradigm. “The popular theologian translates academic theology down to other pastors and the laity.”⁶² Hiestand and Wilson differentiate the writing ministry of the popular theologian, explaining his focus as primarily common, rather than seeking an academic audience. Thus, the works produced are introductory, addressing topics not usually covered by academic theologians—dating, parenting, marriage, finances, church leadership, and liturgy.⁶³

The ecclesial theologian. For Hiestand and Wilson, the ecclesial theologian is the paradigm most essential to answer the identity crisis among pastors. It is the ecclesial theologian, they claim, who must become the combatant against ecclesial and academic

⁶⁰ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 81.

⁶¹ In the paradigm of the local theologian, Hiestand and Wilson point to many advocates. They show how Vanhoozer in his *Drama of Doctrine* argues for the local theologian model, for the pastor is a “director” of a performance of the gospel in a particular setting. They point to Albert Mohler as well when he notes, “The health of the church depends upon pastors who infuse their congregations with deep biblical and theological conviction, and the primary means of this transfer is the preaching of the Word of God.” In Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 11. They additionally reference Strachan and Mathis in their work on Carson and Piper, *The Pastor as Scholar and the Scholar as Pastor: Reflections on Life and Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011). All of these, they assert, advocate for the pastor as local theologian, unconcerned with public or ecclesial writing or contribution.

⁶² Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 83.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 84.

anemia.

An ecclesial theologian is a *theologian* who bears shepherding responsibility for a congregation and who is thus situated in the native social location that theology is chiefly called to serve; and the ecclesial theologian is a *pastor* who writes theological scholarship in conversation with other theologians, with an eye to the needs of ecclesial community. In this way, the ecclesial theologian includes, but extends beyond, the local theologian and popular theologian models.⁶⁴

Ecclesial theologians behave in ways similar to local and popular theologians, but their writing ministry involves the academic community as well. Hiestand and Wilson lay out eight particular characteristics of the ecclesial theologian's identity, providing clarity to their taxonomy.

First, the ecclesial theologian inhabits the ecclesial social location. Simply put, the ecclesial theologian is a vocational pastor. For Hiestand and Wilson, "It is the pastoral vocation that sensitizes and positions the ecclesial theologian to make unique pastoral contributions to theology."⁶⁵ The pastor is uniquely able to relate complex theological issues to ministerial realities within the local church as the vocational elder responsible for that church. Second, the ecclesial theologian foregrounds ecclesial questions. That is, for the ecclesial theologian, the concerns of the church drive the nature and scope of writing. Third, the ecclesial theologian aims for clarity over subtlety. Hiestand and Wilson explain the unnecessary complexity often accompanying academic composition can be counterproductive. Thus, the ecclesial theologian writes an aim toward clarity rather than complexity in order to aid pastoral outcomes.⁶⁶ Fourth, the ecclesial theologian theologizes with a preaching voice. Here, Hiestand and Wilson posit that for the ecclesial theologian the pulpit is always in view. That is, while academic theology does not tend to "get preachy," ecclesial theology always carries a homiletic and

⁶⁴ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 85.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

doxological mantle into writing. Fifth, the ecclesial theologian is a student of the church. Hiestand and Wilson point to church history and tradition as a treasure for the ecclesial theologian. Indeed, they claim, “Remembering and drawing from this treasure room is a chief characteristic of the ecclesial theologian.”⁶⁷ Sixth, the ecclesial theologian works across the guilds. The ecclesial theologian for Hiestand and Wilson is no specialist, as are academic theologians. Rather, he synthesizes multiple disciplines and data points for the congregation as a generalist. Seventh, the ecclesial theologian works in partnership with the academic theologian. Hiestand and Wilson posit that the ecclesial theologian needs the specialized resources of the academy even if he behaves and writes as a generalist. In addition, the objectivity and focus on theory within academic theology allows the ecclesial theologian to decipher error before moving to praxis in the congregation. Finally, Hiestand and Wilson demonstrate that the ecclesial theologian traffics in introspection. By this, they mean that the ecclesial theologian studies the self. His work is heart work and theology aids in the understanding and transformation of the Christian self.⁶⁸

While they acknowledge the local and popular theologians as valid, beneficial vocational models, it is clear that Hiestand and Wilson prefer and advocate for the ecclesial theologian as a response to the theological anemia of the church and the ecclesial anemia of the academy. The ecclesial theologian, writing robust theological scholarship from the vocational center of the local church, is the historical vision to be resurrected.

Vanhoozer/Strachan

Vanhoozer and Strachan present a model comparable to Hiestand and Wilson,

⁶⁷ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 94.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 100.

but several distinctions set their model apart. They, too, see three areas of influence for the pastor-theologian, or three publics, as it were: the academy, the church, and broader society. They, too, admit each public has a specific kind of accompanying theology (fundamental, systematic, practical). They too explain the pastor-theologian must learn to be “trilingual,” able to speak as a particular kind of generalist to each of the three publics.⁶⁹ Their corresponding argument is clear: first, pastors must be theologians; second, every theologian is in some sense a public theologian; and third, a public theologian is a very particular kind of generalist.⁷⁰ Where they diverge from Hiestand and Wilson is in the objective of the pastor-theologian’s ministry. Rather than categorizing several *kinds* of pastor theologians, they see the office as a particular kind of tri-lingual, generalist “artisan in the house of God,” ultimately called to build up the people of God. Thus, they keep the focus of the pastor-theologian on building the local church as God’s tri-lingual public witness to the ever-expanding kingdom of Christ. The argument is traced through the establishment of a particular kind of generalist called to a particularly public kingdom location.

Pastors must be theologians. Vanhoozer and Strachan say clearly, “To be a Christian theologian is to seek, speak, and show understanding of what God was doing in Christ for the sake of the world.”⁷¹ The pastor-theologian is a necessary identity to recover, as the title itself has been bifurcated, moving theology from the church to the academy, making the *doing* of theology less pastoral and more professional. Vanhoozer and Strachan explain that theology is, as Ames posited, “living to God,” and as such, is a Christian responsibility. Theology is inevitable in the Christian life, and as the pastor is

⁶⁹ “Pastor-theologians must be trilingual, able to speak the language of all three social locations, or at least speak it well enough to ask directions (and give them).” Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 5.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 17.

responsible for the lives of the people in his congregation, his theological task is also inevitable.

Every theologian is a public theologian. When discussing the idea of public theology, Vanhoozer and Strachan acknowledge that the question of the three publics comes into play. Do they mean the academic, church, or general public? To begin, they address the prevailing view: that public theology is simply put, theology aimed at the public square. That is, public theology concerns ways in which individual Christians (and churches) demonstrate their Christian faith in the public square, or society at large. Public theology in the conventional sense is an acknowledgement that theology has bearing on societal issues and events. Vanhoozer and Strachan take a different view of public theology, a view they call an ancient future alternative.⁷² In their view, the church is not domineering on the one hand, nor absent on the other, but Christo-centrally present as a witness to the kingdom of God.

The church is wherever the people of God—the public of Jesus Christ—live out their faith and fellowship in the Triune God. This is public theology: children of light being “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14), bringing to light “the plan of the mystery hidden for ages” (Eph. 3:9), namely, “to unite all things in [Christ]” (Eph. 1:9–10). In sum: the people of God are the public place where what is in Christ is remembered, celebrated, explored, and exhibited.⁷³

Thus, the pastor’s job regarding public theology is to help the church become what it is supposed to be: a set-apart public whose life and witness serves the interests of the broader public.⁷⁴

A particular kind of generalist. A pastor-theologian for Vanhoozer and Strachan is a generalist, as opposed to an academic specialist, limited to a particular field.

⁷² Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 20.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

It is here that they differentiate between the terms “academic” and “intellectual.” They define an intellectual as “one who speaks meaningfully and truthfully about broad topics of ultimate social concern.”⁷⁵ They further define the intellectual as an “organic” intellectual, or one who articulates theological concerns for the social context in which he finds himself. So, the pastor-theologian is “an organic intellectual who is present as the *mind of Christ*, which animates the *body of Christ*.”⁷⁶ He is a generalist, insofar as he relates everything to what God is doing in Christ, and he is an organic intellectual, serving as the mind of Christ for a particular congregation so they can become what they were meant to be in Christ.

An artisan in the house of God. Vanhoozer and Strachan establish the identity of the pastor-theologian by examining his *telos*, or end. They explain that while the ultimate aim of theology is the glory of God the penultimate aim of theology is building up of the people of God, helping them to see their own *telos*: “glorifying God in everything that they do, say, and suffer.”⁷⁷ Vanhoozer and Strachan then show how the pastor-theologian is an artisan in the house of God, building up Christians in Christ. They point to the New Testament metaphors of edification, one organic (flock: John 21:17, Hebrews 5:14), one inorganic (building: 1 Cor. 3:9) to illustrate the pastor-theologian’s focus. “The point is that pastor-theologians are essentially church cultivators, church builders—where “church” refers not to a literal building but to an edifice made up of people.”⁷⁸ Building the church is, as Vanhoozer and Strachan point out, the mission of Christ (Matt. 16:16-18) and is singularly founded upon the words of Christ (Matt. 7:24; John 6:68). Thus, the pastor-theologian builds up Christians in Christ, based on the words

⁷⁵ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 22.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 142.

of Christ, in participation with the activity of Christ.

According to Vanhoozer and Strachan, because pastor-theologians are essentially Christo-centric church cultivators and builders, there are particular practices in which they must participate: proclaiming, teaching, celebrating, and demonstrating. Vanhoozer and Strachan explain each of these practices in detail, giving particular detail to the act of building the people of God. Pastor-theologians first proclaim what is in Christ through counsel (soul-care as ministry of the Word),⁷⁹ visitation (embodiment of ministry of the Word)⁸⁰ and preaching (the proclaimed ministry of the Word).⁸¹ Second, pastor-theologians teach what is in Christ through catechesis.⁸² Third, pastor-theologians celebrate what is in Christ as liturgists (gathering, prayer, and communion).⁸³ Finally,

⁷⁹ Vanhoozer and Strachan note, “This is what makes the pastor’s care different: it concerns Jesus Christ and is exercised on his behalf. Pastors cannot always help to change painful circumstances, but this is not what building people up in Christ means. What is different about disciples is not that they suffer less, but rather how they respond to God’s presence and activity in the midst of suffering. The pastor helps people to process their experiences in light of the gospel and in relationship to the living Christ, assisting them to respond to everything, including adversity, in faith, hope, and love.” Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 153-54.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 155-56. “The purpose of visitation, like all other forms of the ministry of the word, is to communicate the gospel by *embodying* Christ, God’s love for the world. To love the people of God means going to see how they are getting on. Only when pastors come to see the context of a person’s life, at particular times and places, can they minister the word in the particular ways that direct people in the way of Jesus Christ. Pastor-theologians therefore build the house of God one human household at a time.”

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 156. “The sermon is not the exclusive form of one’s ministry of the word, but preaching is nevertheless the pastor-theologian’s most characteristic practice, and one of the most important. Preaching is not the whole of pastoral ministry, but it is its microcosm: as the sermon goes, so goes the (holy) nation.” While Vanhoozer and Strachan admittedly aren’t attempting to construct a theology of preaching for the pastor theologian, they advance four reasons why the pulpit “leads the nation.” First, preaching fosters biblical literacy, biblical-theological competency, and canon sense (157). Second, preaching fosters theological literacy, the ability to read (and, if necessary, critique) our world—our history, our culture—in the light of God’s presence and activity (157). Third, preaching wakes up the local church, here and now, to the bracing reality of Jesus Christ, who is always and everywhere at hand yet beyond our grasp (159). Fourth, preaching draws the local church, here and now, into relationship with the bracing reality of Jesus Christ, directing disciples to adopt beliefs, values, and practices that correspond to what is in Christ in order to get real (160). Preaching, speaking to confess and conform to what is in Christ, is the quintessential theological act of the church’s organic intellectuals, charged with building up the body of Christ by cultivating understanding and obedience (161).

⁸² Vanhoozer and Strachan continue, “Every pastor must be a catechist. Think of the pastor-theologian as a GP (general practitioner), whose responsibility is looking after the health of the body of Christ, in part by teaching sound doctrine.” *Ibid.*, 164.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 168. Vanhoozer and Strachan note, “The saints gather together as a local church to be built up in faith, hope, and love for the ultimate purpose of becoming the kind of people who can worship in spirit and truth anywhere and anytime. Corporate worship is one of the primary means by which the saints are built up. Stated differently: the church gathers and worships in order to build up God’s people, enabling them to serve God by offering themselves as living sacrifices on other days of the week, when

pastor-theologians demonstrate what is in Christ as apologists.⁸⁴

For Vanhoozer and Strachan, the pastor-theologian is a particular kind of tri-lingual, generalist “artisan in the house of God,” ultimately called to build up the people of God. The argument is traced through the establishment of a particular kind of generalist called to a particularly public kingdom location in particular practice.

A Taxonomy of the Pastor as Public Theologian

In order to adopt a taxonomy of the pastor-theologian with which to examine the ministry of Charles Spurgeon, an evaluation of Hiestand and Wilson as well as Vanhoozer and Strachan as representatives of the movement should be undertaken. In review of the general reemphasis upon the pastor-theologian, some have responded negatively. Andrew Wilson wrote an article for *Christianity Today* entitled, “Why Being a Pastor Scholar is Nearly Impossible.” His contention was that the bifurcation exists for a reason. Many who try to combine what history has separated find themselves at odds with one office or the other. “More commonly, some aspire to be both equally, but indicate by their speech and actions—let alone by their weekly timetables—that they major in one and minor in the other.”⁸⁵ Wilson continues to illustrate the manifold tensions upon an individual in the office of pastor-theologian, pointing to the Hiestand and Wilson ecclesial theologian paradigm in particular as problematic.

they are not gathered together as a church.” Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 174. “Pastors are apologists, charged with demonstrating the truth of the gospel and refuting false teaching. Stated differently: pastors are charged with maintaining a faithful and credible witness to the gospel and with helping members of their congregations to do the same.” Ibid.

⁸⁵ Andrew Wilson, “Why Being a Pastor-Scholar Is Nearly Impossible,” *Christianity Today*, 2015, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/september-web-only/why-being-pastor-scholar-is-nearly-impossible.html?start=2>. Wilson notes briefly the diversity of human giftedness, a critical area of concern. Not all pastors are good writers. Few pastors have the intellectual capacities of Spurgeon or Edwards. The reach of their influence may not extend beyond their local congregation, and their theological output may be more resource-dependent than original. Spurgeon himself was more resource-dependent than original in his output. He admittedly relied upon his familiarity and experience with Puritan literature in theological discourse.

No doubt, there is a sense in which everyone who writes for the church should be both theologically and pastorally engaged. But the union of pastor and scholar, shepherd and academic, is elusive. Don't get me wrong. I am not trying to bemoan the call for pastors who are also scholars, and scholars who are also pastors. But being a pastor-scholar is easier said than done. And many, like me, who are attempting to combine their pastoral and scholarly work face challenges and live in perpetual tension.⁸⁶

Wilson illustrates the tensions, many of which are indeed perpetual: specialist-generalist, practical-theoretical, and university-church. These tensions, he acknowledges, are not necessarily bad, but they are not the primary focus of the pastor. Indeed, Wilson sarcastically jabs that pastors should preach the gospel “without footnotes.”

Mark Jones also responded negatively to the paradigm in his *Reformation 21* article, “Pastor Scholar? Not Likely.” Jones advocated for the abandonment of the paradigm altogether, saying, “If you want to be a pastor-scholar, then something has to give. Either your scholarship or your ministry or your family or all of the above!”⁸⁷ For Jones, the focus required by scholarship would harm proper pastoral care for the people of God. He therefore advocates being a generalist (defined by him as one who knows a little about a lot), rather than a specialist (defined by him as one who knows a lot about a little). He too leaves the bifurcation intact, claiming an attempt to occupy both roles will ruin both fields.

Hiestand and Wilson responded to these arguments in their most recent work, *Becoming a Pastor Theologian*. Their claim was that the detractors did not understand their proposal. Hiestand notes that the modern synonymous treatment of academic and ecclesial theology made the distinctions of their paradigm hard to see. Therefore, further clarification was made by Hiestand regarding the nature of theological scholarship. This clarification significantly helps the evaluation of their model.

In summary, Hiestand and Wilson advocated a threefold taxonomy of the

⁸⁶ Wilson, “Why Being a Pastor-Scholar Is Nearly Impossible.”

⁸⁷ Mark Jones, “Pastor-Scholar? Not Likely...,” *Reformation21 Blog*, September 2015, <http://www.reformation21.org/blog/2015/09/pastorscholar-impossible.php>.

pastor-theologian. The local theologian is the pastor-theologian whose primary theological sphere of influence is his local congregation. The popular theologian extends his influence via writing to his local church as well as other congregations in the general public. While the local and popular theologians are commended, it is clear that Hiestand and Wilson ultimately prefer and advocate for the ecclesial theologian as a response to the theological anemia of the church and the ecclesial anemia of the academy. The ecclesial theologian, writing robust theological scholarship from the vocational center of the local church for the academy, is the historical vision to be resurrected.⁸⁸ Their conception is best pictured in gradation. Using an athletic analogy, the freshman team is comprised of local theologians whose focus is the local church primarily, without a writing ministry for either the public or academic spheres. The junior-varsity team is comprised of the popular theologians who engage in a writing ministry for public effect. Finally, the varsity team is comprised of ecclesial theologians, writing to the academy from the vocational location of the church. The vantage point of ecclesial theologians allows for unique contributions to theological scholarship, though confusion exists as to how that differs from academic theology. Hiestand states it bluntly.

If the ecclesial theologian is a pastor who writes theological scholarship for other theologians, isn't he really just an academic theologian in disguise? This is not our vision. Rather, the ecclesial theologian is a pastor who writes ecclesial theology—not academic theology.⁸⁹

Furthering his clarification, Hiestand lists four spheres of theological scholarship: research, systemization, ecclesial significance articulation and ecclesial implementation. Research, according to Hiestand, is locating and gathering data, while

⁸⁸ Hiestand notes, "The key identifying mark of the ecclesial theologian is audience; the ecclesial theologian is not primarily writing to laypeople but to other theologians and scholars. Ecclesial theologians help preserve the ecclesial orientation of contemporary theological scholarship, ensuring that the church's theological discourse stays centered on issues relevant to the life of the church without getting hijacked by the academy." Todd A. Wilson and Gerald Hiestand, eds., *Becoming a Pastor Theologian: New Possibilities for Church Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 57.

⁸⁹ Hiestand and Wilson, *Becoming a Pastor Theologian*, 57.

systemization is the presentation of that data in an organized way. In expressing ecclesial significance, the theologian makes clear the importance of particular systematized data *for* the local congregation, and ecclesial implementation clarifies how said relevant data should be implemented *within* that congregation. Hiestand notes that the ecclesial theologian is most valuable when he contributes to the last two spheres (significance and implementation). The ecclesial theologian thus interprets and applies theological matters to the church.

The trouble with Hiestand's clarification is that it betrays the model previously advanced in *The Pastor Theologian*. A pastor-theologian who determines relevance and implementation of particular theological concepts and systems for the local congregation is a *local theologian* in their taxonomy. Hiestand goes on to argue the differences between academic and ecclesial theology, contrasting the lack of ecclesial application of systematized data for the church with the unique ability of a pastor to operate outside of theological guilds in order to speak deep truth to his congregation. Again, the difficulty is in the aforementioned identity of the ecclesial theologian as one who speaks to a particular audience. Hiestand indeed claims, "The key identifying mark of the ecclesial theologian is *audience*; the ecclesial theologian is not primarily writing to laypeople but to other theologians and scholars."⁹⁰ If it is true that the ecclesial theologian is primarily concerned with writing for other theologians and scholars, then by nature of that activity, he must interact in an academic, guild-defined manner. He contributes to scholarship in a given field. Each scholastic field to which a theologian wishes to contribute comes with particular academic parameters altogether separate from the local church. Thus, it appears that the ecclesial theologian is indeed an academic theologian in disguise, or a local theologian with better than average involvement in the academy. The key for Hiestand and Wilson is not only in the audience but in the concept of contribution. If the ecclesial

⁹⁰ Hiestand and Wilson, *Becoming a Pastor Theologian*, 57.

theologian is contributing to modern theological discourse, there are academic parameters in which he must operate. He may do so from the social location of a pastorate, but his aims are divided, echoing the warning of Jones and others: something will have to give.

Vanhoozer and Strachan contend the pastor-theologian should be able to speak in a trilingual manner: to the public, the academy, and the church at large. By that they mean that he should be an organic intellectual, versed in theological realities so as to competently address them in any sphere.⁹¹ The critical difference in their strategy is that the pastor-theologian's primary sphere of influence and involvement is the local church itself. Again, rather than adopting segmented grades of pastor theologians, they see the office filled by one who is a tri-lingual, generalist "artisan in the house of God," ultimately called to build up the people of God. Thus, they keep the focus of the pastor-theologian on building the local church as God's tri-lingual public witness to the ever-expanding kingdom of Christ. Vanhoozer summarizes this idea plainly in his theses on the pastor-theologian.

The Great Pastoral Commission is Christ's charge to pastors to be public theologians who work with people on God's behalf, workers who feed Christ's sheep and build God's house. The pastor-theologian is a builder of God's house, a mason who works with living stones, joining them together with the cornerstone (Jesus Christ) in order to form a dwelling place on earth for God: a temple made of people.⁹²

Vanhoozer and Strachan center the activity of the pastor-theologian in the church. The pastor-theologian is a "mason" in the house of God, an "artisan" meant to construct the church of God as a minister of Christ. As the church is built by Christ and for Christ, it engages every sphere *with* Christ and his message of reconciliation. So, while Vanhoozer and Strachan admit that the pastor-theologian should be able to "give

⁹¹ "The pastor-theologian is an organic intellectual in the body of Christ, a person with evangelical intelligence who is wise unto salvation. As an organic intellectual, the pastor-theologian articulates the faith, hope, and love of the believing community on the community's behalf and for its upbuilding." Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 184.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 187.

directions” and speak “trilingually” in each sphere, the locus for that speech is the local church.⁹³ The pastor-theologian is not primarily a contributor to theological debate in the academy, nor is his audience comprised of other scholars and theologians. Instead, “Pastor-theologians administer sound doctrine to the body of Christ for the sake of its health, flourishing, and growing up into maturity in Christ.”⁹⁴

It is my contention that the Vanhoozer and Strachan model of the pastor-theologian is a clearer and more comprehensive representation of the pastor-theologian than Hiestand and Wilson. Their taxonomy domesticates the pastor-theologian’s efforts. That is, they locate the ministry of the pastor-theologian primarily inside the local church, launching outward. Thus, it is a beneficial evaluative tool for the ministry of Charles Spurgeon. Spurgeon was first a churchman. His deepest concern was for the advancement and edification of the saints gathered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle rather than popular public engagement.⁹⁵ Indeed, it was from his ministry in the Tabernacle itself the training of pastor-theologians began. He explained his mission to train pastor-theologians in his pastor’s college clearly.

Many pastors are not theologians, and hence the mistakes which they make. Let us be thoroughly well acquainted with the great doctrines of the Word of God and let us be mighty in expounding the Scriptures. I am sure that no preaching will last so long, or build up a church so well, as the expository. For this purpose, you must understand the Word yourselves, and be able so to comment upon it that the people

⁹³ It would certainly be possible to be less than trilingual and still be considered a faithful pastor-theologian in their paradigm, making it much more accessible to those with intellectual gifting not on par with Spurgeon or Edwards. The intention of Vanhoozer and Strachan regarding trilingual speech is on the ability to engage each sphere, not necessarily the frequency of said engagement. The pastor-theologian aims his efforts into the local church and has the capability to work *through* the local church to engage other spheres.

⁹⁴ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 188.

⁹⁵ Spurgeon was overwhelmed by his popularity, saying, “When I first became a Pastor in London, my success appalled me, and the thought of the career which it seemed to open up, so far from elating me, cast me into the lowest depth, out of which I uttered my misery, and found no room for a *gloria in excelsis*. Who was I that I should continue to lead so great a multitude? I would betake me to my village obscurity, or emigrate to America, and find a solitary nest in the backwoods, where I might be sufficient for the things which would be demanded of me.” C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography*, vol. 1, *The Early Years, 1834-1859* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2005), 263.

may be built up by the Word. Be masters of your Bibles, brethren.⁹⁶

It was from a foundation of doctrinally robust, expositionally faithful ministry that all Spurgeon's subsequent ministry endeavors grew. He was a pastor-theologian par excellence and he trained others to follow in his wake.

⁹⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, *All Round Ministry*, rev. ed. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1960), 35-36.

CHAPTER 3
THE PASTOR AS POLEMIC RHETORICIAN:
A FILTER

Kevin Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan provided the larger taxonomy to view Spurgeon's ministry as a pastor-theologian, but in order to grasp the depth of his trilingual speech during the Downgrade, an additional filter is necessary. That is, Vanhoozer and Strachan's taxonomy provides a basis for assessing Spurgeon as a pastor-theologian, but an examination of his rhetorical moves is necessary to see how he spoke as such. The current chapter briefly addresses the rhetorical category of polemic in an effort to understand the particular ways in which Spurgeon spoke as a trilingual pastor-theologian.

All rhetoric is situational.¹ That is, all utterance is essentially connected to a particular context of people, events, objects, and relationships. The trilingual rhetorical situation with which this work is concerned is the Downgrade Controversy, which, by its very name raises the expectation of polemic discourse. What follows is a general overview of the theory of polemic rhetoric as well as a comparison of Marcelo Dascal's work on polemics with Arthur Schopenhauer and Richard Weaver. Such an examination provides a sufficient filter for Spurgeon's writing, teaching, and preaching. Dascal distinguishes polemic strategy between discussion, dispute, and controversy. In a discussion, the goal is to establish the truth or disseminate information. In a dispute, the goal is to gain rhetorical victory over the opponent. In a controversy, the goal is to persuade an audience to accept one's position on a particular issue. In his preaching,

¹ Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 25 (1992): 1-14.

teaching, and writing, Spurgeon primarily adopted the polemic structure of controversy, seeking to persuade his audience to take his position. He often did so by employing particular rhetorical strategy. Schopenhauer provides an extensive list of these rhetorical strategies with which one can advance an argument, many of which are referenced by Dascal. Richard Weaver argues for the *telos* of rhetoric as the good-ward or truth-seeking aim. Spurgeon's Downgrade discourse reveals a truth-seeking *telos* as well, resembling Dascal's category of discussion. Thus, comparing Dascal to Schopenhauer and Weaver produces a sufficiently clarified filter with which to view Spurgeon's discourse. Dascal's work provides the overarching structure for understanding Spurgeon's rhetoric, his interaction with Schopenhauer provides sufficient means to examine Spurgeon's rhetorical strategies, and Weaver's teleological emphasis echoes Dascal's description of discussion while expanding the emphasis to include all rhetoric. Spurgeon's discourse thus filtered is shown to be a hybrid of Dascal's descriptions: the truth-bound, strategic controversialist.

Polemic as Rhetorical Category

Generally, the study of rhetoric is the examination of language used in the art of persuasion. Corbett and Connors define rhetoric as "The art or the discipline that deals with the use of discourse, either spoken or written, to inform or persuade or motivate an audience."² In his classic work *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle explained, "rhetorical study, in its strict sense, is concerned with the modes of persuasion."³ Simply put, rhetoric always has a purpose beyond information. Rhetoric is a compelling practical force, directing an

² Edward P. J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1.

³ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, Dover Thrift ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 108, Kindle.

audience toward a particular end. Lloyd Bitzer clarifies, showing rhetoric is indeed always persuasion.

A work of rhetoric is pragmatic; it comes into existence for the sake of something beyond itself; it functions ultimately to produce action or change in the world; it performs some task. In short, rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse, which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action. The rhetor alters reality by bringing into existence a discourse of such a character that the audience, in thought and action, is so engaged that it becomes a mediator of change. In this sense *rhetoric is always persuasive*.⁴

Richard M. Weaver similarly posits that rhetoric always has as its object the exerting of some kind of *compulsion*. “We have no sooner uttered words than we have given impulse to other people to look at the world, or some small part of it, in our way.”⁵

A helpful rubric for understanding rhetoric as persuasion comes from the work of Aristotle and his three classic modes of artistic proof: *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*.⁶

Logos is simply the logical, rational appeal of the message made through verbal content. The construction of the data of the argument is contained in the *logos* as well, so that the raw data does not necessarily stand on its own.

Pathos is the emotional appeal of the message made through specific and evident feeling and fervor. The speaker must understand human passion in general and that of his audience in particular. He must then connect with or stir that passion to persuade through this form of proof. Aristotle described emotions as the feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments, attended by pain or pleasure. The construction

⁴ Lloyd F. Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 25 (1992): 4.

⁵ Richard M. Weaver et al., *Language Is Sermonic: Richard M. Weaver on the Nature of Rhetoric* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 224.

⁶ “There are, then, these three means of effecting persuasion. The man who is to be in command of them must, it is clear, be able (1) to reason *logically*, (2) to understand human *character* and goodness in their various forms, and (3) to understand the *emotions*—that is, to name them and describe them, to know their causes and the way in which they are excited.” Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 174.

of an argument considering *pathos* must, according to Aristotle, come from a threefold understanding of each emotion expended.

Take, for instance, the emotion of anger: here we must discover (1) what the state of mind of angry people is, (2) who the people are with whom they usually get angry, and (3) on what grounds they get angry with them. It is not enough to know one or even two of these points; unless we know all three, we shall be unable to arouse anger in any one. The same is true of the other emotions.⁷

Ethos is the perceived character of the rhetor, or speaker advanced as an appeal itself. The speaker must be a man of good will, seeking the best interest of his audience. At least, he must be so perceived, according to Aristotle. The argument or rhetoric is rendered effective by the speaker's personal character when the communication is so delivered as to make the audience think him credible. Aristotle pointed to this distinction as the most important of the three.

We believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided. This kind of persuasion, like the others, should be achieved by what the speaker says, not by what people think of his character before he begins to speak. It is not true, as some writers assume in their treatises on rhetoric, that the personal goodness revealed by the speaker contributes nothing to his power of persuasion; on the contrary, his character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses.⁸

These classic modes demonstrate the wider comportment of spoken and written communication in persuasion of an audience toward a particular viewpoint. Aristotle's assertion is that all rhetoric is persuasion and thus engages the modes of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*.

The goal of all three forms of artistic proof is to advance a particular idea or course of action. Idea advancement through rhetorical persuasion develops distinctive attributes depending on the setting of the speech act, however. At times, the rhetorical

⁷ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1219.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 174.

situation is contentious. That is, conflict often characterizes and accompanies a rhetorical speech act. Obviously, an audience may respond negatively to attempted persuasion, but the conflict here examined is not the effect of persuasive attempts, but the cause. Simply put, persuasive rhetoric is often necessary during an exceptionally contentious season. This type of rhetoric is defined as polemic. The word is derived from Greek *polemos*, meaning “war.” Polemic exchanges are thus predominantly characterized by contention through particular rhetorical strategies toward differing ends. These exchanges are difficult to categorize, but a valiant attempt has been made by Marcelo Dascal. He provides a modest, general definition of polemic exchange before attempting any categorization.

A polemical exchange involves at least two persons who employ language to address each other, in a confrontation of attitudes, opinions, arguments, theories, and so forth. The important expressions in this definition are address each other and confrontation. The former stresses the interactive aspect (“exchange”, “dialogue”) and the latter, the content of the interaction, as perceived by the participants.⁹

For Dascal, both elements of interaction and particular contentious content must be present for any rhetorical exchange to be characterized as polemical. As an example, Dascal would not describe a disagreement with the work of Plato (d. 348 b.c.) in polemical terms, as Plato is unable to respond to current critique. Thus, even if polemic language is used in a particular argument, that language cannot be leveled against an opponent unable to respond in an exchange and still be considered polemical.

Dascal’s Polemic Types and Moves

Dascal lists three types of polemic exchanges: discussion, dispute, and controversy. The main criteria for his typology are: the scope of the disagreement, the kind of content involved, the presumed means for solving the disagreement, and the ends

⁹ Marcelo Dascal, “Types of Polemics and Types of Polemical Moves,” in *Proceedings of the 6th Conference, Prag. 1996*, ed. Svetla Cmejrková, Jana Hoffmannová, and Olga Müllerová (Tubingen, Germany: Niemeyer, 1996), 1:15–33.

pursued by the contenders.

The Discussion

For Dascal, the discussion is a contention over the establishment of the truth. The concern for the contenders is to ascertain what is right or true. Dascal summarizes a discussion clearly: “A discussant seeks to apply decision-procedures that provide knock-down arguments proving the truth of her position or the falsity of her adversary's position.”¹⁰ Weaver echoes the teleological aim of Dascal's discussion typology in his insistence on dialectic, or the establishment of truth about doubtful propositions. For Weaver, “there is no true rhetoric without dialectic.”¹¹ The demand for clarity of terminology in Weaver's work is aimed toward the arrival at an ultimate good in rhetorical exchange. Indeed, he claims the ultimate aim of all rhetoric is improving mankind.

So, rhetoric at its truest seeks to perfect men by showing them better versions of themselves, links in that chain extending up toward the ideal, which only the intellect can apprehend and only the soul have affection for. This is the justified affection of which no one can be ashamed, and he who feels no influence of it is truly outside the communion of minds. Rhetoric appears, finally, as a means by which the impulse of the soul to be ever moving is redeemed.¹²

Thus, Weaver agrees with Dascal as to the aim of discussions, though Weaver would broaden the good-ward aim, the truth-seeking aim, to all of rhetoric. For Weaver, *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* come together in dialectically sound rhetoric because a whole man is speaking to whole men toward a true, noble aspiration.¹³ A certain Platonic good

¹⁰ Dascal, “Types of Polemics and Types of Polemical Moves,” 22.

¹¹ “If now we are not resigned to the teaching of sophistry or of etiquette, there remains only the severe and lofty discipline of *vere loqui*. This means teaching people to speak the truth, which can be done only by giving them the right names of things. We approach here a critical point in the argument, which will determine the possibility of defining what is correct in expression; we come in fact to the relationship of sign and thing signified.” Richard M. Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*. (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1953), 17. See also Weaver et al., *Language Is Sermonic*, 191.

¹² Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 25.

¹³ Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 18-19.

is the aim.

With truthfulness in mind, Dascal posits a particular move in the typology of discussion: the proof. He states, “A proof is a move that purports to establish the truth of a proposition beyond reasonable doubt.”¹⁴ Establishing truth beyond a reasonable doubt can be rhetorically accomplished through a variety of avenues, according to Dascal. The contender may use observation, testimony, common sense, etc. He notes, “Whenever these are presented as directly relevant to establishing the truth of a statement, [that] counts as a move pertaining to the category ‘proof.’”¹⁵ An opposing move in discussion is the seemingly obvious “counter-proof,” where, as an example, the credibility of a given testimony is called into question, weakening the truthfulness of the original proof.

Again, overlap occurs between Dascal and Weaver, who indeed believes the aim of all rhetoric is to actualize a dialectic position in the existential world.¹⁶ Simply put, Weaver believes all rhetoric should have a “beyond a reasonable doubt” truth-seeking intention, applicable to the betterment of humanity. For application to thus occur, Weaver observes an inseparable connection of rhetoric to grammar along with the aforementioned commitment to dialectics. Regarding grammar, he explains, “Rhetoric in its practice is a matter of selection and arrangement, but conventional grammar imposes restraints upon both of these.”¹⁷ Dialectic, in Weaver’s scheme, is the vehicle for clarity, but it is governed by the speed limit of grammar. One can only argue for and apply truth as quickly as the rules of conventional speech allow. In *The Ethics of Rhetoric* he notes “old rhetoric” is often deemed embarrassing or uncomfortable, because the rules of grammar and language advance, altering symbols and the things they are meant to

¹⁴ Dascal, “Types of Polemics and Types of Polemical Moves,” 25.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁶ Weaver et al., *Language Is Sermonic*, 19.

¹⁷ Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 116.

represent.¹⁸ The reality of rhetoric's connectedness to grammar, then, reinforces Weaver's insistence upon dialectic. In *Ideas Have Consequences*, Weaver points to the power of the word when he says, "The feeling that to have power of language is to have control over things is deeply imbedded in the human mind."¹⁹ Simply put, the ability to arrive at truth beyond a reasonable doubt and thus affect an audience or opponent requires the specificity and agreement upon a proper dialectic. It is a way to "put one's house in order" through linguistic distinction and precision.

In summary, Dascal's category of discussion describes an arrival at truth beyond a reasonable doubt through the rhetorical move of proof. Weaver's work in the ultimate application of rhetoric toward a Platonic good and the necessity of dialectic emphatically undergirds Dascal's typology, while adding the necessary component of linguistic specificity.

The Dispute

Dascal's second polemical category is the dispute. A dispute has victory as its ultimate aim. No dialectic agreement between contenders is attempted because a dispute has no resolution according to Dascal. "There are no mutually accepted procedures for deciding the dispute, that is, a dispute has no solution; at most it can dissolve or be

¹⁸ Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, 164-85. Weaver discusses the "space" between speech itself and what it is meant to signify. "Few species of composition seem so antiquated, so little available for any practical purpose today, as the oratory in which the generation of our grandparents delighted. The type of discourse which they would ride miles in wagons to hear or would regard as the special treat of some festive occasion, fills most people today with an acute sense of discomfort. Somehow, it makes them embarrassed. They become conscious of themselves, conscious of pretensions in it, and they think it well consigned to the museum. But its very ability to inspire antipathy, as distinguished from indifference, suggests the presence of something interesting. The student of rhetoric should accordingly sense here the chance for a discovery, and as he begins to listen for its revealing quality, the first thing he becomes aware of is a "spaciousness. This is, of course, a broad impression, which requires its own analysis. As we listen more carefully, then, it seems that between the speech itself and the things it is meant to signify, something stands—perhaps it is only an empty space—but something is there to prevent immediate realizations and references." *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁹ Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*, 148.

dissolved.”²⁰ In a dispute, each contender seeks to be acknowledged as the winner, irrespective of the truthfulness of his position. So, the upward motivation and Platonic purpose of Weaver’s paradigm do not apply to this category. Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), an atheist German philosopher, wrote extensively on rhetorical themes, with similar designations to Dascal. Schopenhauer differentiates truth-seeking dialectic from what he calls controversial dialectic, or “the art of disputing, and of disputing in such a way as to hold one’s own, whether one is in the right or the wrong.”²¹ He connects this definition to Aristotle, who differentiated between logic (a means of arriving at the truth) and dialectic (a means at arriving at conclusions that are accepted as true). Schopenhauer explains, “What is this but the art of being in the right, whether one has any reason for being so or not, in other words, the art of attaining the appearance of truth, regardless of its substance?”²² Ultimately, Schopenhauer relates the desire to be right regardless of truth to the vanity of the human heart. Man, he claims, so deeply wants to be right, that he cannot entertain an opposing viewpoint, whether correct or not. Indeed, human vanity in controversial dialectic will force the contender to defend what is false as true. He must not lose.²³ In this paradigm, Schopenhauer provides foundation for Dascal, demonstrating the aim of a dispute as ultimate victory in the rhetorical exchange, without reference to ultimate good or human betterment.

²⁰ Dascal, “Types of Polemics and Types of Polemical Moves,” 21.

²¹ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Art of Controversy* (Adelaide, Australia: The University of Adelaide Library.), locs. 113-15, Kindle.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., locs. 127-33. Schopenhauer elaborates, “Our innate vanity, which is particularly sensitive in reference to our intellectual powers, will not suffer us to allow that our first position was wrong and our adversary’s right. The way out of this difficulty would be simply to take the trouble always to form a correct judgment. For this a man would have to think before he spoke. But, with most men, innate vanity is accompanied by loquacity and innate dishonesty. They speak before they think; and even though they may afterwards perceive that they are wrong, and that what they assert is false, they want it to seem the contrary. The interest in truth, which may be presumed to have been their only motive when they stated the proposition alleged to be true, now gives way to the interests of vanity: and so, for the sake of vanity, what is true must seem false, and what is false must seem true.” Ibid., loc. 92.

Dascal goes on to define the rhetorical move used in a dispute as stratagem. He explains, “A stratagem is a move that purports to cause a relevant audience to (re)act in a certain way, by inducing it to believe that a proposition is true.”²⁴ Essentially, the nobility of the discussion’s teleological aim at truth and existential betterment is not as much a concern as “winning the day.” Dascal unsurprisingly borrowed the term from Schopenhauer, who viewed the move in a negative light.²⁵ Schopenhauer's reason for including a chapter on stratagems was to give an honest disputant tools for easily recognizing and overcoming such tricks. Among his 38 stratagems and fallacies he explains moves that should have an effect upon an opponent's beliefs.²⁶ Schopenhauer describes stratagems as means used to accomplish victory, intentionally disregarding truth if necessary. Dascal lists several of Schopenhauer’s stratagem examples which bear repeating in order to understand the rhetorical behavior.

Extension, according to Schopenhauer, is “carrying your opponent's proposition beyond its natural limits.”²⁷ The contender makes his opponent’s argument as general as possible while making his own argument as narrow as possible. In this way, the general argument is left open to more critiques than the narrow, allowing for advance upon the opponent. Dascal also discusses diversion, a tactic for which Schopenhauer advocates as a particularly effective move. He notes that if an opponent is gaining ground, “You can suddenly begin to talk of something else, as though it had a bearing on

²⁴ Dascal, “Types of Polemics and Types of Polemical Moves,” 25. He continues, “It may involve deception and dissimulation -- e.g., by manipulating the ‘current state’ and ‘current demands’ of the exchange. The causation involved need not be explicit and recognizable by the audience, provided it achieves its intended effect, namely to let its user ‘win the day’ (at least momentarily) in the eyes of the relevant audience (which may or may not include the interlocutor). Hence the current meaning of this word as ‘any artifice or trick; a device or scheme for obtaining an advantage.’” Ibid.

²⁵ Schopenhauer, *The Art of Controversy*, loc. 286.

²⁶ See appendix 1.

²⁷ Schopenhauer, *The Art of Controversy*, loc. 289.

the matter in dispute and afforded an argument against your opponent.”²⁸ Dascal brings attention to the personal attacks offered by Schopenhauer as well. For example, Schopenhauer advises contenders to make one’s opponent angry, “for when he is angry, he is incapable of judging aright and perceiving where his advantage lies.”²⁹

In full, the stratagems explained are what Schopenhauer calls “tricks” and “chicanery” used to win the dispute. He lists and explains logical fallacies like *ad hominem* often used to gain an advantage in a debate in an effort to prepare contenders to face this kind of behavior in a contest focused squarely on victory.³⁰ Dascal attributes these rhetorical moves to the category of dispute for this reason. He believes these stratagems and others abound in polemical exchanges, but primarily when the discovery of truth is not the aim.

The Controversy

Dascal finally posits a mediating polemic category between discussion and dispute called controversy. In a controversy, the rhetorician is concerned with the persuasion of an opponent or audience to his view on a contentious subject. Controversies, according to Dascal, are neither solved nor dissolved, but at best resolved. He believes the category of controversy has been largely neglected in rhetorical study and has thus devoted a portion of his research and writing to correcting that deficiency. For example, in his work on epistemology, controversies, and pragmatics, he posits the necessity of controversy for scientific disciplines.

Controversies are indispensable for the formation, evolution and evaluation of (scientific) theories, because it is through them that “serious” criticism — i.e., the kind that allows for engendering, improving and controlling both the “well-

²⁸ Schopenhauer, *The Art of Controversy*, loc. 560.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, locs. 407-8.

³⁰ Schopenhauer describes *ad hominem* as a strategy addressing an opponent’s actions in relationship to his assertions. For example, if a speaker notes that Louisville, Kentucky, is a terrible place to live, an opponent could counter, “Then why do you still live there?”

formedness” and the “empirical content” of scientific theories — is performed. Controversies are the locus where critical activity is exercised, where the meaning of theories is dialogically shaped, where changes and innovations arise, and where the rationality or irrationality of the scientific enterprise manifests itself.³¹

The necessity of the rhetorical category of controversy for epistemology and scientific enterprises thus established, Dascal gives six characteristics of controversies in order to further clarity.

First, Dascal points out that they do not remain limited to the original demands that prompt them. “They tend to spread rapidly, both in extension and in depth.”³² That is, controversies naturally develop and evolve into more than the initial conflict that began them. Second, Dascal notes that controversies involve the questioning of each opponents’ factual, methodological, and conceptual presuppositions.³³ The credibility of each contender’s methodology is often questioned during controversy, with precision as a major aim. A third common characteristic of controversies is what Dascal calls the hermeneutic component. He notes, “The question of the correct interpretation of data, of language, of theories, of methods, and of the status quaestionis, arises again and again throughout a controversy.”³⁴ Fourth, and most important, Dascal describes the characteristic of openness as the most important.

What I want to express by this term is this: (a) when we begin a controversy, we do not know where its inherent dynamics will lead us; (b) controversies are rarely confined to a single discipline and, within a discipline, to a well -defined topic; (c) they reveal the existence of deep differences regarding the meaning of concepts, methods, and facts so far accepted without dispute; (d) it is not possible to anticipate all the objections of the opponent; (e) they clear the way for the emergence of radical innovation — one might even say that they invite the appearance of “non-

³¹ Marcelo Dascal, “Epistemology, Controversies, and Pragmatics,” *Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy* 10 (2000): 164.

³² Dascal, “Epistemology, Controversies, and Pragmatics,” 169.

³³ Ibid. Elsewhere, Dascal notes, “Controversies, like conversations, presuppose that the parties are able to achieve some reasonable measure of understanding. Yet, they are plagued, unlike normal conversations, by allegations of misunderstanding, only some of which correspond to what an external observer would consider as ‘real ones.’” Marcelo Dascal, *Interpretation and Understanding* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing, 2003), 286.

³⁴ Dascal, “Epistemology, Controversies, and Pragmatics,” 171.

conventional” ideas, methods, techniques, and interpretations.³⁵

The openness of a controversy comes from the preceding characteristics of dynamic discussion, methodological questioning, and hermeneutic principles. It is not possible to contain all the divergences in a controversy, and thus not possible to resolve it cleanly. Thus, the fifth characteristic Dascal notes is closure. Controversies clarify problems, examine methodological difficulties, interpret data, and produce understanding, but as a rule, they cannot be solved. Controversies are too complex and involved to be closed easily. Finally, Dascal clarifies that while controversies are not resolved as much as dissolved, they do not possess an “anything goes” quality as disputes often do. He notes, “controversies manifest some sort of order or systematicity” weak enough to maintain openness, and yet adequate enough to ensure their progress is not completely arbitrary.³⁶ Thus, there is a discussion-like structure that keeps controversies from devolving into disputes, where any manner of “tricks and chicanery” pass as valid argumentation.

Regarding moves within controversy, while victory may or may not be achieved and truth may or may not aid in human betterment, a contender or audience could at least acknowledge the weight of an opponent’s argument. It is, in fact, the rhetorical move of argument that categorizes controversy as a polemic type. Dascal defines an argument as “a move that purports to persuade the addressee to believe that a proposition is true.”³⁷ An argument thus directs the audience to the validity of a contender’s position, persuading them to take that position as well. Here Dascal fortifies his mediating position between truth-driven discussion and victory-driven dispute. He works to craft the persuasion-driven argument.³⁸ Here, Richard Weaver folds back into

³⁵ Dascal, “Epistemology, Controversies, and Pragmatics,” 171.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 172.

³⁷ Dascal, “Types of Polemics and Types of Polemical Moves,” 25.

³⁸ He notes, “The affinity between the ‘argument’ type of move and the ‘controversy’ type of polemical exchange lies in the fact that the former fits the latter’s most typical features. First, the

the paradigm, as one believing that all language is indeed *sermonic*. That is, all rhetoric has a persuasive aim, either toward an audience or an opponent. In this way, he claims everyone is a preacher in either a private or public capacity. He notes, “Thus caught up in a great web of inter-communication and inter-influence, we speak as rhetoricians affecting one another for good or ill.”³⁹ This persuasive nature of all rhetoric for Weaver is why he demands excellence from those with rhetorical responsibility over others. He admits a “preacher” in the controversial sense can influence an audience toward noble or awful ends with his usage of argumentation, and thus it is vital to examine one’s end in persuasion and the means of taking an audience there. Or, as Dascal would put it, to move consciously in the tension between a discussion and dispute.

Summary and Direction

In summary, rhetoric always has a purpose beyond information. Rhetoric is indeed a compelling practical force, directing an audience toward a particular end. The Aristotelian rubric for understanding rhetoric as persuasion through *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* demonstrates the effort to persuade an individual or audience. It is clear that persuasive rhetoric is often used during controversies; this type of rhetoric is defined as *polemic*. Not all polemic exchanges are the same, however. Marcelo Dascal, as well as other philosophers and rhetoricians (Weaver and Schopenhauer, for example) provide a helpful polemic trichotomy: discussion, dispute, and controversy. In a discussion, the goal is to establish the truth or disseminate information. Richard Weaver believes that

controversy's openness, namely, the fact that in a controversy everything is up for grabs, no ‘sacred’ assumptions or methods being preserved from unlimited mutual questioning. Arguments are both good tools for that purpose (since they go beyond purely logical considerations, and thus allow to question what the former take for granted) and also excellent targets (in so far as, when used by the adversary to ground her position, their ‘quasi-validity’ makes them easy prey to orthodox logical hunting practices). Second, the fact that, even though in a controversy all is up for grabs, not ‘anything goes’, i.e., some norms are respected and the ways of acting upon the opponent's beliefs are constrained.” Dascal, “Types of Polemics and Types of Polemical Moves,” 25.

³⁹ Weaver et al., *Language Is Sermonic*, 224.

establishment of truth should be toward a universal, or Platonic good. In a dispute, the goal is to gain rhetorical victory over the opponent. Dascal leans on Arthur Schopenhauer's description of "tricks" and "chicanery" which he asserts are often used in dispute, showing the tendency to proceed independent of truth and the common good. In a controversy, the goal is to persuade an audience to accept one's position on a particular issue. There is a methodological tension, however, between a truth-driven discussion and victory-driven dispute. In the end, Dascal creates his own methodological paradigm of persuasion-driven arguments, though he does not coin the phrase. These moves do not devolve into the "tricks" of dispute, but they can operate without the particular *telos* of a platonic good. Richard Weaver again enters the fray, heartily agreeing that all rhetoric is persuasion, indeed *sermonic* persuasion. Thus, Dascal's categories provide a filter through which to sift the writing, preaching, and teaching of Spurgeon for the purposes of this work.

Spurgeon engaged in a polemic hybrid of Dascal's discussion and controversy methodologies. He was, to coin a phrase, a truth-bound, strategic controversialist. In his preaching, teaching, and writing, Spurgeon adopted primarily the polemic strategy of controversy, seeking to persuade all in his hearing to take his position. He was additionally constrained by the truth as he saw it in Scripture, with a teleological aim toward the ultimate good of his hearers. He finally employs particular rhetorical strategies in his polemic discourse, some found in Schopenhauer's list of 38.

Both Dascal and Schopenhauer question the ethic of stratagems, comparing them to tricks and dodges aimed at winning the argument rather than advancing the truth or not. Spurgeon practices, though in limited measure, certain stratagems described by Schopenhauer as well as more common rhetorical moves and devices. Simply put, Spurgeon's polemic moves overlap one another, as Dascal admits happens often.⁴⁰ The

⁴⁰ Dascal, "Types of Polemics and Types of Polemical Moves," 22. Overlapping rhetorical

aim of the current work is to examine Spurgeon's polemic discourse as a pastor-theologian engaged in controversy. An examination of Spurgeon's writing, teaching, and preaching during the Downgrade Controversy reveals certain rhetorical tactics selected from Dascal's larger framework and filtered through Schopenhauer's and others' methodological grid. Simply put, an examination of Spurgeon's communication shows what strategies he employed as a truth-bound, strategic controversialist. The parameters of such a study include the list of 38 stratagems given by Schopenhauer, along with a compilation of common rhetorical strategies used in polemic discourse.⁴¹ These are connected to Dascal's larger description of polemic types to find areas of agreement. Spurgeon's Downgrade discourse is then filtered through this sieve revealing his polemic patterns during that time.

The Downgrade was a lengthy conflict, extending indeed until Spurgeon's death. Even as the conflict dragged on, he did not venture into personal attack, but rather contrasted the truth with error and sought to persuade his audience to follow him in truth. When pressed to produce names from correspondence with S.H. Booth, secretary of the Baptist Union, Spurgeon refused. He never named individuals, from the pulpit nor in publication, who were under theological scrutiny within the Baptist Union. The goal for Spurgeon during the controversy was to "expose doctrinal declension" wherever he saw it, not to gain personal victory by besting a denominational leader in a verbal dispute.⁴² Dispute, according to Dascal's designations, was a method largely avoided by Spurgeon during the Downgrade Controversy. Instead, he adopted the strategy of a truth-bound, strategic controversialist. He referenced the Bible consistently as the inspired, authoritative standard of truth to which everyone in the Downgrade would be held

moves does not necessarily imply ethical confusion on Spurgeon's part.

⁴¹ See appendixes 1 and 2.

⁴² Charles H. Spurgeon, "The Baptist Union Censure," *The Sword and The Trowel*, February 1888, 83.

accountable. He confronted the error within the Baptist Union itself, calling for a change of course in the denomination and a solidification of course for those standing with him in truth.

CHAPTER 4
THE MAKING OF SPURGEON, THE PASTOR-
THEOLOGIAN

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born June 19, 1834 in the Essex County village of Kelvedon. His parents sent him to live with his paternal grandparents in Stambourne fourteen months later. He remained in their care for the next five years before rejoining his parents in Colchester. He spoke fondly of his grandparents whom he visited often in childhood. Their home was an inimitable setting for the curious young Spurgeon to spend his early years.¹ His grandfather, James, was a Congregational minister steeped in English Puritanism.² His study contained the works of many Puritan greats in which the young Charles was deeply interested.³ Indeed, it would be his encounter with the Puritans of his grandfather's library to which he would return as the remedy for the theological ills of London.

Out of that darkened room I fetched those old authors when I was yet a youth, and never was I happier than when I was in their company. Out of the present contempt into which Puritanism has fallen, many brave hearts and true will fetch it, by the

¹ Spurgeon described his grandparents' home in great detail. "This parsonage is two hundred years old, and consists of a stout framework of wood, filled in with lath and plaster. Strong timbers of oak, some of them roughly hewn, combined with oaken rafters and laths, give shape to the roof, which is overlaid with thickly-set tiles." C. H. Spurgeon and Benjamin Beddow, *Memories of Stambourne. Stencilings by B. Beddow* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1892), 26. In one quaint story, he described a wooden rocking horse as "the only horse I ever enjoyed riding. Living animals are too eccentric in their movements, and the law of gravitation usually draws me from my seat upon them to a lower level; therefore, I am not an inveterate lover of horseback. I can, however, testify of my Stambourne steed, that it was a horse on which even a member of Parliament might have retained his seat." C. H. Spurgeon. *C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography*, vol. 1, *The Early Years, 1834-1859* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2005), 4.

² "[He] seemed to live as one of the last representatives of the Old Dissent. In all his tastes, manners, and aspirations, the veteran belonged to a generation which had long since passed away." He spoke of the elder Spurgeon's congregation as "a rare instance of Puritan fervor burning on through two centuries." Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:2.

³ "Here I first struck up acquaintance with the martyrs, and especially with 'Old Bonner,' who burned with them; next, with Bunyan and his 'Pilgrim'; and further on, with the great masters of Scriptural theology, with whom no moderns are worthy to be named in the same day." *Ibid.*, 11.

help of God, ere many years have passed. Those who have daubed up the windows will yet be surprised to see Heaven's light beaming on the old truth, and then breaking forth from it to their own confusion.⁴

Spurgeon would not only return to his puritanical roots later in ministry, but in the very year that the Downgrade Controversy commenced, he would be reminded of those early days and his fearless public theology. He didn't have the stomach for error and sin, even as a child. On a visit to Stambourne in 1887 he was told a story from his childhood wherein he confronted a member of his grandfather's congregation engaging in the abuse of alcohol and worldly amusements. The young Spurgeon stormed into the pub and addressed the man, "What doest thou here, Elijah? Sitting with the ungodly; and you a member of a church and breaking your pastor's heart. I'm ashamed of you!"⁵ The man put down his beer, ran from the pub, and fell down in a heap of repentance. He came to Spurgeon's grandfather and asked for his forgiveness as well, saying, "I'll never grieve you any more, my dear pastor."⁶ The young Charles was ferociously on his way toward a life of public ministry.

Others noticed the young Charles and the potential gospel affect he could generate later in life. While visiting Stambourne at the age of ten, he met Richard Knill of the London Missionary Society. Knill spent several days with the Spurgeons, explaining the gospel to young Charles and praying with him. Knill announced to the entire family, "This child will one day preach the gospel, and he will preach it to great multitudes."⁷ Reflecting on that earlier experience, Spurgeon remarked, "Did the words of Mr. Knill help to bring about their own fulfillment? I think so. I believed them and looked forward

⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:11. Spurgeon's description of "daubing up the windows," and reading in a "darkened room" refers to the infamous "window tax" which sought to estimate the wealth of the homeowner based on the number of windows. To get around this tax, residents would paint over their windows, blacking them out. Hence, Spurgeon referred to the library at Stambourne as a "dark den — but it contained books, and this made it a gold mine to me" *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

to the time when I should preach the word.”⁸

Parental Influence

In 1840 Charles moved back home with his parents. Both were ardent Christians, intent on bringing him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.⁹ His father, John (1810-1902) was a bi-vocational pastor, serving a Congregational church in Tollesbury while employed as a clerk in a coal merchant’s office. His mother managed the household comprised of Charles and his three siblings (two sisters and a brother), with fastidious gospel focus.

Yet I cannot tell how much I owe to the solemn words of my good mother. It was the custom on Sunday evenings, while we were yet children, for her to stay at home with us, and then we sat round the table, and read verse by verse, and she explained the Scripture to us. After that was done, then came the time of pleading; there was a little piece of Alleine’s *Alarm*, or of Baxter’s *Call to the Unconverted*, and this was read with pointed observations made to each of us as we sat round the table; and the question was asked, how long would it be before we would think about our state, how long before we would seek the Lord. Then came a mother’s prayer... “Now, Lord, if my children go on in their sins, it will not be from ignorance that they perish, and my soul must bear a swift witness against them at the day of judgment if they lay not hold of Christ.”¹⁰

Spurgeon would speak often of his indebtedness to his upbringing under the pastoral hand of his grandfather and father as well as the tender pious instruction of his mother.

Conversion

On January 6, 1850, Charles Spurgeon was born again. School had been dismissed early because of an outbreak of fever. A snowstorm kept him from attending church with his family in Tolesbury, so he found his way to a Primitive Methodist

⁸ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:28.

⁹ “I was privileged with godly parents, watched with jealous eyes, scarcely ever permitted to mingle with questionable associates, warned not to listen to anything profane or licentious, and taught the way of God from my youth up.” *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

Chapel. He had long been wrestling with his own sinfulness and need for Christ, returning often to the books his mother read him on Sunday evenings only to intensify the knowledge of his need for Christ. In the Methodist chapel, there were but 12-15 people in attendance. The minister was snowed in, so a layman stood to preach the message. His text was Isaiah 45:22, “Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else.” Spurgeon recounts the sermon as less than impressive, but deeply effective. The preacher looked directly at Spurgeon to speak, “Young man, you look very miserable and you will always be miserable...if you don’t obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment you will be saved.” He continued, “Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin’ to do but to look and live.”¹¹ Spurgeon responded to the gospel message in repentance and faith.

I saw at once the way of salvation. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ and the simple faith which looks alone to him.¹²

Spurgeon would reference this event frequently, recalling the grace of God to him in the back of a Methodist chapel, saving him from sin. “That happy day, when I found the Savior, and learned to cling to his dear feet was a day never to be forgotten by me.”¹³ He was baptized on May third of that year and in his diary wrote, “I vow to glory alone in Jesus and his cross, and to spend my life in the extension of his cause, in whatsoever way he pleases.”¹⁴

Education

Spurgeon’s experience in formal education was meager, but profoundly

¹¹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:88.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 131.

influential. He was taught in a cottage school until he began his studies at the Stockwell School in 1844. He excelled there and transferred to Maidstone where he and his brother attended St. Augustine's College. Spurgeon spent only one year in Maidstone before beginning work at Newmarket in Cambridgeshire. Here, he served as an usher, the modern equivalent of a teacher's aide or assistant. During his stay at Newmarket he encountered a cook named Mary King. She proved to be an instrumental force in his life, affirming the Puritan theology of his grandfather's dark den.

She liked something very sweet indeed, good strong Calvinistic doctrine, but she lived strongly as well as fed strongly. Many a time we have gone over the covenant of grace together, and talked of the personal election of the saints, their union to Christ, their final perseverance, and what vital godliness mean; and I do believe that I learnt more from her than I should have learned from six doctors of divinity of the sort we have nowadays.¹⁵

In the fall of 1850, Spurgeon left Newmarket in order to study and assist at Cambridge. He went to work with Mr. Leeding, who had previously instructed him in Colchester. Leeding's influence cannot be exaggerated. G. Holden Pike believed that Leeding "probably understood his young friend's bent of mind and developing genius better than anybody else."¹⁶ His work with Spurgeon in Colchester prior to his conversion and at Cambridge after his conversion profoundly equipped the young pastor-theologian. He never finished his education at Cambridge however, for ministry engagements began to overwhelm his schedule.¹⁷

¹⁵ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:38-39.

¹⁶ G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1991), 1:44. Of Spurgeon's education, Pike remarked, "When Mr. Spurgeon settled in London in the year 1854 there were those who industriously circulated the report that the young preacher was quite uneducated. This was not the opinion of those who were better acquainted with the facts of the case, however. The truth was, that he was not only as well prepared as circumstances would allow for the distinguished position he was destined to occupy in the world, but was evidently prepared for his future eminent service in the best manner possible. That is the view the late Pastor would himself have taken of the matter, while the tutor to whom he was chiefly indebted—the late Mr. Charles Leeding—would have born similar testimony." *Ibid.*, 29. Pike believed Spurgeon was uniquely gifted and educated for the task at hand, an education he balanced between a Puritan upbringing and Leeding's instruction. In a note following Leeding's death in 1890 Spurgeon wrote, "He was a teacher who really taught his pupils, and by his diligent skill I gained the foundation upon which I built in after the years." W. Y. Fullerton, *C.H. Spurgeon: A Biography* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1920), 13-14.

¹⁷ "He [Leeding] has left it on record that he did not think that there was need for me to go to

Early Ministry

The year of 1850 marked a spiritual launching period for Spurgeon. He wrote early spiritual reflections in his journal from April to June, which he later entrusted to his wife, who transcribed them for his autobiography. He marked his conversion January 6, 1850, followed by his admittance to fellowship at the Congregational Church of Newmarket. He was then baptized on May third and took his first communion on May fifth. On the same Sunday as his first communion he began work as a Sunday School teacher, a work he deeply valued.¹⁸

Spurgeon's First Sermon

Spurgeon had a profound desire to preach but was fearful and hesitant to do so.¹⁹ The responsibility was thrust upon him while attending church in Cambridge where he became connected to the Preacher's Association of St. Andrew's Street Chapel. James Vinter, called "Bishop" by his students, organized volunteers to preach wherever needed. He approached Spurgeon and asked him to accompany a preacher to Taversham the next evening. He agreed. On the way, Spurgeon kindly commented that he hoped the young man would feel the presence of God while preaching. Shocked, the young man explained that he had no intention of preaching. He wasn't even a member of the Preacher's Association. He too had been asked to walk with a preacher! He assured Spurgeon that there would be no sermon unless he delivered one.

I walked along quietly, lifting up my soul to God, and it seemed to me that I could surely tell a few poor cottagers of the sweetness and love of Jesus, for I felt them in

any of the Dissenting colleges, since I had mastered most of the subject studies therein; and his impression that I might, while with him, have readily passed through the University, if the pulpit had not come in the way." Fullerton, *C.H. Spurgeon: A Biography*, 13-14.

¹⁸ "He who teaches a class in a Sabbath-school has earned a good degree. I had rather receive the title of S.S.T. than M.A., B.A., or any other honor that was ever conferred by men." Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:157.

¹⁹ In letter dated April 6, 1850, Spurgeon wrote to his father, "How I long for the time when it may please God to make me, like you, my Father, a successful preacher of the gospel! I almost envy you your exalted privilege." *Ibid.*, 116.

my own soul. Praying for divine help, I resolved to make my attempt.²⁰

His text was 1 Peter 2:7, “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” The sixteen-year-old Spurgeon delivered his message and the poor cottagers were richly blessed. One matriarchal figure called out, “Bless your dear heart! How hold are you?” Spurgeon replied, “You must wait until the service is over before making any such inquiries.” After the closing hymn, the woman inquired his age again. Quick came the reply, “Never mind my age, think of the Lord Jesus and his preciousness.”²¹ This experience began a Spurgeon’s regular ministry with the Preacher’s Association. The course had been marked. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a preacher.

The Young Preacher of Waterbeach

On October 12, 1851 Spurgeon was assigned to a Baptist chapel in Waterbeach, just North of Cambridge. His text was Matthew 1:21, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.” His robustly theological outline tackled justification by faith, the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, and progressive sanctification. This brand of doctrinal preaching fit well with congregational expectations, for they were already deeply grounded in Puritan theology.²² His ministry at Waterbeach continued for two years and his popularity grew steadily. Soon the modest chapel was unable to contain the crowds coming to hear his message, and the townspeople would congregate around the exterior of the building to listen through the open windows.

²⁰ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:182. Spurgeon committed his apprehension to the Lord. “It seemed a great risk and a serious trial, but depending on the power of the Holy Ghost, I would at least tell out the story of the cross, and not allow the people to go home without a word” *Ibid.*, 183.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 184. Spurgeon’s theologically focused homiletic begun here is indeed a direction-setter and his preaching held this shape throughout his ministry.

²² “The doctrines he preached were such as they themselves loved and built their hopes upon; and these doctrines were identical with the teaching which had been given forth from the Baptist pulpit in the village for long generations. In point of fact, Waterbeach was as much a little stronghold of Puritan ideas as Stambourne itself; and that is the reason why the grandson of the aged Essex pastor at once felt himself at home with the congregation.” Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 1:62.

The maid's mistake. In the midst of a thriving new ministry, Spurgeon was often encouraged to gain formal training. His father even sought to arrange theological education for his son in some manner, whether with Leeding or elsewhere. A meeting was arranged with Dr. Joseph Angus, principal of Stepney College, an institution Spurgeon was profoundly interested in attending. When the time came, Spurgeon arrived at the appointed meeting place promptly and was shown into a drawing room. He waited for Angus for nearly two hours before inquiring as to his whereabouts. To his surprise, Angus had arrived on time as well, but was shown to a separate room. He had assumed Spurgeon would not come and departed on a train back to London. The maid had ushered the men into separate rooms, and they had waited for one another, separated by mere feet. Spurgeon, disappointed in the failed engagement, headed to his afternoon preaching appointment. On the way, Jeremiah 45:5 came to his mind, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not!" He considered that moment a sign from God that he should not pursue further education.²³ He wrote to his father later with settling convictions.

I am not uneducated. I have many opportunities of improvement now; all I want is more time; but even that, Mr. Leeding would give me if it were so arranged. I have plenty of practice, and do we not learn to preach by preaching? You know what my style is. I fancy it is not very College-like. Let it be never so bad, God has blessed it, and I believe he will yet more. All I do right, he does in me, and the might is of him. I am now well off; I think as well off as anyone of my age, and I am sure quite as happy.²⁴

²³ Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 1:73.

²⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:210. After his first sermon at New Park Street, Spurgeon wrote again to his father, confirming his decision not to attend. "I told the deacons that I was not a College man, and they said, 'This is to us a special recommendation, for you would not have much savor or unction if you came from College.'" Ibid., 250. At the laying of the foundation stone of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Spurgeon's father referenced his schooling decision specifically. "I always thought he was wrong in not going to College; I tried three or four hours with him, one night, with a dear friend who loved him, but it was no use. Several persons said to me – 'Your son will never last in London six months; he has no education.' I said, 'You are terribly mistaken; he has the best education that can possibly be had; God has been his Teacher, and he has had earthly teachers, too.' I knew, as far as education went, he could manage London very well." Ibid., 252.

He continued to assist Mr. Leeding at Cambridge to the delight of all who studied under him.²⁵ In addition, he kept multiple weekly preaching appointments with the Preacher's Association which provided him ample opportunity to learn.²⁶ His primary attention was on the flock of Waterbeach and with them he would stay until 1853, when he was called to London to pastor The New Park Street Chapel, the center of his public ministry until his death.

The Call to Shake England

In November of 1853, the Waterbeach pastor was asked to address the annual meeting of the Cambridge Sunday School Union in the Guildhall. Spurgeon was first to speak, followed by two other ministers. Each derided his age, one with particular vehemence, calling it a pity that “boys did not adopt the Scriptural practice of tarrying at Jericho until their beards were grown before they tried to instruct their seniors.” Spurgeon asked the chairman for permission to make a reply.

Having obtained the chairman's permission, I reminded the audience that those who were bidden to tarry at Jericho were not boys, but full-grown men, whose beards had been shaved off by their enemies as the greatest indignity they could be made to suffer, and who were, therefore, ashamed to return home until their beards had grown again. I added that the true parallel to their case could be found in a minister who, through falling into open sin, had disgraced his sacred calling, and so needed to go into seclusion for a while until his character had been to some extent

²⁵ Pike notes, “As my friend at Willingham is able to testify, the boys who made up Mr. Spurgeon's class needed no urging to be attentive when the time for going through a Scripture lesson came round. Though the Bible is often regarded as a dry book by boys, the Scripture lessons were given with a freshness which made them of extraordinary interest. ‘There was no long, somber face with Spurgeon, no starchiness,’ remarks his former pupil; ‘he was very homely and happy in these lessons.’ While giving them, the young teacher would not only become animated, but seemed to speak about the old-time characters who stood out on the page of inspiration as though they were his own personal acquaintances. One occasion is still memorable—that on which the lesson embraced the passage wherein the prophet Elijah challenges the people to determine by fire whether the Lord of Hosts or Baal was the true God. The great scene on Mount Carmel was depicted before the boys with wonderful vividness. to everyone present it almost seemed that the youth had actually been an eye-witness of the spectacle.” Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 1:80-81.

²⁶ Spurgeon would write to his father again, explaining the value of his preaching ministry. He noted that he was, “as much a minister as any man in England; and probably very much more so, since in that time I have preached more than 600 times.” Iain H. Murray and C. H. Spurgeon, *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1992), 49.

restored.²⁷

Spurgeon had no way of knowing how significant this event would be. In the first place, the man whom he rebuked had himself engaged in open sin which was known by the congregation. Secondly, a man attending this event, George Gould, was particularly taken with Spurgeon and his response to his critics. Soon Gould spoke in London with a deacon from New Park Street Chapel, Thomas Olney, and pressed him to bring Spurgeon in to fill their vacant pulpit.

The pulpit into which Spurgeon would step had enjoyed over 200 years of gospel ministry in London. Benjamin Keach was pastor from 1668 to 1704. On his deathbed he transferred the pastoral responsibility to his son-in-law, Benjamin Stinton. Stinton served until his death in 1718. In 1719 John Gill became pastor and served until 1771.²⁸ John Rippon followed him in 1773 and stayed for over six decades. He died in 1836, having produced a hymnbook, periodicals, various agencies and societies, along with a church building allowing for 1200 seats. Following his death, two other pastors served the church with minor tenures before Spurgeon came as pastor.

A calling commenced. When Spurgeon arrived at the chapel in Waterbeach on the last Sunday in November 1853 an envelope was passed to him with a London postmark. Inside was an invitation to preach at the New Park Street Chapel in London. Spurgeon was surprised and humbled by the invitation. He was preparing for the morning service using Rippon's hymnbook, named for New Park Street's venerable former pastor, and this church had asked him to come and preach! He thought it a mistake and wrote to them the next day, enquiring as to how they could have heard of him, reminding them of

²⁷ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:245.

²⁸ "Gill, above all, must be remembered for his theological writings. The books, like the preacher, are ultra-Calvinistic to the last syllable. Spurgeon deeply admired the man, and his pulpit rested in a room at the Metropolitan Tabernacle for years. Students at the Pastors' College used it to preach their trial sermons. John Gill's works and theology became known as 'Gillism,' reflective of the high-Calvinism that characterized most Baptists at that particular time." Lewis A. Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1992), 183.

his age saying, "...if you think my years would unqualify me for your pulpit, then, by all means, I entreat you, do not let me come."²⁹ A reassuring reply came, saying no mistake had been made. He was the one they were seeking. Arrangements were made, and Spurgeon prepared to preach on December 18, 1853.

When he began his journey to London, Spurgeon had a heavy heart. He viewed this opportunity as a sort of trial and focused his mind on the task by meditating on John 4:4, "He must needs go through Samaria."³⁰ He dearly loved the quaint congregation of Waterbeach and the 19th Century bustling London seemed overwhelming. No one from New Park Street offered him any lodging, but "supply" was provided for him to stay at a boarding house. When he arrived at the massive New Park Street Chapel the next morning he was greeted warmly and confronted with the rich history of the people to whom he was about to speak. Pike notes, "The temptation to sit down in what had been Dr. Gill's chair was irresistible, and there were pictures, etc."³¹ When he rose to preach, the 1200 seat sanctuary was sparsely dotted with few attenders, a reality that calmed Spurgeon's anxiety. "I was not yet out of my depth and was not likely to be with so small an attendance."³² His text was James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." His message was markedly different from the standard homiletic practice of the day.

The accepted preaching style of the mid-nineteenth century English minister centered in the preparation of a full, literary manuscript, and to read each chosen word most meticulously and pedantically. The whole design seemed to be to deliver weighty, eloquent discourses that tended to draw attention to the writing skill and learning of the preacher rather than to the message itself. Charles Spurgeon became a breath of fresh air in this heavy, almost oppressive preaching atmosphere. Because

²⁹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:247.

³⁰ Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 1:94.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

³² Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:248.

he was extemporaneous, free, and communicative, he thrilled the people with his message.³³

As the service ended, people lauded the young preacher and invited others to attend the evening service to hear “this young man from Waterbeach.” The evening crowd was sizeable, and they pressed the deacons to secure Spurgeon’s return to the pulpit. He did return for three weeks in January at the end of which time the deacons presented him with an invitation to supply for six months. It was meant to be a sort of probationary period with the permanent position of pastor in view. Spurgeon thought the timing was too long for someone his age.

My objection is not to the length of the time of probation, but it ill becomes a youth to promise to preach to a London congregation so long, until he knows them and they know him. I would engage to supply for three months of that time, and then, should the congregation fail, or the church disagree, I would reserve to myself liberty, without breach of engagement, to retire; and you could, on your part, have the right to dismiss me without seeming to treat me ill.³⁴

A decision was eventually reached, and he went to London to begin his probationary period of ministry. The flock left behind in Waterbeach knew their pastor had been called to greater things. One parishioner prophetically remarked, “That young man will shake England like a second Luther.”³⁵

Expanding Ministry

Not surprisingly, the three-month trial period at New Park Street was unnecessary. By April of 1854, a petition signed by fifty men of the congregation called for a special business meeting to invite Spurgeon to become their permanent pastor. On April 19, the church sent him a unanimous invitation which he humbly accepted: “No

³³ Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 194.

³⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:255.

³⁵ In the church records, the following entry is found regarding Spurgeon’s change of ministry venue: “Mr. Spurgeon continued to labor amongst us with very great success till the beginning of 1854, when he was called to the more important pastorate of New Park Street, where his popularity and usefulness continue beyond all parallel in modern times, being often called upon to preach on public occasions in all parts of the country.” Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 1:103.

lengthened reply is required; there is but one answer to so loving and cordial an invitation. I ACCEPT IT.”³⁶ Spurgeon’s ministry at New Park Street immediately yielded tremendous fruit. In the first few months of his tenure the 1200 seat auditorium was filled, and people stood around the room to participate in the service and hear him preach.

The Popular Public Theologian

At once the New Park Street chapel could not hold the number of people pressing in to hear Spurgeon preach. A collection for new facilities was quickly initiated.³⁷ As expansion work began on the chapel, the people of New Park Street had to select an alternate meeting place for their massive Sunday morning gatherings. Exeter Hall, with seating for five thousand was chosen as a suitable temporary home for the growing congregation. It was filled from the first Sunday. One observer quipped, “If Exeter Hall had been twice its size, it would have been inadequate still.”³⁸ The media both positively and negatively covered the vast crowds at Exeter Hall and Spurgeon’s popularity grew still further. James Grant, editor of *The Morning Advertiser* wrote:

Never since the days of George Whitefield has any minister of religion acquired so great a reputation as this Baptist preacher, in so short a time. Here is a mere youth, a perfect stripling, only twenty-one years of age, incomparably the most popular preacher of the day. There is no man within Her Majesty’s dominions who could draw such immense audiences.³⁹

As the audiences grew more immense, the renovation of New Park Street proved to be an exercise in futility. After one year of crowded meetings in the renovated chapel, the congregation returned to Exeter Hall. It was soon determined that a new facility must be constructed for New Park Street and that Exeter Hall could not hold the current Sunday crowds. An even larger venue would have to be secured until a new

³⁶ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:259.

³⁷ Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 1:131.

³⁸ Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 211.

³⁹ Ernest W. Bacon, *Spurgeon, Heir of the Puritans*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 52.

facility was complete.

Surrey Gardens. Surrey Gardens Music Hall was chosen next as a suitable venue. It held 12,000 and on the evening of October 19, 1856, was filled to capacity. An additional 10,000 people surrounded the facility seeking entrance. After a brief introduction, exposition, and hymn, a shout rang through the throng. “FIRE! FIRE! FIRE! The galleries are giving way! The place is falling!” A panic ensued. In the rush to exit the building, seven people were killed and many injured. Spurgeon did his best to quiet the crowd, attempting to preach, but to no avail. Overwhelmed by the pandemonium, he sang a hymn and dismissed the crowds. He was carried from the hall by friends, carefully avoiding the seven corpses on the ground outside.⁴⁰

Spurgeon spent two weeks with his wife in Croydon at the home of church members as he battled despair over the horrific incident at Surrey Gardens. Aside from personal recovery, the people of New Park Street sought to protect their young pastor from the media assault that ensued. The press, as will be made evident, were already critical of Spurgeon. This tragedy provided full vent to their vitriolic rhetoric.⁴¹ As

⁴⁰ Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 241.

⁴¹ “Mr. Spurgeon is a preacher who hurls damnation at the heads of his sinful hearers. Some men there are who, taking their precepts from Holy Writ, would beckon erring souls to a rightful path with fair words and gentle admonition; Mr. Spurgeon would take them by the nose, and bully them into religion. Let us set up a barrier to the encroachments and blasphemies of men like Spurgeon, saying to them, ‘Thus far shalt thou come, but no further;’ let us devise some powerful means which shall tell to the thousands who now stand in need of enlightenment,—This man, in his own opinion, is a righteous Christian; but in Ours, nothing more than a *ranting charlatan*. We are neither strait-laced nor Sabbatarian in Our sentiments; but we would keep apart, widely apart, the theatre and the church;—above all, we would place in the hand of every right-thinking man, a whip to scourge from society the authors of such vile blasphemies as, on Sunday night, above the cries of the dead and the dying, and louder than the wails of misery from the maimed and suffering, resounded from the mouth of Spurgeon in the music-hall of the Surrey Gardens. And lastly, when the mangled corpses had been carried away from the unhallowed and disgraceful scene—when husbands were seeking their wives, and children their mothers in extreme agony and despair—the chink of the money as it fell into the collection-boxes grated harshly, miserably on the ears of those who, we sincerely hope, have by this time conceived for Mr. Spurgeon and his rantings the profoundest contempt.” *Ibid.*, 241. The *Daily News* was also harshly critical. “The crowd had been assembled to collect a subscription toward the erection of such a mammoth chapel (the proposed Tabernacle), and Mr. Spurgeon and his friends were unwilling that the opportunity should be lost. Therefore, his intumescence reminder; therefore Mr. Spurgeon’s exclamation to the panic-stricken fugitives that they were more afraid of temporal than eternal death; therefore, the indecent rattling of money-boxes in their ears. We might go further and remark on the callous manner in which Mr. Spurgeon and his friends left the meeting, without one attempt to aid or soothe the sufferers; But we are willing to make allowance for the bewilderment which such a

reports and commentaries were published, news of the young pastor spread rapidly. Instead of decreasing his influence, the results of the tragedy were to the contrary. On November 23, 1856, Spurgeon went back to Surrey Gardens and the crowds filled the structure yet again. He continued to preach at Surrey Gardens until 1859 when the permanent church home for his congregation was completed.

The Metropolitan Tabernacle. The opening service of the Metropolitan Tabernacle was held on March 25, 1861. Spurgeon thundered from the new pulpit as to his gospel intentions.

I would propose (and O may the Lord grant me grace to carry out that proposition) that the subject of the ministry of this house, as long as this platform shall stand, and as long as this house shall be frequented by worshippers, shall be the person of Jesus Christ. I am never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist, although I claim to be rather a Calvinist according to Calvin, than after the modern debased fashion. I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist... but if I am asked to say what is my creed, I think I must reply: "It is Jesus Christ."⁴²

The Tabernacle itself held over 5,000 worshippers, and it was weekly filled beyond capacity to hear Spurgeon speak on his gospel subject.⁴³ The Tabernacle thus became the center of Spurgeon's ministry until his death.

The Pastor-Theologian and Philanthropy

Spurgeon wasn't content to carry out his ministry within the walls of the newly built Tabernacle. He intentionally and strategically engaged the culture around the church with gospel tenacity. By the time he turned fifty, he had launched over sixty-six ministry

spectacle was calculated to produce." Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 242.

⁴² C. H. Spurgeon, "The First Sermon in the Tabernacle," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1861), 7:169.

⁴³ Drummond notes that after the Surrey Gardens tragedy, Spurgeon took personal care over the construction of the Tabernacle, insuring its safety. "The Tabernacle was a well-built structure and very sturdy. Spurgeon could never forget the tragedy at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall. He had constructed the building in such a fashion that, should the need ever arise that the people needed to leave the building quickly and safely, each gallery had its own set of stairways. They were of large size and ran all the way down to the individual exit doors." Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 351.

organizations from the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

The Pastors' College. During his early and rapidly expanding London ministry, Spurgeon saw the need to establish a place of education for ministers.

When, in early days, God's Holy Spirit had gone forth with my ministry at New Park Street, several zealous young men were brought to a knowledge of the truth; and among them some whose preaching in the street was blessed of God to the conversion of souls. Knowing that these men had capacities for usefulness, but labored under the serious disadvantage of having no education, and were, moreover, in such circumstances that they would not be likely to obtain admission into any of our Colleges, it entered into my heart to provide them with a course of elementary instruction, which might, at least, correct their inaccuracies of speech, and-put them in the way of obtaining information by reading.⁴⁴

Beginning with a single student in 1856, the "Pastor's College Evangelical Association of Ministries" attracted many seeking training from Spurgeon for the ministry. In 1879 the college was celebrating twenty-five years in ministry as 548 men had passed through the school, 432 of which were still in active ministry positions. The college was deeply important to Spurgeon. In an 1875 *Sword and Trowel* article he explained, "Our assured conviction is that there is no better, holier, more useful or more necessary Christian service than assisting to educate young ministers."⁴⁵ The college thus became a powerful ministry arm of the Tabernacle into the life of Londoners. The Missionary Association of the college was a sending force, placing missionaries in areas where no gospel witness was known. The Evening School began in 1862, providing basic education for those who had neither the time nor funds to attend school.⁴⁶ Many who attended Evening School went on to study at the Pastor's College to prepare for ministry themselves. Students from the college planted churches in London and throughout

⁴⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:385.

⁴⁵ Charles H. Spurgeon, "A Plea for The Pastor's College," *The Sword and The Trowel*, June 1875, 252.

⁴⁶ "The curriculum included a Bible class, advanced English, elementary and advanced Greek and Latin, French, and lectures on science, as well as the traditional disciplines. Classes ran from 150 to 200 in attendance and required the basement of the Metropolitan Tabernacle as well as the buildings of the Pastor's College." Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 419.

England based on their training with Spurgeon. “By 1866, in London alone the Spurgeon men had formed eighteen new churches.”⁴⁷

Lectures to My Students. Every Friday, Spurgeon would personally lecture the men of the Pastor’s College. Some of those lectures were later published and compiled in a book entitled *Lectures to My Students*. One student remembered his Friday deliveries with delight. “What weighty and wise discourse he gave us on the subject of preaching! How gently he corrected faults and encouraged genuine diffidence!”⁴⁸ Spurgeon lectured often on the Puritans and explicitly marked out the theology of the college as “Puritanic.”

We endeavor to teach the Scriptures, but, as everybody else claims to do the same, and we wish to be known and read of all men, we say distinctly that the theology of the Pastors’ College is Puritanic. We know nothing of the new *ologies*; we stand by the old ways. The improvements brought forth by what is called ‘modern thought’ we regard with suspicion, and believe them to be, at best, dilutions of the truth, and most of them old, rusted heresies, tinkered up again and sent abroad with a new face put upon them, to repeat the mischief which they wrought in ages past. We are old-fashioned enough to prefer Manton to Maurice, Charnock to Robertson, and Owen to Voysey. Want of knowing what the old theology is, is in most cases the reason for ridiculing it. Believing that the Puritanic school embodied more of gospel truth in it than any other since the days of the apostles, we continue in the same line of things, and, by God’s help, hope to have a share in that revival of Evangelical doctrine which is as sure to come as the Lord Himself. Those who think otherwise can go elsewhere; but, for our own part, we shall never consent to leave the doctrinal teaching of the Institution vague and undefined, after the manner of the bigoted liberalism of the present day.⁴⁹

The Stockwell Orphanage. The Pastor’s College was the first of Spurgeon’s engagements with the culture of London, but it was far from his only enterprise. In an 1866 article for *The Sword and Trowel*, Spurgeon described the need for an institution to care for the orphans of London. Not long after the article’s publishing, a widow of a

⁴⁷ Arnold A. Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1985), 108.

⁴⁸ Charles Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography*, vol. 2, *The Full Harvest 1860-1892*, rev. ed. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2006), 108-9.

⁴⁹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:387-88.

clergyman of the church of England contacted Spurgeon with a donation. She had recently joined the covenant members of the Metropolitan Tabernacle and Spurgeon's compassion toward the fatherless of London resonated with her. She wrote to the church, saying, "I have now about £20,000, which I should like to devote to the training and education of a few orphan boys. Of course, bringing the little ones to Jesus is my first and chief desire."⁵⁰ Land was purchased the following January and the Stockwell Orphanage began to take shape. Spurgeon personally designed the structure of the orphanage to mimic, as closely as possible, the nuclear family. "Sensitive to the fact that institutional life could be very impersonal, he wanted the children to grow up in smaller family units, although it would be more expensive."⁵¹ Each "home" became its own family, with a mother in the place of authority. Spurgeon's vision for the orphanage was innovative for the 1860's and it greatly impacted the community of orphans in London. The boys home was completed in 1869 and ten years later expanded to include a girls' home, completed in 1880.

Other ministries. Spurgeon deeply cared for the poor of London. When the New Park Street building was sold, he used the proceeds to fund Almshouses begun by Dr. Rippon, his predecessor. These facilities met the needs of elderly women in London with no family to care for them, and Spurgeon placed a high priority on their ministry.

In 1866 he also founded the Colporteurs Association "to extend the circulation of the scriptures, and to create the diffusion of sound religious literature..."⁵² Men, many

⁵⁰ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:163. Spurgeon and the leadership of the Tabernacle were understandably surprised and met with her to confirm the amount, suggesting perhaps she meant £200. She reiterated her intentions to give the former amount. Spurgeon asked whether she might want to give it to George Müller instead for his Orphan Homes. She assured the men that the money was to be entrusted to Spurgeon, and him alone.

⁵¹ Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 423.

⁵² Charles Ray, *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (London: Ibister and Company, 1903), 340-50.

of whom were preachers from other denominations, would travel throughout England selling Bibles and other theological books. As they went, they often engaged in ministry with the homeowners to whom they spoke, extending the Tabernacle's reach far beyond London.⁵³ In addition to the Colporteurs Association, Spurgeon founded the Pastor's Aid Society in 1879 to help poor ministers in need of money and clothing. That particular society was connected closely with Susannah Spurgeon's Book Fund Ministry founded in 1875. Mrs. Spurgeon saw it as a private undertaking to get a copy of the newly published *Lectures to My Students* into the hands of every minister in England. When she told her husband of this desire he quipped, "Then why not do so?" By the end of Spurgeon's life, over 150,000 volumes had been sent to pastors.⁵⁴

Spurgeon and the Tabernacle launched The Rock Loan Tract Society, The Ordinance Poor Fund, The Ladies' Benevolent Society, The Ladies' Maternal Society, The Poor Minister's Clothing Society, The Flower Mission, and many other auxiliary ministries aside from Sunday School and Bible classes regularly offered.⁵⁵ His intentional engagement with London culture began in his early days of ministry and never waned in his later years.

⁵³ About the Colporteurs Spurgeon remarked, "I believe it to be one of the most efficient and economical agencies in existence and as education increases, it will be more and more so. The sale of vicious literature can only be met by the distribution of good books; these can best be scattered in rural districts by carrying them to the houses of the people; and even in towns, the book-hawkers' work greatly stimulates their sale. The colporteur not only endeavors to sell the books, but he visits from door to door, and, in so doing, converses with the inmates about their souls, prays with the sick, and leaves a tract at each cottage. He is frequently able to hold prayer meetings, open-air services and Bible readings. He gets a room, if possible, and preaches; found Bands of Hope, and makes himself generally useful in the cause of religion and temperance. He is, in fact, at first a missionary, then a preacher, and by-and-by, in the truest sense, a pastor. We have some noble men in the work." Ray, *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 356-57.

⁵⁴ Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 436.

⁵⁵ The Rock Loan Tract Society loaned copies of Spurgeon's sermons to those who lived in isolated areas of England. The Ordinance Poor Fund centered on the members of the Metropolitan Tabernacle themselves who needed food and other supplies. The Ladies' Benevolent Society collected and made clothes for the poor. The Ladies' Maternal Society aided poor pregnant women in London in whatever way they were able. The Poor Minister's Clothing Society, as might be expected, provided clothing for poor ministers. Spurgeon himself presided over this particular ministry as well. The Flower Mission began in 1877. Flowers would be collected, arranged, and delivered to people in the hospital by members of the church. Drummond, 437-38.

The Pastor-Theologian and Publishing

Spurgeon engaged the public at an intense pace. His first published sermon was released in a magazine entitled *The Penny Pulpit* in 1854. Not long after this, Spurgeon came to terms with publisher and friend Joseph Passmore to publish his sermons weekly in a “Penny Pulpit” of his own. These messages had an average circulation of 25,000 per week, and when Spurgeon preached a special message, such as the controversial attack on Baptismal Regeneration, the number swelled to over 350,000. His printed messages were eventually compiled to form the multi-volume *New Park Street Pulpit* and later, the sixty-three volume *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*.⁵⁶ Through Spurgeon’s relationship with Passmore, one hundred thirty-five books were produced. Mention has already been made of *Lectures to My Students*, the compilation of Spurgeon’s Friday lectures to the Pastor’s College, but his addresses to the annual conference at the college were also compiled in the volume *An All Round Ministry*. He wrote several works that became immediately popular at the time of their publishing because of the unadorned nature of their composition. He titled them *John Ploughman’s Talks; or Plain Advice for Plain People*, and *John Ploughman’s Pictures; or More of His Plain Talk for Plain People*. In 1865 he produced the devotional *Morning by Morning*, but his devotional commentary and magnum opus, *The Treasury of David*, took twenty-one years to complete. “It stands today as a monument to his insight, thoroughness, tenacity, and above all, his practical grasp of what the Word of God is saying.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Drummond notes, “On January 7, 1855, the first of a long series commenced. Passmore produced a weekly sermon from that date until 1917.” Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 314. Until very recently, the published sermons of Spurgeon in the New Park Street Pulpit were the earliest records of his preaching. Thanks to Dr. Christian George and Broadman and Holman Publishers, sermons from as far back as 1851 are now accessible and in print form. Drawn from Spurgeon’s own notebooks, George has compiled an elegant prequel to The New Park Street Pulpit referenced in various places throughout the current work. Christian T. George, *The Lost Sermons of C. H. Spurgeon*, vol. 1, *His Earliest Outlines and Sermons Between 1851 and 1854* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2017); Christian T. George, *The Lost Sermons of C. H. Spurgeon*, vol. 2, *His Earliest Outlines and Sermons between 1851 and 1854* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2017); Christian T. George, *The Lost Sermons of C. H. Spurgeon*, vol. 3, *His Earliest Outlines and Sermons Between 1851 and 1854* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2018).

⁵⁷ Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 317.

Spurgeon, like Rippon his predecessor, also produced a hymnal entitled *Our Own Hymn Book* to be used at the Tabernacle during worship.

The Sword and The Trowel. Spurgeon's writing ministry extended beyond the books and published sermons, however. In 1865 he began production of a monthly periodical entitled *The Sword and the Trowel*. The intention behind the magazine was to report on the organizations connected with the Tabernacle and commend right doctrine to those who might never attend the tabernacle. He saw it as a supplementary resource to aid in the defense of biblical truth and advance the influence of the Tabernacle beyond the borders of London.

Our magazine is intended to report the efforts of those churches and Associations which are more or less intimately connected with the Lord's work at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and to advocate those views of doctrine and church-order which are most certainly received among us. Our monthly message will be a supplement to our weekly sermon and will enable us to say many things which would be out of place in a discourse. It will inform general Christian public of our movements and show our sympathy with all that is good throughout the entire Church of God. It will give us an opportunity of urging the claims of Christ's cause, of advocating the revival of godliness, of denouncing error, of bearing witness for truth, and of encouraging the laborers in the Lord's vineyard."⁵⁸

The magazine was widely circulated and became Spurgeon's primary source of contact with Tabernacle members as well as the general public.⁵⁹ His published works stand alone in Christian history, with more books published than any other English author. The Metropolitan Tabernacle pastor was a prolific author and keen public theologian.

Established Ministry and Death

By 1875 Spurgeon's Tabernacle and accompanying ministerial enterprises had

⁵⁸ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:145.

⁵⁹ "In addition, the general Christian reader could learn first-hand, rather than through rumor or the press, what happened at the Tabernacle. After a decade of less than satisfactory experience with reports from other sources of news and information, and just plain nastiness, Spurgeon had a clear path to the public in mind." Tom J. Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2013), 400.

born tremendous fruit. The Pastor's college was filled with eager young ministers, the orphanage had grown substantially, and the membership of the Tabernacle held steady at over 4,000 people. In 1880 the Spurgeons moved to a more expansive home as well, a suburban estate south of London called Westwood. "People had long told Spurgeon that because of his rheumatic condition and his wife's ill health he ought to live outside the city...to escape the damp and fog of London."⁶⁰ He received criticism for the purchase, even though the sale of his London home almost completely covered the cost. It was a beneficial move for the family and served as a hub of ministry for Spurgeon until the time of his death.

The Pastor-Theologian's Private Struggles

Spurgeon met Susannah Thompson when he was called to London to pastor New Park Street, where her parents were members. They pursued a quiet courtship and were married on January 8, 1856. Theirs was a sweetly devoted relationship, though not free from troubles. Spurgeon traveled often for various preaching engagements and his wife missed him terribly. They had twin boys on September 20 of 1865, just one month before the Surrey Gardens Tragedy. Two years later, Susannah's health failed, and she became an invalid for the remainder of their marriage. Biographers neglect to treat this topic in full, though she underwent multiple surgeries from the father of modern gynecology, Dr. James Simpson. Following the birth of the twins, she most likely never knew full recovery. Despite her painful condition, she extended the ministry of her husband through her generous Book Fund, extensive correspondence, and ardent personal support.

Spurgeon himself endured tremendous physical and emotional suffering during his life. He endured a highly painful arthritic condition in his feet (Gout), as well as

⁶⁰ Dallimore, *Spurgeon*, 168.

kidney disease (Bright's Disease). Emotionally, he suffered greatly as well. He was often depressed and brought low by a host of embattlements. He was criticized by his fellow ministers from the time he arrived in London. For example, at an 1854 London Baptist general meeting, one pretentious prayer was uttered for him, that God would "bless our young friend who has much to learn, and so much to unlearn."⁶¹ He endured slanderous treatment from the press as mentioned, and the Surrey Gardens tragedy took a tremendous emotional toll. But no conflict caused more heartbreak for Spurgeon than the Downgrade Controversy, beginning in 1887 and continuing until his death. To one friend he commented, "This fight is killing me." Following Spurgeon's death, his son pronounced that the Baptist Union was indirectly responsible. To Archibald Brown, head of the Baptist Union at the time, Thomas jabbed, "The Baptist Union almost killed my father." Brown retorted, "Yes, and your father almost killed the Baptist Union." Susannah also agreed that the Downgrade took a toll on her husband, calling it the "deepest grief of his life."⁶²

1884: A Jubilee

On June 19, 1884, The Metropolitan Tabernacle held a special service for the 50th birthday of their beloved pastor. The event lasted two evenings. Spurgeon's father headlined a long list of dignitaries and guests all gathered for the celebration and his dear friend D.L. Moody spoke.⁶³ Lord Shaftesbury was aware of the sixty-six organizations Spurgeon managed and expressed deep gratitude for the extensive public ministry of the

⁶¹ Fullerton, *C.H. Spurgeon: A Biography*, 66-67.

⁶² Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:470.

⁶³ Moody remarked, "I want to say to you, Mr. Spurgeon, 'God bless you.' I know that you love me, but I assure you that I love you a thousand times more than you can ever love me, because you have been such a blessing to me, while I have been a very little blessing to you. When I think of a man or woman who has been in this Tabernacle time after time, and heard the Gospel, I pity them, deep down in my heart, if they are found among the lost. I have read your sermons for twenty-five years, and what has cheered my heart has been that in them was no uncertain sound." *Ibid.*, 398.

Tabernacle pastor.⁶⁴ Despite encouragements to the contrary, Spurgeon would not go on much longer. He enjoyed the fruits of his labor and continued in ministry for just eight more years.

The Pastor-Theologian Finishes His Course

Spurgeon stepped into the pulpit of The Metropolitan Tabernacle for the last time on June 7, 1891. His text was 1 Samuel 30:21-25 and the sermon titled, “The Statue of David for the Sharing of the Spoil.” He characteristically extolled the glories of service to Christ, saying, “His service is life, peace, joy. Oh, that you would enter on it at once! God help you to enlist under the banner of Jesus Christ!”⁶⁵ He would spend three months struggling to recover from influenza before the damp darkness of fall descended upon London. Sickness and season forced him to retreat to Mentone, France, his most frequent place of rest. He appeared to improve for a short time, but by mid-January 1892 his condition had worsened to the degree that hope of recovery was abandoned. Just after 11:00 p.m. on January 31, Spurgeon passed over. His body was brought back to London to lay in state at the Pastors’ College for two days as private memorial services were conducted. His students then lovingly carried the body of their president to the Tabernacle for public viewing the next day. More than 60,000 Londoners passed through

⁶⁴ Lord Shaftesbury said, “I will begin by saying he stands as a marvel before you; fifty years old, and thirty-one years out of that fifty have seen him in the ministry! He began his ministry when only nineteen and see him now going on as he began. He has not been puffed up by success, but humbled and animated the more to go on In his noble career of good which God in His merciful providence had marked out for him, and for the benefit of mankind. I cannot but call your attention to this; but your attention is not required to it. I want to tell you what we outsiders think. What a tale of his agencies read to you just now! How it showed what a powerful administrative mind our friend has! That list of associations, instituted by his genius, and superintended by his care, were more than enough to occupy the minds and hearts of fifty ordinary men. It seems to me to be the whole world in a nutshell. He carries on his Orphanage and various other institutions, and | would impress upon you that in which I think he shines the brightest—in the foundation and government of the Pastors’ College. My worthy friend has produced a large number of men, useful in their generation, to preach the Word of God in all its simplicity and force, adapted to all classes, more especially to the large masses around us, to bring forward the principles of elementary truth—no Single man has produced such a body capable and willing to carry on the noble work as our friend whose jubilee we celebrate to-day.” Richard Ellsworth Day, *The Shadow of the Broad Brim: The Life Story of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Heir of the Puritans* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1934), 168-69.

⁶⁵ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:500.

the Tabernacle to pay their respects and more than 20,000 attended the memorial services.

As expected, the work Spurgeon began carried on in his absence. The Tabernacle moved forward, eventually seeing Spurgeon's son, Thomas accept the call to the pastorate. The organizations and publications continued to engage and influence London, but the valiancy of their founder was deeply missed.

And the people returned to London, to take up their duties in the Tabernacle, the college, the almshouses, the orphanage, and the numerous missions and schools, to labor with fervor and patience as they had done for years, but yet to feel a sad difference, for the leader, the pastor they had loved, was no longer there.⁶⁶

His indelible impact on London and Christianity was immediately admitted, as many who paid tribute acknowledged the depths of his influence. One such admirer remarked that the work of Spurgeon would become greater after his death than during his life, and in the current work there is hearty agreement. Spurgeon deftly occupied the historical office of pastor-theologian and his example instructs modern readers profoundly, even after his death.

Summary

Charles Spurgeon was just 58 years old when he went to his reward, meeting the savior he so eloquently exalted through his ministry as pastor-theologian. His early encounters with Puritan greats in the dark den of his grandfather's library set him on a trajectory that would terminate in one of the most influential pastorates in history. His Puritan beginning produced a robust Calvinism galvanized by his consistent study of Scripture, theology, and church history.

We only use the term "Calvinism" for shortness. That doctrine which is called "Calvinism" did not spring from Calvin; we believe that it sprang from the great founder of all truth. Perhaps Calvin himself derived it mainly from the writings of Augustine. Augustine obtained his views, without doubt, through the Spirit of God, from the diligent study of the writings of Paul, and Paul received them of the Holy

⁶⁶ Dallimore, *Spurgeon*, 242.

Ghost, from Jesus Christ the great founder of the Christian dispensation.⁶⁷

His theological development and delivery marked his pastoral ministry at Waterbeach and New Park Street as the crowds thronged to hear. His initial message at the Metropolitan Tabernacle exemplified his theological distinctives as he promised to focus the ministry upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. As his ministry expanded, Spurgeon built the Pastor's College upon an explicitly "Puritanic" foundation. His institution began training men in a theological method which Spurgeon believed embodied more gospel truth than newer methods. He had an intentional hope in this endeavor: "...that by God's help, [we] hope to have a share in that revival of Evangelical doctrine which is as sure to come as the Lord Himself."⁶⁸ Spurgeon's publishing ministry, whether through the *Penny Pulpit*, the books, or the *Sword and Trowel* magazine, extended his theological ministry far beyond London to those who never attended the Tabernacle.

In his efforts as pastor-theologian, Spurgeon centered his ministry upon the Tabernacle itself as a particular kind of generalist, building up the body in London. It was from the epicenter of ministry at the Tabernacle that the multitude of Spurgeonic enterprises were launched. He was, using Vanhoozer and Strachan's term, an *artisan* in the house of God whose theological voice consistently resounded from his pulpit with great consequence.

His consistent commitment to a theological homiletic fed his polemic of later years as a truth-bound controversialist. Puritanic, Calvinistic theology was foundational in his polemic. Divergence from these principles was a divergence from the truth. A necessary result of such a theological pastorate is conflict and dissent. While the Downgrade Controversy of 1887-1892 is the most public and painful of Spurgeon's

⁶⁷ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:162.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 387-88.

battles, he was acutely familiar with conflict in his life and ministry. It is to this battlefield that the current work now turns.

CHAPTER 5

THE BATTLES OF THE PASTOR-THEOLOGIAN

An indiscriminate reader might be infatuated with the obvious success of Spurgeon and forget that his ministry was consistently assailed by controversy and struggle. No conflict was as damaging as the Downgrade Controversy, but other battles preceded and wearied Spurgeon as pastor-theologian. Tom Nettles helpfully categorizes these controversies into three types. First, Nettles identifies Spurgeon’s controversial interactions based on immediate conflict over Scripture.¹ That is, Spurgeon often engaged in public disagreement with individuals and groups he felt were sermonically or confessionally in error. Secondly, Spurgeon addressed those who confessionally held to a certain position but denied that same position in practice. Nettles notes, “For these he felt special alarm and was particularly disdainful of their hypocrisy.”² Finally, Spurgeon found himself in controversy over his disagreements with theological error he found in several publications, including periodicals and books.³ Spurgeon found himself in contention often, but his aforementioned meteoric rise in popularity drew significant attention and with that attention came disagreement.

For the purposes of this work, the controversies in which Spurgeon engaged will be arranged chronologically, while periodically referencing Nettles categories so as to establish thematic touchpoints in Spurgeon’s life. In addition, a portion of the chapter will contain an examination of the Downgrade Controversy through the lenses of

¹ Tom J. Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2013), 473.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Dascal's aforementioned characteristics of controversy to demonstrate the polemic context in which Spurgeon fought as a truth-driven controversialist.

Iain Murray, formidable biographer and historian, lists three major controversies into which Spurgeon spoke. Aside from the commonly addressed Baptismal Regeneration Controversy (1864) and the Downgrade Controversy (1887-1892), Murray brings particular attention to Spurgeon's Calvinism as a point of contention during his ministry. Murray's focus is important and helpful. The struggle over Spurgeon's Calvinism was ongoing but will be addressed here in connection with his Early Controversies. This effort is meant chronologically and theologically to funnel Spurgeon's engagement down to the Downgrade Controversy where he thematically encompasses all of Nettles categories, takes his most ardent pastoral stand, and rhetorically fires every weapon in his arsenal.

Murray additionally notes that Spurgeon in controversy is an oft neglected study. Nettles, Murray, and the current author lament such historical neglect. Murray voices his lament with particular fervor.

As a personality, preacher, author, Baptist, mystic and philanthropist, Spurgeon has been described and discussed, but meanwhile the great controversies in which he engaged so earnestly and the theology to which he held so tenaciously have, by and large, been allowed to fall into oblivion.⁴

Indeed, a study of Spurgeon in controversy reveals quite the contrary regarding his theological acumen. He aptly addressed each conflict with cumulative intensity, not for mere satisfaction of rhetorical victory, nor to gain the reputation of a good controversialist. Rather, Spurgeon sought to defend the truth of God for the sake of the people of God toward the glory of God.⁵

⁴ Iain Hamish Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1973), 10. Murray continues, "While such a study [of Spurgeon in controversy] will not tell a man everything he can profitably learn about Spurgeon, it will bring to the fore the things which Spurgeon firmly believed a future generation of Christians would be enabled by the grace of God to establish again on the earth. Examined in this context, Spurgeon is seen as no genial pulpiteer and humorist, but a man of granite, who thundered out to his generation the timeless truths of the Word of God." *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁵ Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 472. Nettles asserts, "His intent was to do battle. His

Controversy in the Early Years

When Spurgeon first arrived in London to pastor New Park Street, he enjoyed a season of high praise from the media. One Irish playwright, actor, and medical doctor named James Sheridan Knowles spoke to the students at Stepney College in glowing terms regarding their need to hear Spurgeon.

Go and hear him at once, his name is Charles Spurgeon. He is only a boy, but he is the most wonderful preacher in the world. He is absolutely perfect in oratory; and, beside that, a master in the art of acting. He has nothing to learn from me or anyone else. He is simply perfect. He knows everything. He can do anything. I was once lessee of Drury Lane Theatre; were I still in that position, I would offer him a fortune to play for a season the boards of that place. Why boys, he can do anything he pleases with his audience: he can make them laugh and cry and laugh again in five minutes. His power was never equaled. Now, mark my word, boys, that young man will live to be the greatest preacher of this or any other age. He will bring more souls to Christ than any man who ever proclaimed the gospel, not excepting the apostle Paul. His name will be known everywhere, and his Sermons will be translated into many languages of the world.⁶

Knowles' prophecy would indeed come true, and his soaring praise of the young minister was not the only positive press Spurgeon enjoyed in those early days. *The Globe* compared him to Whitefield.⁷ *The Glasgow News* called him a genius not to be put down by envious rivals.⁸ But the press wasn't always kind to Spurgeon as the first of his controversial engagements clearly demonstrates.

The Media Controversy

When Spurgeon moved his meetings to Exeter Hall in 1855, biographer Lewis

earnestness, rather than weakening, intensified his qualifications. He was after something beyond himself, beyond the mere appearance of vanquishing a foe, and beyond the awe of men; he was after the glory of God in the defense of the truth." Ibid.

⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography*, vol. 1, *The Early Years, 1834-1859* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2005), 260-61.

⁷ "Since the days of Whitefield—whose honored name seems to be in danger of being thrown into the shade by this new candidate for pulpit honors—so thorough a religious furor has never existed." Ibid., 332.

⁸ "A young man of such energy as Mr. Spurgeon is not to be put down by envious rivals. Like other young preachers, he has his peculiarities; but these are often the indications of a genius which ripens into a brilliant maturity." G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1991), 1:161.

Drummond remarks, “The dam that had held back the waters of belittlement broke, and for the next few years a flood-tide of caustic, cruel criticism all but drowned the twenty-one-year-old.”⁹ Drummond asserts that Spurgeon’s leading the working class over the bridge into “London’s blasé ‘West End’ proved too much for the sophisticated, rather snobbish press.”¹⁰

In his autobiography, Spurgeon quoted *The Ipswich Express*, February 27, 1855 in which the author refers to his preaching as “vulgar and theatrical...an insult to God and man.”¹¹ The majority of his article describes an arrogant Spurgeon instructing the young women in the church not to send him any gifts as he was engaged. Spurgeon wrote to his father to assure him the news was untrue. He said, “Do not be grieved at the slanderous libel in this week’s *express*... of course it is all a lie, without an atom of foundation.”¹² Several letters came in to the paper in defense of Spurgeon and eventually a retraction was produced.

The *Express* of February 27th contained, as usual, a letter from our London correspondent, a gentleman favorably known as a writer on politics and general literature. This letter contained some rather severe criticism on Mr. Spurgeon’s style of preaching, and a line or two respecting a rumor, heard by our correspondent, of some absurd remarks said to have been made on a certain occasion by Mr. Spurgeon previous to preaching. We did not read the letter until it appeared in print. As soon as we saw the paragraph, we blamed ourselves for publishing, as well as our correspondent for forwarding, anything of mere hearsay which could possibly give annoyance to the preacher in question or his friends.¹³

While the paper walked its comments back, the damage had been done and the story circulated through other papers, both in London and elsewhere. The *Essex Standard* on April 18, 1855 termed his preaching “ranting,” and varied their criticism from his

⁹ Lewis A Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1992), 213.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 213.

¹¹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:311.

¹² *Ibid.*, 312.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 313.

discussion of study to his delivery of his study's results.¹⁴ Copying the charge of “ranting” in April of 1855, *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* called him an impudent actor, dealing in “coarse familiarity with holy things.” They claimed, “He is a nine days wonder—a comet that has suddenly shot across the atmosphere. He has gone up like a rocket, and ere long will come down like a stick.”¹⁵

Spurgeon did not openly engage the media over biblical, confessional, or theological grounds, but his ministry as pastor-theologian was under constant scrutiny. His communication of theological principle and precept was deemed “vulgar” and “colloquial,” too common and practical for the media to tolerate.

The Surrey Gardens tragedy. The disapproval of the media reached its peak following the Surrey Gardens fire. The morning after the horrific event brought bitter denouncement from major news outlets. *The Daily Telegraph* eviscerated Spurgeon for attempting to preach as the chaos went on around him, even insinuating that he was more concerned for money than those harmed in the confusion of that night.

This man, in his own opinion, is a righteous Christian; but in Ours, nothing more than a ranting charlatan. We are neither strait-laced nor Sabbatarian in our sentiments; but we would keep apart, widely apart, the theatre and the church;—above all, we would place in the hand of every right-thinking man, a whip to scourge from society the authors of such vile blasphemies as, on Sunday night, above the cries of the dead and the dying, and louder than the wails of misery from the maimed and suffering, resounded from the mouth of Spurgeon in the music-hall of the Surrey Gardens. And lastly, when the mangled corpses had been carried away from the unhallowed and disgraceful scene—when husbands were seeking their wives, and children their mothers in extreme agony and despair—the chink of the money as it fell into the collection-boxes grated harshly, miserably on the ears of

¹⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*: 1:316. The article continued, “His style is that of the vulgar colloquial varied by rant. All the most solemn mysteries of our holy religion are by him rudely, roughly, and impiously handled. Mystery is vulgarized, sanctity profaned, common sense outraged, and decency disgusted. His rantings are interspersed with coarse anecdotes that split the ears of the groundlings; and this is popularity! and this is the ‘religious furor’ of London! And this young divine it is that throws Wesley and Whitefield in the shade! And this is the preaching, and this the theology, that five thousand persons from Sabbath to Sabbath hear, receive, and approve, and—profit by it!” Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 321-22. *The Daily News* additionally called his preaching fanatical pulpit buffoonery. *The Illustrated Times* claimed the only reason for his popularity was curiosity, and that the current would soon turn against him.

those who, we sincerely hope, have by this time conceived for Mr. Spurgeon and his rantings the profoundest contempt.¹⁶

Other papers followed in condemnation, many with similar claims of Spurgeon's greed to receive donations to build a new church building even if such donations be acquired on such a tragic occasion. Biographer and friend to Spurgeon, G. Holden Pike noted, "During the night the wildest rumors were current throughout London."¹⁷ The wild rumors circulating fed the already burning fires of antipathy toward the young Spurgeon, and the papers the next morning had, according to Pike, "misrepresented the facts of the case."¹⁸ Numbers were inflated, insinuating Spurgeon sought fame and fortune with such high attendance. Not all media outlets were harsh toward Spurgeon during the tragedy, however. A Monday evening paper, *The Sun*, diverted responsibility away from Spurgeon and focused on those who incited panic over a fire that never was.

We hardly think anyone can be held responsible for not conjecturing that any even of the lowest roughs and rowdies could be found wicked enough to hazard the lives of so many persons, however willing they might have been to annoy one whom they, of course, judged a fanatical preacher.¹⁹

Simply put, Spurgeon could not be blamed for a tragedy caused by people wishing to discredit him. The general public did not blame Spurgeon for the tragedy and the press eventually exchanged negative evaluations for positive ones. As the media took a more balanced position toward Spurgeon's actions, the attention produced brought even more people to hear him, and his fame exponentially increased. The Media Controversy quieted as the press endorsed the prominent preacher, though their tumultuous relationship would continue throughout his ministry. Spurgeon seldom engaged the media directly during these early days, though numerous others defended him. He only

¹⁶ Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 2:247.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 244.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 248.

occasionally addressed the media's slanderous treatment from the pulpit when they reported wrongly or distorted the truth.²⁰ He did not recoil at the prospect of media disapproval or abuse. Rather, his concern was with the accuracy of his statements regarding the gospel and biblical truth. Into this fray he would step again and again in later years, primarily through the avenue of his own publications.²¹

The Calvinist Controversy

A noteworthy conflict in which Spurgeon often found himself attacked from every direction came over the theological subject of Calvinism. Spurgeon was not enough a Calvinist for Hyper-Calvinists. Indeed, Iain Murray calls Spurgeon's dealings with them "The Lost Controversy" due to the amount of energy he expended in a theological battle often ignored. On the Arminian side of the theological aisle, Spurgeon was too much a Calvinist. Several biographers note the pressure in holding such a tenuous position and attempt revision. Carlile attempts to raise a mediating place for Spurgeon's thought, so as to avoid the "terrible chapters" of Calvin and Luther.²² He posits that Spurgeon found Scripture to be the ultimate concern, not theological systems, and thus Calvinistic thought was a needless focus. Spurgeon was, in Carlile's mind, primarily a practically-minded evangelist, holding to the sovereignty of God in private, but publicly demonstrating the expanse of God's mercy to sinners. Thus, Carlile asserts, "Spurgeon

²⁰ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:302-3. From a sermon preached on January 25, 1857, Spurgeon thundered, "In these days, there is a growing hatred of the pulpit. The pulpit has maintained its ground full many a year, by; partially by its becoming inefficient, it is losing its high position. Through a timid abuse of it, instead of a strong stiff use of the pulpit, the world has come to despise it; and now most certainly we are not a priest-ridden people one-half so much as we are a press-ridden people. By the press we are ridden indeed. *Mercuries, Despatches, Journals, Gazettes, and Magazines* are now the judges of pulpit eloquence and style. They thrust themselves into the censor's seat, and censure those whose office it should rather be to censure them. For my own part, I cheerfully accord to all men the liberty of abusing me; but I must protest against the conduct of at least one Editor, who has misquoted in order to pervert my meaning, and who has done even more than that; he has manufactured a 'quotation' from his own head, which never did occur in my works or words." *Ibid.*, 302.

²¹ See Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 492-96.

²² J.C. Carlile, *C.H. Spurgeon: An Interpretative Biography* (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1934), 143.

made the center and soul of his teaching the love of God, revealed in the mercy of Jesus Christ.”²³ While he rightly asserts the center of Spurgeon’s teaching, he wrongly implies that such a center is thus the sum of his teaching. Patricia Stallings Kruppa also constructed an artificial contradiction for Spurgeon in holding to theological Calvinism while preaching a complete evangel.

Certainly his public utterances on free grace and redemption are at odds with his affirmation that he was a Calvinist, but as we shall see, Spurgeon refused to admit that a contradiction existed. He was held a captive intellectually by the Calvinism he had learned in his youth, but emotionally he rejected the rigid limitations Calvinism imposed upon his evangelism early in his ministry.²⁴

Kruppa thus argues Spurgeon’s Calvinism was little more than sentimental attachment to his youth. She continues, “His theology was at times inconsistent, often oversimplified, and never sophisticated, but it reflected the faith of home, hearth, and heart.”²⁵ She, like Carlile, believes Spurgeon to be a private, even sentimental Calvinist and simultaneously a pragmatic Arminian.

Spurgeon’s explanation of his own experience of Calvinism is thoroughly different than Kruppa and Carlile argue. Spurgeon called Calvinism *the* gospel, separate from all other “gospels,” and believed divergence from it was loss. He explained his Calvinism not in terms of hearth and home, but in biblically-saturated, soul-converting terms. In his journal, dated April 7, 1850 he wrote plainly, “Arminianism does not suit me now.”²⁶ Later, he would explain that he was born “as all of us are by nature,” an

²³ J.C. Carlile, *C.H. Spurgeon: An Interpretative Biography*, 148. Later, he continued, “The doctrine of the Church which Spurgeon held was that of the ecclesia, the ‘called out,’ who were regenerate through faith in Jesus Christ. He had no doctrine of unregenerate membership, nor did he admit that there was any place in Church fellowship for babes unconscious of belief. Through all his history he was keen on preaching individual responsibility. Men were saved or lost according to their relationship to Jesus Christ. The responsibility upon the saved individual led to the doctrine of personal holiness and progressive sanctification. The redeemed were not passive but active agents together with God.” Ibid.

²⁴ Patricia Stallings Kruppa, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon: A Preacher’s Progress” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1968), 39.

²⁵ Ibid., 40.

²⁶ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:125.

Arminian, and his conversion was wrought entirely by God. Working through his conversion experience, he acknowledged the reality of his seeking the Lord because the Lord ultimately sought him first.

Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all; and that He was the Author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession, "I ascribe my change wholly to God."²⁷

His personal experience with conversion, informed by Scripture transformed every aspect of his preaching and teaching. He believed that without Calvinism, there was no true gospel preaching.

I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel, if we do not preach justification by faith, without works; nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel, unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus. Such gospel I abhor.²⁸

Thus, his Calvinism was more than a sentimental attachment to his childhood, or even an interpretation of his regeneration. It was, in fact, the theologically governing principle of all he did.²⁹ Lewis Drummond agrees. He calls Calvinism the core of

²⁷ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:165.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 168.

²⁹ He gloriously continues, "We only use the term 'Calvinism' for shortness. That doctrine which is called 'Calvinism' did not spring from Calvin; we believe that it sprang from the great founder of all truth. Perhaps Calvin himself derived it mainly from the writings of Augustine. Augustine obtained his views, without doubt, through the Spirit of God, from the diligent study of the writings of Paul, and Paul received them of the Holy Ghost, from Jesus Christ the great founder of the Christian dispensation. We use the term then, not because we impute any extraordinary importance to Calvin's having taught these doctrines. We would be just as willing to call them by any other name, if we could find one which would be better understood, and which on the whole would be as consistent with fact. The old truth that Calvin preached, that Augustine preached, is the truth that I must preach to-day, or else be false to my conscience and my God. I cannot shape the truth; I know of no such thing as paring off the rough edges of a doctrine. John Knox's gospel is my gospel. That which thundered through Scotland must thunder through England again." *Ibid.*, 162.

Spurgeon's theology and the grid through which all his beliefs could be viewed.³⁰

Having established the centrality of Calvinism, Spurgeon thus found himself embattled. Hyper-Calvinists attacked him in 1855 through an article pseudonymously contributed to *The Earthen Vessel*, questioning Spurgeon's call to the ministry and position as pastor. Iain Murray summarizes the reasoning for the attack clearly.

Spurgeon's untraditional phraseology, the crowds which followed him, his general invitations and exhortations to all hearers to repent and believe the Gospel, and the 'broadness' of his theology were all grounds for suspicion. He was neither narrow enough nor discriminating enough for his critic, who complained: 'Spurgeon preaches all doctrine and no doctrine; all experience, and therefore no experience.'³¹

The criticism came in response to an article by Charles Waters Banks, treating Spurgeon somewhat favorably. The anonymous author was found out later to be James Wells, a popular Hyper-Calvinist preacher who was known for his fierce "lashing" of Arminians.³² Banks wrote of Spurgeon, "I believe Mr. Spurgeon is as great a lover of free grace and of real Calvinism, as any man."³³ Wells wrote a scathing response to Banks, critical of what he called Spurgeon's advancement of "duty faith." He remarked, "To preach that it is man's duty to believe savingly in Christ is absurd."³⁴ He went on to criticize Spurgeon's evangelism, calling him deceptive, doing whatever it takes to remain popular.

While Spurgeon never directly addressed Wells, he responded from the Metropolitan Tabernacle with a fourfold approach to Scripture. Spurgeon contended that

³⁰ Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 635. Drummond extensively covers the doctrines of grace in Spurgeon's preaching, showing how each fundamentally impacted his ministry. *Ibid.*, 636-50. Others posit particular facets of the doctrines of grace holding sway over the others. See Henry Franklin Colquitt, "The Soteriology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Revealed in His Sermons and Controversial Writings" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1986), 129. Colquitt argues for the doctrine of election as governing of Spurgeon's theology and preaching.

³¹ Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, 46.

³² Iain Hamish Murray, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1995), 43.

³³ *Ibid.*, 46.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

Hyper-Calvinism restricted gospel invitations, failed to treat the word and promises of God as warrants for faith, minimized the place of human responsibility, and denied God's love outside of the elect.³⁵ According to Murray, Spurgeon attacked Hyper-Calvinists and Arminians because he felt their systems were biblically inconsistent and needing correction.³⁶ Being between two opposing lines of thought, he was often assailed, yet he continued to purposefully and openly proclaim a gospel of sovereign grace.

The Rivulet Controversy

In 1855 a small book of hymns was published entitled *Hymns for Heart and Voice, The Rivulet*. The author was a pastor named Thomas Lynch and his selections were what many would call “less evangelical than hymns used by Unitarians.” Many reviews were published, and Spurgeon's was among them.³⁷ While several biographers designate it a minor skirmish, the roots of this conflict bear fruit in the Downgrade Controversy, according to Spurgeon.³⁸ After the book's release, few paid attention to it, until James Grant published a review in *The Morning Advertiser* in the May issue of 1856. His review was scathing and stirred raucous debate over the work. G. Holden Pike, in his biography of Spurgeon, reprinted the review.

It is with regret and pain we are compelled to say that, though the volume in many places displays much fine feeling, there is not, from beginning to end, one particle of vital religion or evangelical piety in it. At least, if there be, we have not been able to discover it. Occasionally—but even that is comparatively seldom—the name of the Savior is introduced; but there is not one solitary recognition of His divinity, of

³⁵ Murray, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism*, 99.

³⁶ Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, 63-66.

³⁷ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:474-81.

³⁸ Spurgeon points to the beginning of the Downgrade Controversy in 1887 as no “new role” of combat against error. Rather, he claims direct correspondence between his position in the Downgrade with his arguments made in the Rivulet Controversy. He says, “Long before *The Sword and the Trowel* appeared with its monthly ‘record of combat with sin and of labor for the Lord,’ its editor had been busily occupied both in battling and building—vigorously combatting error in all its forms, and, at the same time, edifying and establishing in the faith those who had been brought to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.” Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:471. Contrary to Fullerton, who called it, “. . . much hubbub about very little.” W. Y. Fullerton, *C.H. Spurgeon: A Biography* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1920), 291.

His atoning sacrifice, or of His mediatorial office. Neither is the inherent depravity of man, nor the agency of the Spirit in the work of conversion and sanctification, even indirectly recognized from the first to the last page of the volume. Nearly the whole might have been written by a Deist.³⁹

Grant's review became more controversial than the book itself, prompting responses from multiple media outlets like *The Eclectic* which published a piece critical of Grant and his "insolent opposition to all freedom and largeness of thought."⁴⁰ *The Eclectic* additionally produced a protest against Grant's review signed by more than fifteen Nonconformist ministers in an effort to squelch the outcry. Eventually *The Baptist Messenger* joined the debate, critiquing the frenzied push to silence Grant's doctrinal concerns.

We do most deeply deplore the position these fifteen reverend gentlemen have voluntarily and heedlessly taken in this business, inasmuch as we greatly fear it betokens on their part an evident leaning towards a transcendental theology—the blighting influences of which have proved most fatal to many once flourishing churches.⁴¹

Noted Nonconformist John Campbell sided with Grant and others who were critical of Lynch's book of poetry and hymns. He produced seven letters addressed to the "Principles and Professors of Independent and Baptist Colleges of England," contending that there was less evangelical truth in Lynch's work than in hymns used by Unitarians.⁴²

Spurgeon entered the fray through an obscure but regular publication, *The Christian Cabinet*. He spoke favorably of the literary and poetic quality of the book but took issue with its theological substance. For Spurgeon, it had none. He said, "There is nothing distinct in the book but its indistinctness...it is more covertly unsound than openly so."⁴³ He went on to explicitly denounce the book as less than orthodox but

³⁹ Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 2:209.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 211.

⁴³ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:477.

cautioned those contending with him to still respect the book's author. His kindness to Lynch was not unnoticed; Lynch himself responded to Spurgeon's review with gratitude, though not before taking a swipe at his youth.⁴⁴ Spurgeon's assessment of the conflict over Lynch's hymnal was positive. He believed the conflict caused people to return to doctrinal truths from which they had begun to slide away. Thus, another conflict over published theological difference marked the young pastor's ministry. He was only two years into his service at New Park Street when engaged in these disputes, and he already rose above the intensity of the fight to see gains on the side of the truth.

Controversy in the Middle Years

As his popularity grew, so did the attention paid to his differences with theological, academic, and public leadership. The middle years of Spurgeon's ministry were marked by several conflicts, the most significant coming in 1864 over baptismal regeneration. He addressed matters both social and scientific as well, pressing against slavery in 1860 and denouncing Darwin's *Origin of the Species* as early as 1861 in his "Gorilla Lecture."

The Slavery Question

In 1859, during a midweek prayer meeting at New Park Street, a fugitive slave named John Andrew Jackson gave his testimony. He described his suffering and escape in detail for over an hour. Following his testimony, Spurgeon rose to give an impassioned address on slavery.

Slavery is the foulest blot that ever stained a national escutcheon and may have to

⁴⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:481. "This review of Mr. Spurgeon's enjoys the credit with me of being the only thing on his side—that is, against me—that was impertinent, without being malevolent. It evinced far more ability and appreciation than Grant or Campbell had done, and indicated a man whose eyes, if they do not get blinded with the fumes of that strong, but unwholesome, incense, popularity, may glow with a heavenlier brightness than it seems to me they have yet done. Mr. Spurgeon concluded by remarking that 'the old faith must be triumphant', in which I entirely agree with him, doubting only whether he is yet old enough in experience of the world's sorrows and strife to know what the old faith really is." Ibid.

be washed out with blood. America is in many respects a glorious country, but it may be necessary to teach her some wholesome lessons at the point of the bayonet—to carve freedom into her with the bowie-knife or send it home to her heart with revolvers. Better far should it come to this issue, that North and South should be rent asunder, and the States of the union shivered into a thousand fragments, than that slavery should be suffered to continue.⁴⁵

He continued, denouncing American ministers who characterized slavery as only a “peculiar institution” comparing slavery’s peculiarity to the devil’s peculiarity as an angel and hell’s peculiarity as a “hot place.” He finally and boldly refused to fellowship with those who called themselves Christians and practiced slavery.⁴⁶

Spurgeon’s bold statements on slavery were not made in a vacuum, or purely in response to Jackson’s testimony. On the contrary, Spurgeon’s feelings on slavery were clear in his writing and preaching, but American publishers omitted passages critical of slavery.⁴⁷ Because of these omissions, some posited that Spurgeon had a favorable view of slavery. When asked to respond to these accusations, Spurgeon responded soundly. He explained, “I believe slavery to be a crime of crimes, a soul-destroying sin, and an iniquity which cries aloud for vengeance.”⁴⁸ He went on to deny that his publisher had altered anything before sending his messages to America. Dr. Campbell additionally charged him to publish something on the subject and Spurgeon composed what he called a “red-hot letter” to *The Watchman and Reflector*. Therein did he reinforce his position on slavery and detestation of those who practiced it.

I do from my inmost soul detest slavery anywhere and everywhere, and although I commune at the Lord’s table with men of all creeds, yet with a slave-holder I have no fellowship of any sort or kind. Whenever one has called upon me, I have considered it my duty to express my detestation of his wickedness, and would as

⁴⁵ Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 2:324.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ One example from Spurgeon’s preaching came when he noted, “[The] hope of deliverance seemed far away, it was God that gave an Abraham Lincoln, who led the nation onward till ‘Emancipation’ flamed upon its banners.” C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, 1861-1917* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1974), 29:243. Elsewhere Spurgeon is described as a “hell-deserving Englishman” for his views on slavery. “Spurgeon on Slavery,” *The Bossier Banner* (February 24, 1860).

⁴⁸ Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 2:331.

soon think of receiving a murderer into my church, or into any sort of friendship, as a man-stealer.⁴⁹

He explained that while he had not made it a pattern to rebuke Americans in his sermons as his ministry was primarily British in focus, he would intentionally rebuke the sin of man-stealing in the future. Thus, rather than blunting his speech, Spurgeon promised to make it more severe. The response to such a declaration in America was expectedly less than positive. His sermons had been exceedingly popular, but almost completely ceased distribution during the years 1860-1865. In many Southern places, his sermons were gathered and burned.⁵⁰ He pressed on, deeply convicted that one who called himself a Christian could not engage in man-stealing with a clear conscience committed to Christ. The opposition made him more outspoken, not less.⁵¹

The Gorilla Lecture

Charles Darwin released his book *The Origin of the Species* in 1859. It quickly began to influence the scientific community and general public. Spurgeon took issue with Darwin's work, particularly in one 1861 lecture on the book *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa* by Paul B. Du Chaillu. Spurgeon entitled his lecture "The Gorilla and the Land He Inhabits." He delivered the lecture at the Tabernacle before a crowded audience including the author himself. His tone of pastoral concern for the topic is

⁴⁹ Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 331.

⁵⁰ Carlile, *C.H. Spurgeon: An Interpretative Biography*, 161. A representative account of the burning of Spurgeon's sermons is found in "Burning Spurgeon's Sermons," *Burlington Weekly Free Press* (March 30, 1860). In reference to Spurgeon's sermons, one Southerner threatened, "If the Pharisaical author should ever show himself in these parts, we trust that a stout cord may speedily find its way around his eloquent throat." See also "Mr. Spurgeon's Sermons Burned by American Slaveowners," *The Cork Daily Reporter* (April 10, 1860).

⁵¹ Spurgeon's views against slavery extended to the Pastors' College to which a freed slave named Thomas Johnson matriculated in 1876. Johnson and his wife lived with one of the elders of the Metropolitan Tabernacle and studied with the desire to serve as a missionary to Africa. He said, "I can truthfully and gladly say that I had never been treated more kindly or made to feel more at home and more happy than when at the Pastors' College. The President, Rev. C. H. Spurgeon; the Vice-President, Rev. J. A. Spurgeon; the Professors, Revs. George Rogers, David Gracey, and Archibald Fergusson, and all the students, with whom I came in contact, were most brotherly, and ever ready to help me in my educational struggles and answer any questions too hard for me." Thomas L. Johnson, *Twenty-Eight Years a Slave, or, the Story of My Life in Three Continents* (1909; repr., Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2010), 91.

evident immediately in his introduction. He noted, “We want common things treated religiously, and there may be almost as much good achieved by books and lectures on ordinary topics...as by sermons or theological treatises.”⁵² Simply put, he planned to address the book from the perspective of a pastor-theologian, treating common things in a theological manner.

He admits that Du Chaillu wrote in a clear, common manner, that he was an excellent observer and scientist, and that his work would add to both the scientific and religious community. Following a general endorsement, he openly attacked evolutionary theory and Charles Darwin by name. He brought a stuffed gorilla up to the platform from which he spoke and used it in his delivery, saying, “I...believe there is a great gulf fixed between us, so that they who would pass from us to you [the gorilla] cannot; neither can they come to us who would pass from thence.”⁵³ From a denial of evolution’s progression, he attacked evolutionary philosophy through a staunch defense of the authority of Scripture. For Spurgeon, evolutionary philosophy was an outright declaration of war against Scripture. He spoke ferociously against such a position.

It is too hard a thing to believe that God made man in His own image, but, forsooth, it is philosophical to hold that man is made in the image of a brute, and is the offspring of ‘laws of development.’ O infidelity! thou art a hard master, and thy taxes on our faith are far more burdensome than those which Revelation has ever made.⁵⁴

He admitted similarities between primates and men, but illustrated their differences as well, calculatedly expanding the aforementioned gulf of separation between the two. He concluded his lecture with a plea for missionaries to be sent to the African regions where Du Chaillu conducted his research, as they received him warmly and would thus be open to receiving missionaries carrying the gospel.

⁵² Spurgeon *Autobiography*, 1:131.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

The response to his lecture was less than favorable, but Spurgeon boldly responded to the criticisms in person and in print.⁵⁵ He defended both the substance and delivery of the lecture, as there were criticisms that he treated the material in too disrespectful a manner. He clearly replied as pastor-theologian invested in the building of the house of God. That is, his concern is primarily the people under his care, both his congregation and those training to serve other congregations under his instruction. He noted, “This work of my Institution is of God; lectures are a part of the necessary plan, they do good, I have a call to this work, so all this opposition is a spur to increased zeal.”⁵⁶ As in the Slavery Question, the opposition failed to weaken his resolve; it rather reinforced his intention to build the church.

The Baptismal Regeneration Controversy

In 1864, Spurgeon found himself in a controversy unlike any before. The Church of England, the Anglican Church, was divided over the issue of the baptismal regeneration of infants. Fifteen years before Spurgeon spoke on the topic, an Anglican minister suspected of having extreme evangelical beliefs was rejected by church authorities in his request for relocation to a different parish. The minister was George Gorham, and the Bishop of Exeter, Henry Phillpotts, demanded he be examined before

⁵⁵ One commentator coldly remarked, “We are . . . entertained by Mr. Spurgeon’s lecture on the gorilla; but after ages, — according to the development theory, — we shall doubtless have a gorilla lecturing on Mr. Spurgeon.” Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 386-87.

⁵⁶ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:137. He explained that he was primarily concerned for the students under his charge. “I have, in connection with my Church, a College for young ministers, which is a work of faith as to temporals, and a labor of love on my part in the highest sense of the term. There are about 150 young men, who are getting an education with a view, in most cases, to preaching the Word in the streets, villages, and towns of this land. Their studies are such as their capacities can receive, and the ministering brethren are mainly given to the searching of the Word; while reading it in the original is the ambition of each. In the course of instruction there are lectures, delivered by myself, a regular lecturer, and other gentlemen. We have had about twenty lectures on English History. I have given lectures on Sabbath-school teaching, Preaching, Church Discipline, Ethnology, etc. The Rev. George Rogers has lectured on Books and Reading, Habit and Instinct, on Ministerial Prerequisites, and on other matters. Various brethren have taken up other topics; and, having attended all the lectures, I can testify that the best spirit has pervaded all, and each lecturer has labored, not merely to instruct, but to do spiritual good. My present course is upon Natural History. For the lectures already delivered, especially the abused ones, I have had the thanks of the members passed spontaneously and unanimously; and I believe the lectures have been as acceptable to the audience as any which were ever delivered.” *Ibid.*, 136.

his request for transfer be accepted. The examination lasted fifty-two hours, an unusual practice, centered on Gorham's conformity to the prayer book, particularly on the issue of baptismal regeneration.⁵⁷ Gorham rejected the doctrine, for infants could not benefit from baptism except from a separate work of grace through faith. Thus, Bishop Phillpotts refused to transfer Gorham. After appeals, hearings, and extensive arguments lasting over two years, the Judicial Committee of the Church of England ruled in Gorham's favor. They were not convinced that he had contradicted the Church of England so severely as Phillpotts believed.⁵⁸ While the controversy seemed to reach general resolution, the doctrinal contention over baptismal regeneration of infants continued in the Church. The more evangelical Anglican churchmen argued against baptismal regeneration while the so called "High Churchmen" argued for it. The council's ruling created a tentative arrangement wherein each Anglican clergyman would determine for himself which position he would take on the doctrine. On this particular doctrine, the ecclesial air was uniquely charged, and the loudest voice in London added considerable voltage to the discussion.

On June 5, 1864, Spurgeon delivered a message on Mark 16:15-16 entitled, "Baptismal Regeneration." He expected that the sermon would cause great damage relationally and that the sales of his sermons would drop significantly.⁵⁹ He did indeed suffer relational fall out, but his sermon sales only increased.⁶⁰ Spurgeon's dispute in the message was against the doctrine itself, High Church Anglicans who held to it, and

⁵⁷ Desmond Bowen, *The Idea of the Victorian Church* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1968), 97.

⁵⁸ Owen Chadwick, *An Ecclesiastical History of England: The Victorian Church* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1966), 261.

⁵⁹ Charles Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography*, vol. 2, *The Full Harvest 1860-1892*, rev. ed. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2006), 55.

⁶⁰ Iain Murray notes, "Soon, 180,000 copies of the sermon were in print (the figure increasing to 350,000)." Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, 128.

Evangelical Anglicans who disagreed with the doctrine but continued to use the Prayer Book. He aggressively asserted early in the message that the doctrine of the Church of England on baptismal regeneration is against his focal text in Mark's gospel. He then asserted that his purpose in the message was to contend against such a belief with the clear assertion, "Baptism without faith saves no one."⁶¹ After quoting directly from the Prayer Book regarding procedural instructions for infant baptism, he condemned the practice as against Scripture, and instrumental in damning souls to hell.

Following his condemnation of the doctrine, he addressed so called "Evangelical Anglicans" who held to the Prayer Book but denied baptismal regeneration. While he agreed with their view, he felt their continuance in a denomination with which they disagreed on such a fundamental point was dishonest and ultimately immoral.⁶² Turning to address the High Church Anglicans who taught in accordance with their Prayer Book, he commended their consistency while condemning their doctrine. He said, "Let us oppose their teaching by all Scriptural and intelligent means but let us respect their courage in plainly giving us their views. I hate their doctrine, but I love their honesty."⁶³

He continued on, dismantling baptismal regeneration as out of character with Christ's teaching, contrary to fact, unable to actually save, ultimately immoral, deceptive, and filled with the influence of "popery."⁶⁴ He noted the inseparable connection of salvation to faith alone, a faith impossible for the infant, and the textual connection of

⁶¹ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 10:315.

⁶² Spurgeon notes, "'But,' I hear many good people exclaim, 'there are many good clergymen in the Church who do not believe in baptismal regeneration.' To this my answer is prompt. Why then do they belong to a Church which teaches that doctrine in the plainest terms? I am told that many in the Church of England preach against her own teaching. I know they do, and herein I rejoice in their enlightenment, but I question, gravely question their morality. To take oath that I sincerely assent and consent to a doctrine which I do not believe, would to my conscience appear little short of perjury, if not absolute downright perjury; but those who do so must be judged by their own Lord." *Ibid.*, 316.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 317.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 317-21.

baptism with faith, thereby nullifying the need for infant baptism altogether. As his message drew to a close, he pressed the congregation as to the urgency of the hour. For Spurgeon, doctrinal error of this kind would only continue and the charge of the church was to fight.

We have been cultivating friendship with those who are either unscriptural in creed or else dishonest, who either believe baptismal regeneration, or profess that they do, and swear before God that they do when they do not. The time is come when there shall be no more truce or parley between God's servants and time-servers. The time is come when those who follow God must follow God, and those who try to trim and dress themselves and find out a way which is pleasing to the flesh and gentle to carnal desires, must go their way.⁶⁵

Spurgeon's sermon was theologically clear. It was so clear that the fallout from his address was almost immediate.

The High Churchmen understandably defended baptismal regeneration through multiple pamphlets released with such titles as, "Exposure of the Fallacies in Mr. Spurgeon's Sermons," "The Evil-Speaking and Ignorance of Mr. C.H. Spurgeon," and "What Is to Be Done with This Spurgeon?" The Evangelical Anglican response was equally clear, for they largely agreed with Spurgeon's doctrine. The message so precisely delivered called their integrity into question; thus their response came from a position of betrayal. Many responses from Evangelical Anglicans were charitable. The concern was the delivery rather than the content. They thought Spurgeon too severe. Others, however, were equally severe in their response. Rev. W. Goode responded in a pamphlet on Spurgeon's sermons with particular vitriol.

As to that young minister who is now raving against the Evangelical clergy at this point, it is to be regretted that so much notice has been taken of his railings. He is to be pitied, because his entire want of acquaintance with theological literature leaves him utterly unfit for the determination of such a question, which is a question not of mere doctrine, but of what may be called historical theology... To hold a controversy with him upon the subject would be to as little purpose as to attempt to hold a logically-constructed argument with a child unacquainted with logical terms.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 10:328.

⁶⁶ William Goode, *The Dean of Ripon's Letter on Mr. Spurgeon's Sermons* (London: J. Paul,

Spurgeon's corresponding answer to his critics was sermonic. Three weeks following the initial sermon, Spurgeon preached two sermons on the subject — "Children Brought to Christ and Not to the Font," and "Thus Saith the Lord, or The Book of Common Prayer Weighed in the Balances of the Sanctuary." He passionately taught against Anglican doctrine using the text of Scripture and pressed his case with intensity. Categorically, the Baptismal Regeneration Controversy was multifaceted in nature. Here, Nettles categories emerge clearly. He argued that the Church of England was ignoring the text of Scripture, and that others who claimed to uphold the text of Scripture were immediately hypocritical in their religious commitment, ultimately lacking Christian morality. Spurgeon certainly did not enjoy the controversy but he ultimately felt it a necessary mantle to take up in the defense of the truth of Scripture.⁶⁷

Controversy in the Later Years

Indeed, the previous episodes of conflict in Spurgeon's ministry established a pattern of polemic interaction to which he returned in the Downgrade Controversy. The aim of such a lengthy examination of Spurgeon's engagement in conflict and controversy is to show that the Downgrade was not an anomaly in an otherwise tranquil pastorate. Spurgeon, as Nettles demonstrates clearly, addressed doctrinal falsehood, confessional hypocrisy, and errant Christian publication throughout the entire course of his ministry.

In the later years, controversy arose related to the denomination with which he was affiliated. Some believe a minor skirmish within the Baptist Union involving the Baptist Missionary Society paved the way for the Downgrade Controversy toward the end of his ministry.⁶⁸

1864), 6.

⁶⁷ Spurgeon still saw himself as on the right side of the conflict, whether victory could be declared or not. Kruppa notes Spurgeon had an old baptismal font installed in his garden as a birdbath, and referred to it as "The Spoils of War." Kruppa, "Preacher's Progress," 231.

⁶⁸ Larry Michael notes, "From 1863-1866 there was an ongoing debate between Charles Spurgeon and the Baptist Missionary Society. It was a skirmish that in some ways foreshadowed

The Baptist Missionary Society

In an ongoing debate from 1863-1866, Spurgeon engaged the Baptist Union regarding particular practices. At that time, the denomination boasted 2,400 churches with over 250,000 members. Even with such a large constituency, they were forced to curtail missionary endeavors due to financial constraints. Some within the denomination called for help, arguing that Spurgeon alone stood to carry the standard of the missionary task.⁶⁹ The Society sought to engage in fundraising efforts with which Spurgeon vehemently disagreed. He adhered to the “faith principle” as the primary means of raising funds, whereas the Society raised funds through voluntary subscription.⁷⁰ In addition, he believed that churches, rather than a society (denomination) should send missionaries, and he believed the basis of membership in the Union was financial rather than spiritual.⁷¹ After much deliberation, the denomination altered the qualifications for ministry to read, “all persons concurring in the religious principles and objects of the Society.”⁷² Though it was a flimsy response, Spurgeon’s concerns were “addressed.” It

Spurgeon’s position in the Downgrade Controversy years later.” Larry James Michael, “The Effects of Controversy on the Evangelistic Ministry of C.H. Spurgeon” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988), 188. See also Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 665.

⁶⁹ Denominational leaders wrote, “There are voices in our midst which would ring through the land, but which are silent except to their own congregations. There are men whom we should all gladly follow, but they carry no standard, and utter no call. Almost the only exception to this statement is Mr. Spurgeon.” Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 3:137-38.

⁷⁰ Spurgeon explained, “We take our stand on the supernatural. We are to depend for our success on Him who has bidden us to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” *Ibid.*, 83.

⁷¹ Brian Stanley, “C. H. Spurgeon and the Baptist Missionary Society 1863–1866,” *Baptist Quarterly* 29, no. 7 (January 1, 1982): 319–28. Spurgeon sharply remarked, “The devil himself might be a member on such terms.” *Ibid.*, 321-22.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 322. Spurgeon didn’t feel the adjustments made by the denomination were adequate. He argued that membership in the denomination had to be on theological grounds. “To us to be right is to be important, and to be true is to be necessary. Let it only be shown that a thing is wrong and unscriptural, and in an assembly of Baptists we never ask the question whether we shall keep it any longer. If it be wrong, to the winds with it. When I joined this denomination, I was enchanted with that which seemed to be written on the banner. We will have nothing but what we find in Scripture. We will not even have infant baptism, because we think it merely a tradition, and we will order our church government on Scriptural principles. Now, it has seemed to us that an association of good men working out God’s purposes was a noble idea, but indeed the outgrowth of the idea of a Church, and we have therefore never said a word against it, but have, on the other hand, fondly cherished the hope that we might see such an association. We have not believed in an association composed of ten-and-sixpences; and we have always said piety is an essential, and the profession of that piety before men. We have always thought that any connection with the

seemed as though the tempest had quieted, but a storm was gathering on the horizon that would dwarf concerns over membership and funding.

The Downgrade Controversy

The Metropolitan Tabernacle was a cooperating member of the Baptist Union until October 28, 1887 when C.H. Spurgeon resigned from the Union over what he believed to be a substantial “Downgrade” from historic Christianity. The controversy developed from his interactions in the 1860s and matured into a conflict worthy of his removal of the Metropolitan Tabernacle from the denomination. Several factors contributed to the decision.

Contributing Factors. Two primary historical factors influenced the Downgrade controversy. First, the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* in 1859 began an avalanche of evolutionary thought descending upon the church, and Spurgeon sought to fight back. His most famous advance against Darwinism came in the aforementioned “The Gorilla Lecture,” delivered October 1, 1861. The fight against Darwinism would never go away and the cultural propensity toward naturalistic thought continued to seep into the church to Spurgeon’s dismay. Lewis Drummond summarized the effect Darwinism had upon theological communities, showing that Darwinism had led to philosophical empiricism.

A whole developmental, evolutionary theory began to take such a hold on the mindset of many Victorians that it resulted in a humanistic approach to all reality.

world, merely on account of ten-and-sixpences, or even thousands of pounds, was almost as great an evil as uniting the Church with the State, which contains so many worldly elements. And therefore, we have not spoken about words and phraseologies, but about what is to us a very solemn principle. We are prepared, as Christian men, to maintain in its fullest strength this society, but we are not prepared to work with any society which either ignores the Churches or does not distinctly make itself a Christian society by having no members but those who profess to be Christians. We don’t believe we could expect to have God’s blessing unless we purge out the old leaven.” Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 3:84. In this response, the real issue at stake for Spurgeon was the boundaries of membership in the Missionary Society. For him, evangelical, confessional identity was essential, but the denomination had already begun to remove “evangelical” language from their documents. In 1873 Spurgeon’s suspicions were confirmed as they removed the phrase “evangelical sentiments” from their constitution. See Michael, “The Effects of Controversy on the Evangelistic Ministry of C.H. Spurgeon,” 195.

Moreover, as is so often the case, that general humanistic atmosphere soon infiltrated theological circles. It began to manifest itself as an emphasis on human development and far less upon a God-centered approach to the realities of life as had prevailed for centuries. This lent itself to the exultation of reason and appealed very much to the typical philosophical empiricism that has characterized the intellectual circles of Britain for many years. Coupled with continental rationalism as typified in thinkers like Kant and Hegel, the stage began to be set for a serious liberalizing of traditional theology.⁷³

Spurgeon's concern was thus the aggressiveness with which Darwinism and natural selection threatened theological teaching during the Victorian era.⁷⁴ Indeed, by 1884, the president of the Union, Richard Glover, was characterized as one unaware "that you could not be friends at once with Darwin and St. John."⁷⁵ As Darwin's influence spread throughout Victorian England, Spurgeon's attack shifted to address the philosophical empiricism that came therefrom.

Consequently, a second factor to influence the Downgrade was the rise of Higher Criticism. In 1878 Julius Wellhausen published *Geschichte Israels*, reconsidering the authorship and authority of the Torah. Wellhausen constructed the documentary hypothesis, which hypothesizes a fourfold origin for the Pentateuch. This theory stood in contrast to the conviction of traditional biblical scholars and theologians that Moses was the inspired author of the Pentateuch. Advocates of the documentary hypothesis not only doubted its authorship, but also its inherent unity. The Baptist Union initially fought against Higher criticism, but their tenacity waned as time went on. John Clifford, a prominent leader in the Baptist Union, eventually adopted the "New Thought" toward biblical authorship. In his ironically titled book, *The Inspiration and Authority of the*

⁷³ Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 661.

⁷⁴ Albert Merideth notes, "In a mere decade Darwin's teachings had been generally accepted, if not by the majority of laymen, then by those who counted in the scientific world." Albert R. Merideth, "The Social and Political Views of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 1834-1892" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1973), 196. Merideth summarizes Darwin's intention by claiming light would be thrown on the origin of man and his history. See also Robert M. Young, "The Impact of Darwin on Conventional Thought," in *The Victorian Crisis of Faith*, ed. Anthony Symondson (London: The Camelot Press, 1970), 13-35.

⁷⁵ Payne Ernest, *The Baptist Union: A Short History* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press Limited, 1958), 128.

Bible, he flatly denied biblical inerrancy: “It is not God's way to give us an absolutely inerrant Bible, and he has not done it.”⁷⁶ Clifford even advanced an evolutionary approach to the study of Scripture itself. He claimed evolution was responsible for the construction of Scripture, for David’s Bible wasn’t as complete as that of Malachi, etc. Paul knew more Scripture than Moses; thus, “evolution is in the Bible as blood is in the race of man.”⁷⁷

Clifford wasn’t alone in his acceptance of higher criticism, however. Higher Criticism began to gain substantial ground in Spurgeon’s circles. At Lancashire Congregational College, a considerable controversy arose over the inspiration of Scripture, but both professors who denied the doctrine quietly retired. The Bishop of Natal was removed from his position in 1862 for publishing a paper casting doubt on the authenticity of the Pentateuch. When he arrived later in England, his deposition was not upheld. W. Robertson Smith was dismissed from Aberdeen College in 1881 for his views regarding Higher Criticism but was given a professorship at Cambridge and his views were not characterized as problematic. Even the *British Weekly*, a Nonconformist paper, began to take a Higher Critical approach to Scripture. Iain Murray thus notes, “By the 1880’s, the new school was dominant in Congregationalism.”⁷⁸ Spurgeon’s suspicions grew from the initial concerns over the Missionary Society in 1863 to doctrinal concerns within the Union itself. With the water of Higher Criticism continually crashing on the shore of orthodoxy, Spurgeon prepared to stand against the tide.

Into the Fray. The wave of the Downgrade didn’t crest until 1887, but Spurgeon’s feet were in the water in early 1883. In *The Sword and Trowel*, he gave a

⁷⁶ John Clifford, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1899), 49.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁷⁸ Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, 142.

preview to the heart of the conflict.

Truths once regarded as fundamental, are either denied, or else turned inside out till nothing of their essence remains. Holy Scripture is no longer admitted to be the infallible record of revelation; but is made to be a door-mat for “thought” to wipe its shoes upon.⁷⁹

When in 1883 a Unitarian minister spoke at the annual meeting, many of Spurgeon’s early suspicions were confirmed. Later that year, he gave warning of his possible exit from the denomination.

This much is very clear to me, —there is a point beyond which association may not be carried, lest it becomes a confederacy in disloyalty. This point can be speedily reached, if it be not felt by all that the unwritten law of the Baptist Union takes it for granted that its members adhere to those grand evangelical truths which are the common heritage of the Church. We cannot remain in union on any other basis. Creeds are of little use as bonds; for men have learned to subscribe to words and to interpret them in their own sense; but there can be no real union among Baptists unless in heart and soul we all cling to the Lord Jesus as our God, our Sacrifice, and our Exemplar. We must be one in hearty love to the gospel of his grace, or our unity will be of little worth.⁸⁰

Ernest Payne, Baptist historian and later general secretary of the Baptist Union, contended that Spurgeon was particularly concerned with younger ministers who held contrary views while sitting on the Baptist Union Council.⁸¹ Specifically, the views in question were those contrary to Calvinism, the substitutionary nature of the atonement, and the inspiration of Scripture. The direction of the Union, if determined by leadership of this ilk, would bring the denomination to theological ruin. Thus, his concept of unity within the denomination was inseparably connected to doctrine. If there was no agreement over truth, there would be no cooperation in error.

The Downgrade articles. While Spurgeon evidenced his concern in articles

⁷⁹ Spurgeon, *The Sword and The Trowel*, January 1883, preface.

⁸⁰ Spurgeon, “Practical Discourse,” *The Sword and the Trowel*, November 1883, 607.

⁸¹ Payne notes, “Spurgeon was gravely troubled at the growing departure from the traditional doctrines of Calvinism, particularly those relating to eternal punishment and the substitutionary nature of the Atonement. Nor was he ready to countenance any reformulation of the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible.” Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 129-30.

and personal correspondence, until 1887 he maintained a measured disdain for the Union's theological degeneration. The first public awareness of the controversy soon to be known as "The Downgrade" came as a result of articles published in the March issue of *The Sword and Trowel* magazine. Spurgeon himself laid down the gauntlet in the preface of the issue, naming the controversy and setting its terms.

During the past year we have often had to look down from the royal road of the truth upon those craggy paths which others have chosen, which we fear will lead them to destruction. We have had enough of *The Down-Grade* for ourselves when we have looked down upon it. What havoc false doctrine is making no tongue can tell.⁸²

His aim was to use the magazine to engage the people under his influence, demonstrate to them the conflict undertaken, and bid them follow him in truth. He was not alone in this endeavor. The first three articles addressing the Downgrade are attributed to Robert Shindler, pastor of the Baptist Church at Addlestone.⁸³ Spurgeon called attention to his arguments in a footnote, saying, "Earnest attention is requested for this paper. There is need of such a warning as this history affords. We are going downhill at break-neck speed."⁸⁴ With Spurgeon's endorsement, the articles resounded through London. In the March issue, Shindler related the Act of Uniformity of 1662, which expelled Puritan ministers from their pulpits, to the larger "Down-grade" in theology among English churches. Arminianism took over for Calvinistic theology in the Church of England, and thus began the slide.

Those who turned from Calvinism may not have dreamed of denying the proper deity of the son of God, renouncing faith in his atoning death and justifying righteousness, and denouncing the doctrine of human depravity, the need of Divine renewal, and the necessity of the Holy Spirit's gracious work, in order that men might become new creatures; but dreaming or not dreaming, this result became a reality.⁸⁵

⁸² Spurgeon, *The Sword and The Trowel*, March 1887, preface.

⁸³ Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History*, 131. See also Carlile, *C.H. Spurgeon*, 245.

⁸⁴ Spurgeon, "The Down Grade," *The Sword and The Trowel*, March 1887, 122.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

His April article rang similar bells, saying, “Arminianism, which is only Pelagianism under another name, had, to a large extent, eaten out the life of the Church of England, and Arianism followed to further complete the destruction.”⁸⁶ Shindler’s trajectory began with a denial of Calvinistic theology leading to Arianism and Socinianism. Spurgeon clarified his Calvinistic commitment in an accompanying April article, saying, “. . .we believe that Calvinism has in it a conservative force which helps to hold men to vital truth, and therefore we are sorry to see any quitting it who have once accepted it.”⁸⁷

Shindler continued to advance his argument in June of 1887, turning his focus to biblical inspiration. He wrote an article highlighting five professors from Andover Theological Seminary who had been dismissed on charges of deviating from the doctrinal position of the school. Shindler argued that their points of divergence were the inspiration of Scripture, the person of Christ, and the final destiny of those who had not received Christ.⁸⁸

Spurgeon himself entered the discussion in August of 1887 in an article entitled, “Another Word Concerning the Downgrade.” He attacked the representatives of the “Broad School,” charging them with heresy, and refusing their fellowship.

A new religion has been initiated, which is no more Christianity than chalk is cheese; and this religion, being destitute of moral honesty, palms itself off as the old faith with slight improvements, and on this plea usurps pulpits which were erected for gospel preaching. The Atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Spirit is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into fiction, and the resurrection into a myth, and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them brethren, and maintain a confederacy with them.⁸⁹

The article continued, arguing those holding to “new thought” were creating

⁸⁶ Spurgeon, “The Down Grade: Second Article,” *The Sword and The Trowel*, April 1887, 166.

⁸⁷ Spurgeon, “Notes,” *The Sword and The Trowel*, April 1887, 195.

⁸⁸ Spurgeon, “Andover Theology,” *The Sword and The Trowel*, June 1887, 275-78.

⁸⁹ Spurgeon, “Another Word Concerning The Down-Grade,” *The Sword and The Trowel*, August 1887, 397.

infidels, destroying churches, and stabbing at faith. They had turned aside to another gospel, thus making fraternity impossible.

By August of 1887, the controversy was gathering steam and critics began to respond. Some claimed Spurgeon was merely crying wolf. Others asked for names of heretical ministers to be publicly listed, claiming Spurgeon would otherwise be bearing false witness against his neighbors. Spurgeon marshalled his defense in an article entitled, “Our Reply to Sundry Critics and Enquirers.” He responded to his critics forcefully with a clear thesis: no one could disagree that prayer meetings were devalued, ministers frequented theaters, Broad School newspapers disrespected Scripture, and sound doctrine was noticeably lacking. Additionally, those who argued that Spurgeon had acted hastily in his Union critique received a swift rebuttal. He argued, “Let no man dream...that we have written in hot haste: we have waited long, perhaps too long, and have been slow to speak.”⁹⁰ Finally, he assured readers that the matters receiving his critique were weighty, eternal, and clear.

A chasm is opening between the men who believe their Bibles and the men who are prepared for an advance upon Scripture. Inspiration and speculation cannot long abide in peace. Compromise there can be none. We cannot hold the inspiration of the Word, and yet reject it; we cannot believe in the atonement and deny it; we cannot hold the doctrine of the fall and yet talk of the evolution of spiritual life from human nature; we cannot recognize the punishment of the impenitent and yet indulge the “larger hope.” One way or the other must go. Decision is the virtue of the hour.⁹¹

In October of 1887, Spurgeon produced a third Downgrade article expanding upon his concerns for the denomination, explicitly answering the charge that he was merely “crying wolf.” He answered that packs of wolves were so loudly howling that, “it would be superfluous for us to shout at all if a wretched indifferentism had not brought

⁹⁰ Spurgeon, “Our Reply to Sundry Critics and Enquirers,” *The Sword and The Trowel*, September 1887, 463.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 465.

deep slumber upon those who ought to guard the flocks.”⁹² The ministers of the Union had been corrupted by false teaching, and thus the sheep were at risk from those tasked with protecting them. The article also revealed Spurgeon’s antipathy toward naming names, as he had been prodded to do. He takes pains to avoid naming specific ministers, so as to not “break the seal of confidential correspondence, or to reveal private conversations.”⁹³

Withdrawal and Censure. The autumn meeting of the Baptist Union failed to produce any action against the error about which Spurgeon had been speaking all year. He concluded that there was therefore no hope of changing the course of the denomination from within, and thus he wrote to Booth again, this time in withdrawal from the Union.⁹⁴ Booth responded with an attitude of surprise, as though such a step was unexpected, adding that Spurgeon had “wounded the hearts of some—of many—who honor and love you...and whose counsel would have led you to a different result.”⁹⁵ In contrast, the deacons and elders of the Metropolitan Tabernacle responded in support.

Resolved, that we, the deacons’ and elders of the church, worshipping in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, hereby tender to our beloved Pastor, C. H. Spurgeon; our deep sympathy with him in the circumstances that have led to His withdrawal from the Baptist Union. And we heartily concur in our sincere appreciation of the steadfast zeal with which he maintains the doctrines of the gospel of our Lord Jesus

⁹² Spurgeon, “The Case Proved,” *The Sword and The Trowel*, October 1887, 511.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 510. The correspondence to which Spurgeon referred was with members of churches in the Union with questionable leadership as well as with S.H. Booth, Secretary of the Baptist Union. Spurgeon brought his concerns to Booth about ministers within the Baptist Union, and Booth responded with his own stories of concern. While Booth cowardly hesitated to come forward in support of Spurgeon’s concerns, his affirmation of the accounts of error was evidence enough. See Fullerton, *C.H. Spurgeon*, 315.

⁹⁴ Pike presents Spurgeon’s letter in full. “Dear Friend, —I beg to intimate to you, as the secretary of the Baptist Union, that I must withdraw from that society. I do this with the utmost regret; but I have no choice. The reasons are set forth in *The Sword and the Trowel* for November, and I trust you will excuse my repeating them here. I beg you not to send anyone to me to ask for reconsideration. I fear I have considered too long already; certainly, every hour of the day impresses upon me the conviction that I am moving none too soon. I wish also to add that no personal pique or ill-will has in the least degree operated upon me. I have personally received more respect than I desired. It is on the highest ground alone that I take this step, and you know that I have long delayed it because I hoped for better things.” Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 4:287.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Christ in their inspired and apostolic simplicity.⁹⁶

Some within the Baptist Union urged Spurgeon to remain. While in Mentone, France to recover his health, students from the Pastors' College encouraged him to stay in the Union, while agreeing with his decision to leave. The current president of the Union, James Culross, also urged him to reconsider, but Spurgeon would not. Culross pressed for names to be produced as evidence of the charges of heresy, but Spurgeon correspondingly refused. When asked about his correspondence with Spurgeon on these matters, Booth cowardly eluded incrimination by claiming he had no knowledge that conversations with Spurgeon would produce charges against other ministers.⁹⁷ On January 13, 1888 Spurgeon was back in London and met with the Union's representatives, adamantly refusing to withdraw his resignation. At an impasse, the Union Council met on January 18 and voted to accept Spurgeon's resignation and simultaneously censure him. The resolution of censure read:

That the council recognizes the gravity of the charges which Mr. Spurgeon has brought against the Union previous to and since his withdrawal. It considers that the public and general manner in which they have been made reflects on the whole body, and exposes to suspicion brethren who love the truth as dearly as he does. And as Mr. Spurgeon declines to give the names of those to whom he intended them to apply, and the evidence supporting them, those charges, in the judgment of the Council, ought not to have been made.⁹⁸

Spurgeon responded quickly in *The Sword and Trowel* in an article entitled "The Baptist Union Censure." While the action taken by the Union Council was not a formal censure, Spurgeon reaffirmed commitment to his protest, saying, "I shall not cease to expose doctrinal declension wherever I see it."⁹⁹ The Council again met on February 21, 1888 advancing a statement of faith for the Union. While it was an acceptable

⁹⁶ Spurgeon, "Notes," *The Sword and The Trowel*, December 1887, 641.

⁹⁷ Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 697.

⁹⁸ James Marchant, *Dr. John Clifford, C.H., Life, Letters and Reminiscences* (London: Cassell and Company, 1924), 160.

⁹⁹ Spurgeon, "The Baptist Union Censure," *The Sword and The Trowel*, February 1888, 83.

improvement over the current standards of denominational admission, the preamble of John Clifford changed the character of the document completely. He noted that the doctrinal beliefs must be left up to the churches and the Union had no authority to formulate statements of faith. The Council voted to accept the statement, but Spurgeon rejected the effort. The split was now permanent. Months before the Council met, Spurgeon advanced a more developed confession for his Pastors' College to fence in right doctrine and eighty students defected. Later that year, the Pastors' College was reformed with a new creed and name: *The Pastors' College Evangelical Association*. The Downgrade had even drawn astray his own students. Looking to the effects of the Downgrade, heartbroken resolve marks Spurgeon's actions.

Effects of the Downgrade. The controversy took a considerable toll on Spurgeon and his ministry. He maintained his resolve until his death but suffered greatly. His wife believed him to be on the right side of the conflict, lauding his resolve in comparison to Martin Luther.¹⁰⁰ Spurgeon himself made the connection to Luther and the Reformation during the Downgrade. Critics approached Spurgeon and chided him for not seeking the dissenters out in order to pray with them according to Matthew 18. Spurgeon, in a letter, mockingly responded, "Luther was very wrong to nail up his theses on the church door; he should have seen the Pope and prayed with him!"¹⁰¹ Even Lutheran resolve could not shield him from the heartbreak of the conflict. Suzannah called it "the deepest grief of his life," even claiming later that the fight "had cost him his life."¹⁰² Thomas Spurgeon agreed with his mother's assessment of the cost of the controversy on his father. He once remarked to Archibald Brown, "The Baptist Union almost killed my

¹⁰⁰ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:470.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 471.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 469-70.

father.” Brown retorted, “Yes, and your father almost killed The Baptist Union.”¹⁰³ The grief of the conflict itself caused him considerable stress, and the defection of the men trained in his Pastors’ College deeply saddened him.

An assessment of the effects of the Downgrade on the ministry efforts of Spurgeon and the Metropolitan Tabernacle in this work cannot be exhaustive, but several positive and negative outcomes are helpfully noted. Positively, Suzannah noted that many who had begun the theological slide characterized in the Downgrade were brought back to the “Up-line.”¹⁰⁴ That is, the Downgrade brought theological clarity enough that those blindly following false doctrine were corrected in their erroneous thinking. Additionally, doctrine became the topic of pulpits which had been lacking for some time.

Larry Michael clearly explains the negative effects of the Downgrade on the Spurgeon’s ministry, particularly in his evangelistic endeavors. He presents data on all those baptized and added as members of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, noting a decline during the years of the Downgrade. The high mark for baptisms and membership growth was in 1874, when 511 people were baptized, and 509 new members added. During the Downgrade, numbers dropped measurably. In 1888, at the height of the controversy, only 218 were baptized and 307 added. Michael believes the controversy served as a detraction from previously zealous evangelistic efforts.¹⁰⁵ Michael also believes that Spurgeon’s preaching took a turn from evangelism to polemics related to the Downgrade, focusing on doctrine.¹⁰⁶ Aforementioned negative effects of the Downgrade are obvious,

¹⁰³ Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 719.

¹⁰⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:470. See also Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 713-16. Drummond concludes that Spurgeon was ultimately vindicated in the Downgrade, and the Baptist Union began a slide that continued into the 1970’s.

¹⁰⁵ Michael, “The Effects of Controversy on the Evangelistic Ministry of C.H. Spurgeon,” 265-66. Michael believes one of the causes of waning evangelistic efforts was also the failing health of Spurgeon brought to light by the controversy itself. Simply put, Michael believes the stress of the controversy fed his failing condition, sapping his energy and weakening his resolve.

¹⁰⁶ Michael, “The Effects of Controversy on the Evangelistic Ministry of C.H. Spurgeon,” 268.

ranging from Spurgeon's personal suffering to broken relationships with those in and outside of the Union. The damage caused by the conflict, while readily observable, does not imply that the fight was unnecessary or without value. On the contrary, Spurgeon acted as he did because he believed it was consistent with Scripture. Such a controversial action revealed a denomination not nearly as committed to the authority of Scripture as he. The controversy was extensive, and Spurgeon demonstrated his commitment to truth in the midst of the struggle.

Dascal's Characteristics and the Downgrade

In a previous chapter, attention was paid to the characteristics of controversy posited by Marcelo Dascal and the connection between those characteristics and the Downgrade controversy itself. The current work now turns to this important connection.

Dascal's Characteristics

First, Dascal shows that controversies do not remain limited to the original demands that prompt them.¹⁰⁷ That is, controversies naturally develop and "evolve" into more than the initial conflict that began them. This was certainly true in the Downgrade Controversy. What began as concern over the influence of Darwinism and Higher Criticism developed into pointed objection against the abandonment of core Christian doctrines, and the lack of moral integrity of Christian ministers.

Second, Dascal notes that controversies involve the questioning of each opponents' factual, methodological, and conceptual presuppositions.¹⁰⁸ The credibility of each contender's methodology is often questioned during controversy, with precision as a major aim. The Downgrade Controversy contained a significant degree of questioning

¹⁰⁷ Marcelo Dascal, "Epistemology, Controversies, and Pragmatics," *Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy* 10 (2000): 169.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

from both sides of the conflict. Spurgeon questioned the Union Council regarding the necessity of holding to a particular creed, and the Council demanded proof that their ministers were erring in their doctrine.¹⁰⁹ Precision was sought but not achieved as both sides were firmly entrenched in their positions.

A third common characteristic of controversies is what Dascal calls the hermeneutic component. He notes, “The question of the correct interpretation of data, of language, of theories, of methods, and of the *status quaestionis* [the state of the investigation], arises again and again throughout a controversy.”¹¹⁰ Dascal explains that commonly those in controversy charge each other with misrepresentation, of using unclear language, of not properly answering objections, and of not addressing the “true problem” at stake. This, he notes, comes from a double commitment of controversialists. First, they intend to defend their own theories and second, they intend to criticize the theories of their opponents. Spurgeon’s interpretation of the data provided him by Booth and others was that theological ruin was an inevitable end of the Union unless the slide was stopped. The next chapter demonstrates Spurgeon’s controversialist strategy to defend his position on the issues at stake: the inspiration and authority of Scripture and the centrality of the substitutionary atonement of Christ. He then sought to attack the position of those who held a differing view of these issues, or worse, those who did not believe the issues were worth the controversy.

Dascal describes the fourth characteristic of openness as the most important. The openness of a controversy comes from dynamic discussion, methodological questioning, and hermeneutic principles. All the divergences in a controversy cannot be simultaneously accounted, and thus clean resolution is often impossible. The Downgrade was indeed an open controversy. The conflict was about much more than one issue and

¹⁰⁹ Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 695-99.

¹¹⁰ Dascal, “Epistemology, Controversies, and Pragmatics,” 171.

multiple divergences occurred as it advanced in time. In the beginning of the controversy, the Downgrade was characterized by Shindler in *The Sword and Trowel* as a shift from Calvinistic principles. By the end of the fight, commitment to the atonement and the inspiration of Scripture was in question for dissenters in the Union.

The fifth characteristic Dascal notes is closure. Controversies clarify problems, examine methodological difficulties, interpret data, and produce understanding, but as a rule, they cannot be resolved. Controversies are too complex and involved to be closed easily. Indeed, the Downgrade was not closed or resolved. Spurgeon's death brought an end to the conflict, not a resolution.

Finally, Dascal clarifies that while controversies are not resolved as much as dissolved, they do not possess an "anything goes" quality as disputes often do. All parties in the Downgrade generally kept their critique to information they had at the time. Spurgeon based his response on information he observed and received from Booth and others. The Union Council based their response on information they felt to be lacking in Spurgeon's critique. True, many of the responses given were intense and powerful, but no chicanery was used in argumentation.¹¹¹

The Truth-Bound Controversialist

The Downgrade Controversy fits Dascal's characteristics cleanly, and points to Spurgeon's identity as a truth-bound controversialist. In his preaching, teaching, and writing, Spurgeon adopted the polemic strategy of controversy, seeking to persuade all in his hearing to take his position. He acted in concert with his theological commitment to

¹¹¹ Chicanery, according to Schopenhauer's scheme described in chapter 3, is an "anything goes" means of argument, including logical fallacies. Spurgeon admittedly used some of Schopenhauer's stratagems (see appendix 1) including the usage of favorable metaphors, subtle distinctions, and begging the question. The distinction in Spurgeon's rhetoric comes at the motivational level. He was, even in seeking victory over an opponent, truth-bound, as it were. His commitment to revelation afforded him the vantage point of the right, endeavoring to correct the wrong, and persuade others to take the better path. That is, Spurgeon didn't engage in polemic discussion in order to appear correct. He began with that assumption. His adopting of rhetorical stratagems that could, in Schopenhauer's scheme, be considered chicanery, was simply an effort to engage his opponent and persuade his audience effectively.

the inspiration and authority of Scripture. He was concerned that developments within the Baptist Union because of Darwinism and Higher Criticism would lead to the destruction of Christian orthodoxy in London. Doctrinal error had begun to infiltrate his denomination and associations, demanding a response. His actions, constrained by the truth as he saw it in Scripture, had a consistent teleological aim toward the ultimate good of his hearers. He was a truth-bound controversialist. His actions within the house of God via the office of pastor-theologian demonstrate his polemic clearly. The next chapter demonstrates how Spurgeon argued as a truth-bound controversialist from the office of pastor-theologian in public, in the pastor's college, and from the pulpit of the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

CHAPTER 6

A PASTOR-THEOLOGIAN IN THE DOWNGRADE CONTROVERSY

Spurgeon stands in history with Bunyan's character, "Mr. Valiant for Truth," a defender of orthodoxy at a time of desperate necessity. He spoke, using Vanhoozer's language, in *trilingual* fashion. He spoke at an academic level both in his Pastors' College and in multiple published interactions. He addressed the public through his weekly published sermons as well as the *Sword and Trowel* monthly magazine. Most central to Spurgeon's trilingual effectiveness as pastor-theologian was his ministry locus in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. His collection of sermons to that assembly stands alone as the largest set of works published by a single author in the history of Christianity. A close examination reveals a forthright commitment to the authority of Scripture and the centrality of Christ's atonement as well as a desire to protect his hearers from the encroaching error of "the new thought." In every area of trilingual speech, Spurgeon spoke as a truth-bound controversialist pastor-theologian. That is, he spoke with a foundational commitment to Scripture in an effort to build the body of Christ. So, when he spoke to the Pastors' College, he did so in an academic manner, but with a pastoral aim. His intention was to build up the body of Christ with the ministers under his charge, newly fortified against error. When he published material for popular consumption in London, he assumed the authority of Scripture and aimed at either the conversion of the lost, or the sanctification of the redeemed. His church and denomination were public entities and he spoke as a public-theologian to protect their theological purity. From his pulpit, Spurgeon's tenacity as a pastor-theologian is most clearly seen. He begins with a clear commitment to the authority and supremacy of Scripture and delivers each sermon

with the aim of building the body of Christ as an artisan in her midst. He sought to protect, shepherd, and instruct his people at the Tabernacle at all times, particularly during this dark time in his ministry.

The Pastors' College

Michael Nicholls correctly observes how seldom Spurgeon is designated an educator.¹ He is often revered as a preacher, churchman, evangelist, writer, and church planter, but rarely is he described as an academic or educator. He served as a tutor while at Cambridge and enjoyed pronounced success. He operated a thriving Sabbath-school at the church, as well as *The Evening School*, which began in 1862, providing basic education for those who had neither the time nor funds to attend school.² Many who attended Evening School went on to study at the Pastor's College to prepare for ministry. Spurgeon began his educational endeavor in pastoral training in 1856. He was still in his early days at New Park Street when several young men who had been converted by his ministry began preaching in the streets of London. Spurgeon believed the only weakness in their ministry was a lack of education and thus he took it upon himself to provide remedy. He secured the services of a tutor, the Rev. George Rogers, who had been seeking such an opportunity, and with a solitary student, the Pastors' College was born. The school rapidly grew alongside Spurgeon's popularity, and grew out of necessity, according to the young minister. He noted, "The work did not begin with any scheme—it grew out of necessity."³

¹ Michael Nicholls, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist," *Baptist Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (1987): 73–94.

² "The curriculum included a Bible class, advanced English, elementary and advanced Greek and Latin, French, and lectures on science, as well as the traditional disciplines. Classes ran from 150 to 200 in attendance and required the basement of the Metropolitan Tabernacle as well as the buildings of the Pastor's College." Lewis A Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1992), 419. See also J.C. Carlile, *C.H. Spurgeon: An Interpretative Biography* (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1934), 64.

³ C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography*, vol. 1, *The Early Years, 1834-1859* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2005), 385.

The initial aim of the school, according to Spurgeon, was “to instruct those whom God had evidently called to preach the gospel, but who labored under early disadvantages.”⁴ Spurgeon qualified his mission in the scope of ecclesial theology as well, when he noted, “...we wanted not men whom our tutors could make into scholars, but men whom the Lord had ordained to be preachers.”⁵ Thus Spurgeon distinguished between a purely academic aim for his school and an artisanal aim, with the building of the church in mind. That aim was vigorously maintained, even as the student body grew.⁶

The theological structure of the Pastors’ College was as explicit as its mission. Even in Spurgeon’s organizational remarks about the school, he set it apart from false teaching, pointing to a distinct, historically theological pedigree.

We endeavor to teach the Scriptures, but, as everybody else claims to do the same, and we wish to be known and read of all men, we say distinctly that the theology of the Pastors’ College is Puritanic. We know nothing of the new *ologies*; we stand by the old ways. The improvements brought forth by what is called “modern thought” we regard with suspicion, and believe them to be, at best, dilutions of the truth, and most of them old, rusted heresies, tinkered up again and sent abroad with a new face put upon them, to repeat the mischief which they wrought in ages past. We are old-fashioned enough to prefer Manton to Maurice, Charnock to Robertson, and Owen to Voysey.⁷

⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:386.

⁵ *Ibid.* He additionally noted, “...we never dreamed of making men preachers, but we desired to help those whom God had already called to be such. Hence, we laid down, as a basis, the condition that a man must, during about two years, have been engaged in in preaching, and must have had some seals to his ministry, before we could entertain his application.” The explicit aim of the college was to equip those who were called to build up the church. *Ibid.*

⁶ See Michael Nicholls, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist,” 396. Nichols comments, “He was also committed to firm theological and educational principles; but always wanted to relate these to the people that God actually set around him.” *Ibid.* Clearly, as Nicholls observes, Spurgeon’s aim was artisanal. He sought to build up the body of Christ at the Metropolitan Tabernacle and beyond. Theological education of the men before him at the College was a critical means to that end. Spurgeon reveals this trilingual academic intention additionally through book reviews released in *The Sword and The Trowel*, written in an academic format. For example, see “Notices of Books,” *The Sword and the Trowel*, (January 1889), 34-40.

⁷ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:387. Spurgeon lauded the Puritans often. He said, “Believing that the Puritanic school embodied more of gospel truth in it than in any other since the days of the apostles, we continue in the same line of things, and, by God’s help, hope to have a share in that revival of Evangelical doctrine which is as sure to come as the Lord himself. Those who think otherwise can go elsewhere.” *Ibid.*, 388. Earlier, he admitted that his concept of education was “peculiar.” He noted, “I may have been uncharitable in my judgment, but I thought the Calvinism of the theology usually taught to be very doubtful, and the fervor of the generality of the students seemed to be far behind their literary attainments. It seemed to me that preachers of the grand old truths of the gospel, ministers suitable for the masses, were more likely to be found in an institution where preaching and divinity would be the main

Spurgeon's commitment to the "Puritanic school" would be continually emphasized in contrast with newer theological innovations influenced by Darwinian evolution and higher criticism. He drew a line in the sand when he declared, "We shall never consent to leave the doctrinal teaching of the Institution vague and undefined, after the manner of bigoted liberalism of the present day."⁸ Rather, the college motto was *Et Teneo Et Teneor*, "I hold and am held." The men of the college were trained to hold the truth as they were confessionally held by it. Thus, the student body was comprised of men intending to serve the church, instructed in "Puritanic" theology and biblical interpretation toward that end.⁹

The college enjoyed many years of significant growth. In 1861 there were twenty students, the next year boasted double that number, then sixty-six in 1863, and in subsequent years, more than one hundred students were enrolled.¹⁰ The numbers continued to climb as new Spurgeon-esque ministers poured out into the streets and churches of England. Quicke and Randall of *Spurgeon's College*, the continuation of the original Pastors' College, note the staggering statistics of its early growth.

In 1877 reports were received from 270 Baptist pastors who had studied at the

objects, and not degrees and other insignia of human learning." Ibid., 384. Simply put, Spurgeon's educational philosophy was centered on theological Calvinism and Puritan pastoral practice.

⁸ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:388.

⁹ "Puritanic" theology here means the "doctrines of grace," or those doctrines broadly considered to be *Calvinistic* as well as Baptist in kind. See Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Sword and the Trowel* (1879), preface. The administration of the college was managed by Spurgeon's brother, James. The original teacher was George Rogers, educated at Rotherham Academy, and he served as instructor until 1881. Spurgeon and Rogers established the curriculum to span several areas: "1. General Knowledge of the Scriptures, (studying whole books and making the best use of commentaries, expositions and introductions) 2. The Study of Doctrine. 3. The History of the Church and the History of the Nations. 4. The Rudiments of Astronomy, Chemistry, Zoology, Geology and Botany. 5. Mental and Moral Science, Metaphysics and Casuistry. 6. Mathematics. 7. Latin, Greek and Hebrew. 8. Composition and Style. 9. Poetry. 10. Practical Oratory. 11. The Conduct of Church Work." Michael Nicholls, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist," 80-81. Tutor David Gracey explained his part in the curriculum in 1891 to include his own lectures in Systematic Theology as well as a survey of Hodge's Handbook for another course. In addition, he led students of Greek through Acts, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Romans. Hebrew students were led through the Psalms, Hosea, Isaiah, Job, Exodus, and Deuteronomy. Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Sword and The Trowel* 1891, 264.

¹⁰ W.Y. Fullerton, *C.H. Spurgeon: A Biography* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1920), 230.

College. There were 37, 597 people in membership in their churches and the pastors had conducted 32,477 baptisms. Many of the churches were new and it was calculated that they had produced a net increase in Baptist membership of 30,118. Four years later the College had trained more than five hundred ministers.¹¹

By Spurgeon's death in 1892, the number of students trained at the Pastors' College numbered over 860, and those pastors comprised 20% of the Union's pastoral yearbook.¹² The relationship between the Union and the college was not always positive, however. During the Downgrade Controversy, eighty former students defected to support the Union position. Spurgeon had previously pressed for a developed theological creed in the Union and when facing mutiny from his own men, he and thirty others crafted a new confession for the college.¹³ Indeed, the college was reformed and renamed The Pastors' College Evangelical Association to reinforce doctrinal commitments. Spurgeon began the college with particular doctrinal intentions and reiterated his commitment to them during the Downgrade.

Lectures to My Students

Spurgeon employed tutors to aid in the instruction of the men attending the college but delivered weekly addresses himself. In a letter responding to criticism over "The Gorilla Lecture" he listed the subjects of his addresses: Sabbath-school teaching, Preaching, Church Discipline, Ethnology, and Natural History.¹⁴ The Friday lectures were a highlight for the students, as W. D. McKinney eloquently recounted.

Friday afternoon came at last. The old, familiar clock pointed to three: the door

¹¹ Michael J Quicke and Ian M Randall, "Spurgeon's College," *American Baptist Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (June 1999): 121.

¹² Quicke and Randall continue, "More than 96,000 people had been baptized in churches led by Spurgeon's students, and in London 40% of the total Baptist membership was in churches the College had a part in founding." *Ibid.*, 122.

¹³ See Brian Stanley, "C. H. Spurgeon and the Baptist Missionary Society 1863–1866," *Baptist Quarterly* 29, no. 7 (January 1982): 319–28. See also Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 706-707.

¹⁴ Charles Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography*, vol. 2, *The Full Harvest 1860-1892*, rev. ed. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1973), 136. Clearly, Spurgeon was unafraid to engage non-theological topics in his curriculum. Even in the early days of the school, he arranged for regular courses on physical science and astronomy. *Ibid.*, 104.

opened on the stroke of the hour, the beloved President appeared, and walked up to the desk—Dr. Gill’s pulpit— while hands clapped, feet stamped, and voices cheered, till he had to hold up his hand, and say, “Now, gentlemen, do you not think that is enough? The floor is weak, the ceiling is not very high, and, I am sure, you need all the strength you have for your labors.” It was an epoch in student life to hear him deliver his *Lectures to My Students*.¹⁵

He would lecture on preaching and pastoral ministry, correct errors and faults in the preaching of the students, offer particular counsel regarding pastoral issues, and close in prayer. Following the lecture, Spurgeon would give out appointments for the men preparing to preach in other pulpits that Sunday and then dismiss the men for tea. Many would stay after and line up to speak to Spurgeon personally. The content of these lectures has been preserved in a work bearing the same name, *Lectures to My Students*.

In these Friday lectures, Spurgeon covered various topics, ranging from the personal holiness of the minister, dealing with depression, sermon content, and the need for personal theological progress. The driving force in each lecture is the heart of a pastor-theologian to build the house of God as a public force for the kingdom of Christ. Spurgeon’s investment in the theological fortification of his students came with particular intentionality because of his love for the truth and concern for the church. He exhorted the men to watch closely their lives, assured of their own election and consistent in their character.¹⁶ He challenged their calling, questioning their desire for the work, aptness to teach, and providential opening for them to engage in ministry.¹⁷ His instruction on homiletic content is particularly enlightening, considering his position during the Downgrade.

First, Spurgeon urged his students to seek out the plain meaning of the text of Scripture. This was reminiscent of the Puritan practice of *sensus literalis*, or that which is gathered immediately out of the words.¹⁸ He explains, “I will further recommend you to

¹⁵ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:108-9.

¹⁶ Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 7-21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22-41.

¹⁸ Joel R. Beeke, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage

hold to the *ipsissima verba*, the very words of the Holy Ghost; for... those sermons which expound the exact words of the Holy Spirit are the most useful.”¹⁹ Second, he presses the students to be aware of the *analogia fidei*, or the analogy of faith. The analogy of faith is the understanding that Scripture as the Word of God has inherent unity and consistency. Joel Beeke clarifies, “That is, the Scriptures do not contradict themselves. For that reason, the analogy of faith was a crucial aspect of the Puritan hermeneutical and exegetical method.”²⁰ Just as the analogy of faith was crucial to the Puritan theologians, so it was crucial to Spurgeon.

How little of Scripture there is in modern sermons compared with the sermons of those masters of theology, the Puritan divines! Almost every sentence of theirs seems to cast side lights upon a text of Scripture- not only the one they are preaching about-but many others, as well, are set in a new light as the discourse proceeds. They introduce blended lights from other passages which are parallel or semi-parallel and thus they educate their readers to compare spiritual things with spiritual.²¹

Thirdly, Spurgeon advocated a Christo-centric homiletic for his students. For him, preaching the Word, preaching the gospel meant preaching the person and work of Jesus Christ. His pulpit ministry directed his hearers toward Christ, and his instructions to the Pastors’ College were that they might do the same.

Of all I would wish to say this is the sum; my brethren, preach Christ, always and evermore. He is the whole gospel. His person, offices, and work must be our one great, all-comprehending theme. The world needs still to be told of its Savior, and of the way to reach him. Justification by faith should be far more than it is the daily testimony of Protestant pulpits; and if with this master-truth there should be more generally associated the other great doctrines of grace, the better for our churches

Books, 2012), 36.

¹⁹ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 73. He further notes, “A sermon, moreover, comes with far greater power to the consciences of the hearers when it is plainly the very word of God—not a lecture about the Scripture, but Scripture itself opened up and enforced. It is due to the majesty of inspiration that when you profess to be preaching from a verse you do not thrust it out of sight to make room for your own thinkings.” *Ibid.*, 73.

²⁰ Beeke, *A Puritan Theology*, 36.

²¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, 1861-1917* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1974), 25:626.

and our age. If with the zeal of Methodists we can preach the doctrines of Puritans a great future is before us.²²

The direction to the Pastor's College was not only to preach Christ, but also to preach Christ in order that saints might be edified, and sinners redeemed. Spurgeon balanced the concern for biblical fidelity with the concern for the lost and urged his students to strive for the same balance. Thus, he advocated for a developed system of theological truth and a proper hermeneutic which would eventually demonstrate itself in the pulpit through a Christo-centric homiletic. God would be glorified in such Word-anchored, Spirit-aided, Christo-centric preaching.²³

The grand object of the Christian ministry is the glory of God. Whether souls are converted or not, if Jesus Christ be faithfully preached, the minister has not labored in vain, for he is a sweet savor until God as well in them that perish as them that are saved. Yet, as a rule, God has sent us to preach in order that through the gospel of Jesus Christ the sons of men may be reconciled to Him.²⁴

²² Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 79.

²³ Spurgeon cautiously advocated "spiritualizing" to his students in their sermon preparation, which can be described as an illustrative usage of *sensus plenior*. His statement to his students was simple, "Continue to look out passages of Scripture, and not only give their plain meaning, as you are bound to do, but also draw from them meanings which may not lie upon their surface." *Ibid.*, 97. While advocating spiritualizing, Spurgeon also evidences his concern that his students will take it too far. "Do not drown yourselves because you are recommended to bathe. An allowable thing carried to excess is a vice, even as fire is a good servant to the grate, but a bad master when raging in a burning house." *Ibid.*, 98. Due to his concern for his students, he lists several restrictions upon the hermeneutical gymnastics of spiritualizing. 1. "Do not violently strain a text by illegitimate spiritualizing." His concern was that they not lay "texts on the rack to make them reveal what they never would have otherwise spoken." 2. "Never spiritualize upon indelicate subjects." His concern in this warning is that his students will take material that is sensitive to Victorian ears (such as that of Jeremiah and Ezekiel), and act in a crass manner with it. "Where the Holy Spirit is veiled and chaste, these men have torn away the veil, and spoken as none but naughty tongues would venture to do." 3. "Never spiritualize for the sake of showing what an uncommonly clever fellow you are." He ironically warns them with an example of Origen by saying, "...if you aspire to emulate Origen in wild, daring interpretations, it may be as well to read his life and note attentively the follies into which even his marvelous mind was drawn." 4. "Never pervert Scripture to give it a novel and so-called spiritual meaning." 5. "In no case allow your audience to forget that the narratives which you spiritualize are facts, and not mere myths or parables." He cautions his students in this final note to remind them that the first sense or plain reading of the text is the most important and shouldn't be overshadowed or "drowned by...imagination." *Ibid.*, 101-102. Spurgeon's encouragement to his students to look for a deeper meaning in the text, while hazardous, was surrounded by a theological fence, solid and strong. "The Bible is not a compilation of clever allegories or instructive poetical traditions; it teaches literal facts and reveals tremendous realities." *Ibid.*, 102. This is a delicate balance in Spurgeon's homiletic. On one hand, he advocates *sensus literalis* and on another, *sensus plenior*. The motive appears to issue from his insistence on preaching Christ in every message, and the warnings against over-spiritualizing are strict.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 336. Christian George additionally notes, "A correct theology of the natures, person, and mission of Christ, coupled with an active spiritual life that was grounded in truth, became the impetus for Spurgeon's evangelical action. Consequentially, in all his evangelistic endeavors—from his weekly lectures, sermons, and itinerate revivals to numerous personal correspondences—Spurgeon's single-minded evangelical focus compelled his Christocentric sermons." Christian T. George, "Jesus Christ, the 'Prince of

In summary, Spurgeon's instruction to the men at the college was to commit themselves to a plain, unified, Christo-centric reading and preaching of the biblical text. This structure would come to the fore during the Downgrade when the inspiration and authority of the Scripture came under attack by John Clifford and others who contradicted even the idea that God would produce a book whereby a plain reading would produce an authoritative message.²⁵ In addition, Spurgeon attempted to fortify his men with a Puritanic understanding of the penal substitutionary atonement and the necessity of its proclamation. This position would be ferociously attacked during the Downgrade as well, but the college men were prepared for such battles.

As with his homiletic instruction, Spurgeon's lectures to the Pastors' College demonstrate his aims as a particular kind of generalist, equipping his students to build the people of God. He counseled them on how to address depression while in the ministry, describing it as a common problem, sent from the Lord to remind men they are dependent upon him.²⁶ He encouraged them to engage in everyday conversation with their congregations without pride and youthful zeal to appear intelligent. He encouraged them

Pilgrims': A Critical Analysis of the Ontological, Functional, and Exegetical Christologies in the Sermons, Writings, and Lectures of Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892)" (PhD diss., University of St Andrews, 2011), 48.

²⁵ See John Clifford, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (London: James Clarke & Co. 1899); Ernest A. Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1958), 127-143. See also Lewis A Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1992), 701. Drummond references an article in the *Evangelical Nonconformist* asserting that because Clifford and others (including Alexander Maclaren) had already openly renounced inerrancy, the vote of censure in 1888 was merely a political move. They asserted that had Spurgeon privately met with those whom he saw as errant in their theology, a vote of censure could have been avoided. Polemically, Spurgeon addressed the vote of censure in *The Sword and the Trowel* in February 1888. Thus, he addressed the conflict publicly. As a truth-bound, strategic controversialist, he appealed to the public to take his view. His was a biblical creed. It was the Union that had diverged from truth. He said, "I would like to call all Christendom to know that all I asked of the Union is that it be formed on a Scriptural basis. I am unable to sympathize with a man who says he has no creed." Spurgeon, *The Sword and the Trowel* (London: Passamore & Alabaster, 1888), 82.

²⁶ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 154. Spurgeon notes, "Fits of depression come over the most of us. Usually cheerful as we may be, we must at intervals be cast down. The strong are not always vigorous, the wise not always ready, the brave not always courageous, and the joyous not always happy. There may be here and there men of iron, to whom wear and tear work no perceptible detriment, but surely the rust frets even these; and as for ordinary men, the Lord knows, and makes them to know, that they are but dust." Ibid.

to procure biblical and theological resources to aid in their understanding of the Bible. Not surprisingly, the majority of texts recommended were Puritanic in authorship. He counseled them to rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit for the entirety of their ministry. He said, “Our hope of success, and our strength for continuing the service, lie in our belief that the Spirit of the Lord resteth on us.”²⁷ He led them to make continual progress in ministerial training, learning, gifts, and grace. As a pastor-theologian, he explicitly instructed his students to become the same when he said, “Be well instructed in theology, and do not regard the sneers of those who rail at it because they are ignorant of it. Many preachers are not theologians . . . hence the mistakes they make.”²⁸ His admonition to make progress in their learning was balanced with an exhortation to discernment. Though many of his lectures were well distanced from the Downgrade Controversy, he warned them against “modern thought.” He said, “Our ‘modern thought’ gentry are doing incalculable mischief to the souls of men . . . souls are being damned and yet these men are spinning theories.”²⁹ He described the intricacies of posture, gestures, and open-air ministry. He shepherded them through rejection of their message and the reality of ministerial conflict. Spurgeon revealed himself as a public theologian building the house of God through his counsel to turn a deaf ear to criticism.

Public men must expect public criticism, and as the public cannot be regarded as infallible, public men may expect to be criticized in a way which is neither fair nor pleasant. To all honest and just remarks we are bound to give due measure of heed, but to the bitter verdict of prejudice, the frivolous faultfinding of men of fashion, the

²⁷ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 185.

²⁸ Ibid., 206. He binds the practice of the pastor-theologian to exposition when he continues, “Let us be thoroughly well acquainted with the great doctrines of the Word of God and let us be mighty in expounding Scripture. I am sure that no preaching will last so long, or build up a church so well, as the expository. To renounce altogether the hortatory discourse for the expository would be running to a preposterous extreme; but I cannot too earnestly assure you that if your ministries are to be lastingly useful you must be expositors. For this you must understand the Word yourselves and be able so to comment upon it that the people may be built up by the Word. Be masters of your Bibles, brethren” Ibid., 206-7.

²⁹ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 208. He adds condemnation to the “modern thought” proponents when he notes, “Hell gapes wide, and with her open mouth swallows up myriads, and those who should spread the tidings of salvation are ‘pursuing fresh lines of thought.’ Highly cultured soul-murderers will find their boasted ‘culture’ to be no excuse in the day of judgment.” Ibid.

stupid utterances of the ignorant, and the fierce denunciations of opponents, we may very safely turn a deaf ear.³⁰

The exhortation to his students sheds light on his strategies during the controversy, but also demonstrates his foresight to equip his students to weather such vicious criticism.

Though many of his Friday lectures were set at a distance from the Downgrade Controversy, one message not included in the *Lectures* volume was delivered on April 25, 1890 entitled “Our Manifesto.” Here Spurgeon’s polemic in the lives of his students comes to the fore. His text was Galatians 1:11, “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.” He delivered two points with concluding application. “He meant, first of all, that *his gospel was not received by him from men*. His reception of it in his own mind was not after men. And next, he meant, that *the gospel itself was not invented by men*.³¹ Spurgeon thus began by reminding the men that the message of the gospel was one they had not received by birthright or heritage. He lauded the evangelical, Puritan heritage from which his church was brought forth, but emphasized the divine revelation of the gospel over and against any idea of birthright.

We have not received our faith by tradition from our parents; and yet some of us, if true faith could be so received, would certainly have thus received it, for if we are not Hebrews of the Hebrews, yet according to our family-tree we are Puritans of the Puritans, descended throughout many generations of believers. Of this we make small account before God, though we are not ashamed of it before men. We have no father in our spiritual life but the Lord himself, and we have not received that life, or the gospel, by any carnal parentage, but of the Lord alone.³²

Spurgeon additionally reminded his hearers that they had not received the gospel through the teaching of mere men or through personal revelation. He encouraged them to re-think their foundations if they believed anything because John Calvin or John

³⁰ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 330.

³¹ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 37:38.

³² *Ibid.*, 39.

Wesley taught it.³³ He reminded them that it was the power of God in Christ through the Scriptures that the gospel was made real to them. He said, “It is because of that wonderful power which the Lord Jesus has over us through his sacred Word that we receive that Word from him and receive it as ‘not of man.’”³⁴ Thus, Spurgeon first argued for the authority of Christian Scripture in the gospel ministry of his students.

In the second section of Spurgeon’s Friday address, his polemic pattern of comparison and contrast emerges clearly. He argues for the exclusivity of the gospel and uniqueness of the biblical message against all other “pretended revelations.”³⁵ Following an address of other false religions, he noted the immutability of the biblical gospel contrasted with those advocating “modern thought,” meaning evolutionary or higher critical perspectives. Here he addresses the Downgrade head-on.

The religions of “modern thought” are as changeable as the mists on the mountains. See how often science has altered its very basis! Science is notorious for being most scientific in destruction of all the science that has gone before it. I have sometimes indulged myself, in leisure moments, in reading ancient natural history, and nothing can be more comic. Yet this is by no means an abstruse science. In twenty years’ time, some of us may probably find great amusement in the serious scientific teaching of the present hour, even as we do now in the systems of the last century. It may happen that, in a little time, the doctrine of evolution will be the standing jest of schoolboys. The like is true of the modern divinity which bows its knee in blind idolatry of so-called science. Now we say, and do so with all our heart, that the

³³ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 37:39.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁵ He noted, “I desire to assert this plainly. If any man thinks that the gospel is only one of many religions, let him candidly compare the Scriptures of God with other pretended revelations. Have you ever done so? I have made it a College exercise with our brethren. I have said—We will read a chapter of the Koran. This is the Mahometan’s holy book. A man must have a strange mind who should mistake that rubbish for the utterances of inspiration. If he is at all familiar with the Old and New Testaments, when he hears an extract from the Koran, he feels that he has met with a foreign author: the God who gave us the Pentateuch could have had no hand in many portions of the Koran. One of the most modern pretenders to inspiration is the Book of Mormon. I could not blame you should you laugh outright while I read aloud a page from that farrago. Perhaps you know the Protoevangelion, and other apocryphal New Testament books. It would be an insult to the judgment of the least in the kingdom of heaven to suppose that he could mistake the language of these forgeries for the language of the Holy Ghost. I have had several pretended revelations submitted to me by their several authors; for we have more of the prophetic clan about than most people know of; but no one of them has ever left on my mind the slightest suspicion of his sharing the inspiration of John, or Paul. There is no mistaking the inspired Books if you have any spiritual discernment. Once let the divine light dawn in the soul, and you perceive a coloring and a fashion in the product of inspiration which are not possible to mere men.” *Ibid.*, 45.

gospel which we preached forty years ago we will still preach in forty years' time if we are alive.³⁶

He asserted the immutability of Scripture in the face of higher criticism and evolutionary theory in stark contrast. He pressed his students to see for themselves the contrast between human pride and biblical humility.³⁷ His points of application were clear and filled with encouragement. He urged his students to continue to see the Scriptures for what they were, divine revelation. He encouraged his students to expect opposition, especially if they held to right doctrine. He also reminded them that the Spirit of God acted upon them to help them believe and they should trust the Spirit to act upon others as well. He said, "They will not believe your report unless the arm of the Lord be revealed to them. But then, if faith be the Holy Ghost's work, we need not fear that men can destroy it."³⁸ He finally sought to strengthen their resolve in reminding them that the truth was worth standing alone for. Here, he uses the polemic strategy of "Holy War" as described by Schopenhauer. He describes the fight for right doctrine in terms of being for God or against him.³⁹ He concluded with an impassioned call, "Come on, ye hosts of hell, and armies of the aliens! Let craft and criticism, rationalism and priestcraft do their best! The Word of the Lord endureth forever."⁴⁰

³⁶ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 37:46-47.

³⁷ He noted, "Hear the dreamers of to-day cry up the dignity of human nature! How sublime is man! But point me to a single syllable in which the Word of God sets itself to the extolling of man. On the contrary, it lays him in the very dust, and reveals his condemnation. Where is boasting then? It is excluded: the door is shut in its face. The self-glorification of human nature is foreign to Scripture, which has for its grand object the glory of God. God is everything in the gospel which I preach, and I believe that he is all in all in your ministry also." *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

³⁹ He said, "We can both live and die upon the everlasting gospel. Let us deal more and more with God, and with him only. If we have obtained light from him, there is more of blessing to be had. Let us go to that same Teacher, that we may learn more of the deep things of God. Let us bravely believe in the success of the gospel which we have received. We believe *in* it: let us believe *for* it. We will not despair though the whole visible church should apostatize." *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

His April message in 1890 serves as an example of his polemic toward his students at the college, but this message is not the only example. Several addresses from the annual Pastors' College Conference demonstrate his work as a truth-bound, strategic controversialist as well. Essentially, *Lectures to My Students* serves as a collection of Spurgeon's preparatory instructions to pastor-theologians and another work, *An All-Round Ministry* captures his polemic speech in the midst of controversy.

An All-Round Ministry

Spurgeon began his Annual Conference at the Pastors' College in 1865. The entire student body was invited along with alumni, in order to provide a fraternal reunion for his students. He delivered twenty-seven Presidential Addresses to the conference, twelve of which were reprinted following his death. He delivered three addresses during the height of the Downgrade Controversy and the difference in his delivery is obvious.

The 1888 address. Spurgeon launched his address in 1888 by addressing the elephant in the room. The title of his address was, "The Evils of the Present Time, and our Object, Necessities, and Encouragements."⁴¹ He began his address with an admission that while he did not intend to offend, he could not help it if he did so. He then clearly declared, "Our quarrel is not with the men, but with that other gospel, which is not another, with which they trouble us. Away with personalities but let us earnestly contend for the faith."⁴² Spurgeon's engagement with those in the Baptist Union with whom he disagreed was charitable. He refused to engage in ad hominem attacks. Instead, he addressed their doctrinal error at a foundational level. This is a crystalline example of his

⁴¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, rev. ed. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1960), 282. Spurgeon footnoted this particular address, saying, "Although this address was delivered before the resolution of the Baptist Union, concerning 'The Downgrade Controversy,' was passed, nothing has occurred to require any softening, but much to emphasize it. The evils spoken of were at first denied, but surely none can now question that they exist, abound, and triumph." Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 283-84.

polemic as a truth-bound, strategic controversialist. Dascal differentiates polemic forms from a typical dispute in that chicanery and fallacy are not practiced. Spurgeon's foundational concern in his polemic was a connection to the truth as he saw it in Scripture, along with a dynamic force of persuasion for others to follow him.

His argument in 1888 contained six major points illustrating the evils of the age. First, he demonstrated evil in the present age by showing those who questioned fundamental truth. He flatly argued that many in the current controversy had abandoned the truthfulness and authority of the Bible.⁴³ Second, he pointed to those who attacked the truth by misrepresenting and distorting it. Critics of Spurgeon's ministry claimed that he spoke constantly of "the wrath to come" and left out other doctrines. They accused him of scaring people into salvation. Spurgeon admitted, he would not flinch from truth because it was dreadful and contended further that his preaching was far more expansive. Third, he lamented the lack of decision for the truth among truly good men. Simply put, he bemoaned the multiplicity of fence-sitters when the truth was clear. He pointedly states, "One or two learned divines are trying their utmost to get down on both sides of the fence; but it is a perilous experiment."⁴⁴ Fourth, he posited another aspect of evil in the current controversy was the insatiable craving for amusement among so many. A local congregation had offered several services with a social aim, playing musical chairs at one. Spurgeon called out this frivolity with clear intensity. Fifth, he correspondingly lamented the lack of piety in the lives of many English congregations. The demand for amusement gave evidence of a lack of gospel seriousness among the churches in England. There was a blatant idolatry of worldly affections and ignorance of holy

⁴³ Ibid., 285. "To some, the teaching of Scripture is not of final authority: their inner consciousness, their culture, or some other unknown quantity is their fixed point, if they have a fixed point anywhere. The font of inspiration is not now within the Book, and with the Holy Spirit, but within the man's own intelligence. We have no longer, 'Thus sayeth the Lord;' but, 'Thus sayeth modern thought.'" Ibid.

⁴⁴ Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, 290.

things.⁴⁵ Finally, he spoke of the difficult climate surrounding the church in sharing the gospel. People were not receptive to the truth as it was. He said plainly, “Compared with what it used to be, it is hard to win attention to the Word of God.”⁴⁶

His answer for the evils of the age delivered to his students was to glorify God as their chief end while making the building of the church their chief activity. His aim in the 1888 address was to exhort them to be God-exalting pastor-theologians. He said, “We do not regard it as your first business to convert sinners, nor to edify the saints; but to glorify God.”⁴⁷ With the glory of God as the ultimate aim, Spurgeon pressed his students to also build up the church with the truth of Scripture for the entirety of their ministries.⁴⁸

The 1889 address. Spurgeon followed his address of 1888 with another exhortation as a pastor-theologian to other pastor-theologians. His message at the annual conference in 1889 carried the title, “The Preacher’s Power, and the Conditions of Obtaining it.” He began the address by establishing the need for the power of God to aid in building the people of God. He next clarified that building the people of God must be according to God’s standards, not the standards of modern progress, or the gratification of cultural elites. Speaking as a truth-bound controversialist, he presses the need for the men of the college to follow him into battle on the authority of Scripture.

⁴⁵ Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, 294. He said, “Do you not notice how superficial is the religion of the mass of professors? How many servants might live in so-called Christian families without perceiving any difference between these houses and those of worldlings? Is not family prayer neglected in many instances? Have we not members who are never seen at a prayer-meeting? When enquiry is made, do you not find that the richer sort could not attend because the dinner-hour is at the same time as the gathering for prayer? No doubt they will be most careful to worship the god they favor most. In other cases, you find that busy men, who could not come out to pray, were quite able to attend a concert. Public dinners and sing-songs are more important ceremonials with many than the offering of prayer to God.”

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 296.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 299.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 301. He noted, “A noble building is possible when the walls rise course upon course upon a fixed foundation. If we would, as wise master-builders, really build up the Church, we must be careful as to our foundation at the first; and upon that foundation we must keep on building to the end.” *Ibid.*

We leave, without regret, the gospel of the hour to the men of the hour. With such eminently Cultured persons forever hurrying on with their new doctrines, the world may be content to let our little company keep to the old-fashioned faith, which we still believe to have been once for all delivered to the saints. Those superior persons, who are so wonderfully advanced, may be annoyed that we cannot consort with them; but, nevertheless, so it is that it is not now, and never will be, any design of ours to be in harmony with the spirit of the age, or in the least to conciliate the demon of doubt which rules the present moment. Brethren, we shall not adjust our Bible to the age; but before we have done with it, by God's grace, we shall adjust the age to the Bible.⁴⁹

He explicitly mentions those with whom he and his students could not consort, presumably those within the Baptist Union who had, in Spurgeon's words, "been in harmony with the spirit of the age." He further warns the students that if they should ever "take up with the new theology," they should refrain from asking God to give them power in their ministry, lest they be guilty of blasphemy.⁵⁰ Thus, he established the need for power in ministry, connected that power to an adherence to Scripture, and consequently warned that no power would accompany a preacher of new theology.⁵¹

He further challenges them to view their ministry as an exercise in bearing witness to true doctrine, according to the analogy of faith, in order to convince their hearers of the truth. Simply put, God would empower them to build the people of God as they were convinced to follow biblical truth.⁵² As their congregations were educated to follow biblical truth, the elect of God would be drawn out in faith, undergo regeneration, and persevere to the end.⁵³ Spurgeon plainly connected the building of the people of God to a robust commitment to the truthfulness of Scripture in the face of "the new thought."⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, 318.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 319. His polemic contains elements of contrast and "Holy War" as well, clearly attaching the blessing/empowerment of God solely to those opposing the "new theology."

⁵¹ He said, "I trust that, if ever any of you should err from the faith, and take up with the new theology, you will be too honest to pray for power from God with which to preach that mischievous delusion; if you should do so, you will be guilty of constructive blasphemy. *Ibid.*, 319.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 321.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 322-28.

⁵⁴ He urged his students to believe in the power of the Word to build the church. He said, "Beloved, have a genuine faith in the Word of God, and in its power to save. Do not go up into the pulpit preaching the truth, and saying, 'I hope some good will come of it;' but confidently believe that it will not

He was bound to the truth, condemned the Baptist Union's relationship to evolutionary theory and Higher Criticism as blasphemy, and persuaded his students to remain committed to the "old-fashioned faith."

The 1890 address. The last address Spurgeon delivered to students at the Pastors' college was the last conference message he would ever deliver. He titled his message, "The Minister in These Times," wherein he reminded the students of their position in Christ and the responsibility to preach Christ in the face of theological error. He demonstrated that many pastors claimed they believed in the atonement, but could not define it, and refused to preach it faithfully.⁵⁵ He wanted his students to be utterly convinced of Christ's substitutionary atonement and committed to the proclamation of that truth. He extolled the glory of Christ's position toward believers as sacrifice, sin-bearer, sole mediator, high priest, infallible teacher, law-giver, ruler of the Church, example, pattern, Lord, and God.⁵⁶ In this soaring treatment of the centrality of Christ and his atonement, Spurgeon gave contrast with those who were teaching false doctrine. Some, he posited, taught false doctrine because they claimed it was better to minister to

return void but must work the eternal purpose of God." Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, 343.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 365.

⁵⁶ Here, Spurgeon contrasted right doctrine with weak and false teaching regarding the doctrine of the atonement. He said, "I observe that certain persons claim to believe in the atonement, but they will not say what they mean by it. May not this mean that really they have no clear knowledge of it; and, possibly, no real faith in it? Every man has a theory of what he knows; at least, he can give a statement of what he understands. We have heard of the men of Athens, and of their altar erected 'to the unknown God': in England, we have philosophical people who believe in an unknown atonement. We conceive that, in this way, they 'ignorantly worship.' Robertson, of Brighton, was orthodox compared with many in this advanced age; but one said of him that he taught that our Lord did something or other, which in some way or other was more or less connected with our salvation. Flimsy as that was, it is better than the doctrine of this hour. Some now think it absurd to believe that what was done at Calvary, nineteen centuries ago, can have any relation to the sins of to-day. Others, who speak not quite so wildly, yet deny that our sins could be laid on the Lord Jesus, and that His righteousness could be imputed to us; this, they say, would be immoral. The ethical side of the atonement is frequently held, and beautifully and strikingly shown to the people; but we are not satisfied with this one-sided view of the great subject. Whatever may be the shadow of the atonement, —by which we mean its ethical influence, —we believe that there was a substance in the atonement; and if that substance be removed, the shadow is gone also. We have no home-made theory; but our solemn witness is, that He 'His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.'" Ibid., 365-66.

their lives rather than their minds. He used the dynamic analogy of poison to show the manner in which this false dichotomy allowed false doctrine to be delivered.

Some excellent brethren seem to think more of the life than of the truth; for when I warn them that the enemy has poisoned the children's bread, they answer, "Dear brother, we are sorry to hear it; and, to counteract the evil, we will open the window, and give the children fresh air." Yes, open the window, and give them fresh air, by all means. You cannot do a better thing, in view of many purposes; but, at the same time, this ought you to have done, and not to have left the other undone. Arrest the poisoners, and open the windows, too. While men go on preaching false doctrine, you may talk as much as you will about deepening their spiritual life, but you will fail in it. While you do one good thing, do not neglect another. Instead of saying that the life is more important, or the truth is more important, or the way is more important, let us be united in the firm belief that they are each one equally important, and that one cannot be well sustained and thoroughly carried out without the rest.⁵⁷

He thus joined theological truth to life and pressed his students to take the same position in their preaching and ministry. In an exercise of comparison and contrast, he noted false doctrine would provide no benefit, but would destroy the lives of people. His polemic strategy here was to enumerate adverse consequences of adopting opposing views during the Downgrade in order to theologically bolster those under his instruction to take the side of orthodoxy.

Others, Spurgeon explained, taught false doctrine because they loved novelty. They taught the "new thought" simply because it was new. Spurgeon called such a fascination "a sort of inevitable spiritual measles."⁵⁸ False doctrine for some was, as it were, an infantile disease. Still others, he noted, taught false doctrine and neglected a biblical Christology because they had personally rejected Christ himself. Here, Spurgeon fiercely engages the college conference as a truth-bound, strategic controversialist. Simply put, he intentionally sought throughout his address to encourage the students toward an orthodox Christology through stark contrast with advocates of "new thought."

⁵⁷ Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, 374.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Here, Spurgeon uses the favorable metaphor strategy, characterizing "new theology" in disease language.

He pressed them at the climax of his message with a warning that abandoning such could be evidence of an unregenerate heart. The heart of the Downgrade was a denial of the inspiration, authority, and Christo-centricity of Scripture.

Holy Scripture has not agreed with them,—so much the worse for Holy Scripture! Such-and-such doctrines do not suit their tastes, so they must be misrepresented, or denied. An unregenerate heart lies at the bottom of “modern thought.” Men are down-grade in doctrine because they were never put on the up-grade by the renewal of their minds.⁵⁹

Spurgeon is explicit in this final address that the Downgrade was no trivial disagreement over the behavior of certain unknown ministers. Rather, the Downgrade Controversy was an uncovering of the corruption of those who claimed to know Christ, but by their actions, denied him. His conclusory admonition was for the men to “stand fast in the faith once for all delivered to the saints, and let no man spoil you by philosophy and vain deceit.”⁶⁰ He added a compelling call for them to stand not only in the faith, but against the error of the day, even if they must do so alone.⁶¹

Spurgeon founded the Pastors’ College in 1856 with the goal of producing pastor-theologians to build the church. It was, at its core, an artisanal institution. That is, according to the Strachan/Vanhoozer paradigm, the Pastors’ College was an institution of public ecclesial theology. The College met in the church, was fed through the church, launched out of the church, and ultimately extended the reach of the church. Therefore, Spurgeon’s lectures to his students and his conference dedicated to their ministries had a decidedly pastoral aim. In addition, during the Downgrade, his training for these men as

⁵⁹ Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, 375.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 376.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 391. “At this hour, there is a call for men who can breast the torrent, and swim upstream. We need heroes who would just as soon go alone, if necessary, as march with a thousand comrades. We need men who are doing their own thinking, and do not put it out, as families do with their washing. They have thought out the truth; and, having gone to God about it, and felt the power of it in their own souls, they are not now to be moved from the hope of their calling. They are pillars in the house of our God, abiding in their places; and not mere caterpillars, crawling after something to eat. We need captains for the good ship who know their longitude and latitude, and can tell whence they came, and to what port they are steering. Our Commander needs warriors true as steel for this hour of conflict.” *Ibid.*

pastor-theologians included warnings and admonitions against the theological error so rampant in the culture around them. He pressed them to study and stand in the faith once for all delivered to the saints, to anchor their souls to the atonement of Jesus, and to fight for truth even though they fight alone. He sought to persuade them to follow him in the fight. The public, church building academy was not Spurgeon's only avenue of polemic attack during the Downgrade, however. He addressed the wider public with clear, strategic language.

The Pastor-Theologian in Public

As with the academy, Spurgeon addressed the Christian public as pastor-theologian. The primary place to investigate his public interaction during the Downgrade is in *The Sword and Trowel* monthly magazine. Truly, the public sale of his sermons through *The Penny Pulpit* was sizable, but the primary aim of the pulpit ministry was the Tabernacle proper, under examination in the next major section.⁶² Aside from his printed sermons, his written works were widely circulated as well. He produced over one hundred thirty-five books and edited another twenty-eight.

Two popular books have already been referenced in this work: *Lectures to My Students* and *An All-Round Ministry*, but Spurgeon's most popular books were not geared toward ministers. Instead, it was his work *John Ploughman's Talks* that garnered the most attention for its simple, accessible treatment of various subjects in Christian living.⁶³ His *Around the Wicket Gate* was written to help lead people to faith in Christ in connection to his dear *Pilgrim's Progress*, wherein the main character, when faced with

⁶² Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 314.

⁶³ Spurgeon plainly expressed his intention for the work when he said, "I have written for the ploughmen and common people. Hence refined taste and dainty words have been discarded for strong proverbial expressions and homely phrases. Much that needs to be said to the toiling masses would not well suit the pulpit and the Sabbath; these lowly pages may teach thrift and industry all the days of the week, in the cottage and the workshop; and if some learn these lessons I shall not repent the adoption of a rustic style. There is no particular value in being seriously unreadable." C. H. Spurgeon, *John Ploughman's Talks* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 5.

the necessity of salvation, is pointed to the wicket gate which opened to the pathway of safety. Spurgeon writes to the individual who stands at the gate and still has yet to enter. The popular volume was a pastoral plea to close with Christ.⁶⁴ Finally, the multi-volume *Treasury of David* deserves mention. This, Spurgeon's devotional commentary on the Psalms, took twenty-one years to complete. He was exceedingly proud of the work and its impact, which extended well past his life and ministry. While his published books engaged the public extensively, no collection of writing carried such momentum in London more than his monthly periodical, *The Sword and The Trowel*.

The Sword and The Trowel

Spurgeon launched the monthly periodical in 1865, containing articles penned by himself and others addressing current issues, spiritual topics, religious concerns, etc. He stated the motive for such a publication in the first issue. He intended the periodical to stand as a printed defense of the truth of Scripture, to advocate the doctrine and church order of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and to inform friends of the Tabernacle as to her progress.⁶⁵ In *The Sword and The Trowel* (ST) Spurgeon's first steps into the Downgrade Controversy were taken and it is to those particular articles that this work now turns.

1887 Downgrade articles. The 1887 preface to the ST reveals Spurgeon's grief over the theological slide in the Baptist Union. He coins the phrase "Downgrade" early, saying, "We have had enough of the Down-Grade for ourselves when we have

⁶⁴ G.E. Lane, in the introduction to the 1966 edition of the book clarifies Spurgeon's motive when he notes, "Spurgeon has in mind a person who has felt the burden of his sin, forseen the judgment coming on the world, believed the Bible to contain the way of salvation, heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached and set out to find the Savior. Eventually he becomes clear in his mind that Christ is alive and can fully meet his need, that He is indeed the Door to salvation. He has even heard from the pulpit His invitation to come to Him and find rest for his soul. But having reached this point he gets no further. He does not proceed to the position of believing he is surely saved and on the way to heaven." C. H. Spurgeon, *Around the Wicket Gate* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979). 6.

⁶⁵ Charles H. Spurgeon, "Our Aims and Intentions," *The Sword and The Trowel*, January 1865, 1.

looked down upon it. What havoc false doctrine is making no tongue can tell.”⁶⁶ He connected the Downgrade to false doctrine and laments the “New Theology” as useless to save or renew the human heart. He draws the lines of battle between truth and error, between friends and adversaries. His polemic is obvious from the start. As a truth-bound, strategic controversialist, his aim was to lead the audience to his point of view and to offer a stark contrast between his perspective and false teaching.

The March 1887 article, while not written by Spurgeon, carried his hearty endorsement.⁶⁷ The author of the entry, Robert Shindler, traces the larger “Down-grade” in theology among English churches to the Act of Uniformity of 1662. For Shindler, Arminianism began the slide. He argued that as preachers began to diverge from Puritan theology and method, “they became...more speculative and less spiritual in the matter of their discourses and dwelt more on the moral teachings of the New Testament.”⁶⁸ That is, rather than building their churches through robust commitment to Scriptural authority, the centrality of the gospel, and Calvinistic doctrine, they essentially became moralists. He then demonstrates a subsequent trajectory from Arminianism to Antinomianism, ending in Socinianism and Arianism for some. He asserts that this history of theological devolution furnishes a warning for the current state of controversy. Pastors and theologians were still clamoring for the new. Shindler quaintly wrote, “Commonly it is found in theology that that which is true is not new, and that which is new is not true.”⁶⁹

In April of 1887, Shindler published a second controversial article, entitled

⁶⁶ Spurgeon, *The Sword and The Trowel*, March 1887, preface.

⁶⁷ Spurgeon, “The Down Grade,” *The Sword and The Trowel*, March 1887, 122. Spurgeon placed a footnote upon the article, saying, “Earnest attention is requested for this paper. There is need of such a warning as this history affords. We are going downhill at break-neck speed.” Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 122. He continues, “Natural theology frequently took the place which the great truths of the gospel ought to have held, and the sermons became more and more Christless. Corresponding results in the character and life, first of the preachers and then of the people, were only too plainly apparent.” Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 126.

plainly, “The Downgrade.” Again, he insisted Arminianism had begun the slide. He noted, “Arminianism, Pelagianism under another name, had...eaten out the life of the Church of England, and Arianism followed to further and complete the destruction.”⁷⁰ He explicitly blamed ministers for the theological condition of churches in England. As pastoral leadership deserted the theological moorings of their Puritan forbearers, churches followed in denial of the truth. He summarized the historical disaster clearly.

In looking carefully over the history of the times, and the movement of the times, of which we have written briefly, this fact is apparent: that where ministers and Christian churches have held fast to the truth that the Holy Scriptures have been given by God as an authoritative and infallible rule of faith and practice, they have never wandered very seriously out of the right way. But when, on the other hand, reason has been exalted above revelation, and made the exponent of revelation, all kinds of errors and mischiefs have been the result.⁷¹

Spurgeon made an additional note to the April article by Shindler, moderately softening the arguments made. He admitted that Arminianism did not universally result in Socinianism, but that such a trajectory should be accepted as generally true. He also clarified his commitment to the authority of the Bible rather than merely to Calvinism, saying, “We care far more for the central evangelical truths than we do for Calvinism as a system.”⁷² He further clarified that the main argument was not against those who agreed on core doctrines of Christianity, but those who denied substitutionary atonement, the inspiration of Scripture, and justification by faith. He said flatly, “The present struggle is

⁷⁰ Spurgeon, “The Down Grade: Second Article,” *The Sword and The Trowel*, April 1887, 166.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 170. One chilling example given to illustrate the theological malady so prevalent involves none other than Charles Darwin. “If anyone wishes to know where the tadpole of Darwinism was hatched, we could point him to the pew of the old chapel in High Street, Shrewsbury, where Mr. Darwin, his father, and we believe his father’s father, received their religious training. The chapel was built for Mr. Talents, an ejected minister; but for very many years full-blown Socinianism has been taught there, as also in the old chapel at Chester, where Matthew Henry used to minister, and where a copy of his Commentary, of the original edition, is kept for public use, the only witness, we fear, to the truths he taught there.” *Ibid.*, 168.

⁷² Spurgeon, “Notes,” *The Sword and The Trowel*, April 1887, 195.

not a debate upon the question of Calvinism or Arminianism, but of the truth of God versus the inventions of men.”⁷³

The August article of 1887 marked Spurgeon’s formal authorial entrance into the fray. His aim in his entrance was to give reason for the controversy. It is in this initial piece that Spurgeon’s polemic strategy as pastor-theologian is made clear. He is making a persuasive effort that no confederacy should be entertained with those in theological error. Those in the “Broad School” scrutinized the atonement, denied the inspiration of Scripture, relegated the Holy Spirit to an influence, fictionalized the doctrine of hell, made the resurrection into a myth, and still wanted to be called “brother.”⁷⁴ Simply put, the disagreement was over core, essential, Christian doctrines. One could not deny the atonement and claim to be spiritually connected to those purchased by it. The seriousness of the theological issues thus necessitated serious action. Again, his polemic is on display in his reasoning for dissent.

Dissent for mere dissent’s sake would be the bitter fruit of a willful mind. Dissent as mere political partisanship is a degradation and travesty of religion. Dissent for truth’s sake, carried out by force of the life within, is noble, praiseworthy, and fraught with the highest benefits to the race.⁷⁵

Thus, as a truth-bound controversialist, he pressed his audience to adopt his position: a noble, praiseworthy, passionate adherence to the truth over and against error. There could be no cooperation with those denying such critical doctrines. They had turned aside to another gospel, they were aimed at robbing the master. Even if the fight would be lost, Spurgeon sought to convince his hearers that the battle was the more eternally worthwhile path.⁷⁶

⁷³ Spurgeon, “Notes,” *The Sword and The Trowel*, April 1887, 196.

⁷⁴ Spurgeon, “Another Word Concerning the Down-Grade,” *The Sword and The Trowel*, August 1887, 397.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 399.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 400. He said, “If for a while the evangelicals are doomed to go down, let them die fighting, and in the full assurance that their gospel will have a resurrection when the inventions of ‘modern

September of 1887 marked a defensive stance from Spurgeon to various criticisms of his attacks upon those within the Baptist Union for their denial of essential Christian truths. He acknowledged that some had accused him of speaking both in error and in haste, but fiercely denied both allegations. He reasoned that he had waited too long to speak and did so in deep grief.⁷⁷ His October article extended his explanation of his accusations of doctrinal error, including his reluctance to name particular names of errant pastors and teachers. Much of Spurgeon's information had been garnered through personal communication with officials within the Baptist Union and he felt it ungentlemanly to "break the seal of confidential correspondence, or to reveal private conversations."⁷⁸ In his polemic, he distanced himself from the style of dispute referenced by Dascal, in which vicious ad hominem attacks were employed to win the argument at any cost. Spurgeon's desire was to advance the truth and persuade others to follow in his steps. Defeating the dissenters was not the entire motive. Instead, he sought to prove his case by listing others who shared his concern in an effort to derail the influence of his opponents. The Evangelical Alliance issued an article in July of 1887 carrying similar concerns to Spurgeon, including the attacks upon substitutionary atonement and a lack of holiness in ministers. Secondly, there was a report of the Gloucestershire and Herefordshire Association of Baptist Churches in June lamenting the lack of adherence to Scripture as inspired by God. Finally, Dr. David Brown, Principal of the Free Church College, Aberdeen, Scotland released a paper in September deriding modern thought and the denial of inspiration and popularity of skepticism.⁷⁹ Brown was not alone in his concerns.

thought' shall be burned up with fire unquenchable." Ibid.

⁷⁷ Spurgeon, "Our Reply to Sundry Critics and Enquirers," *The Sword and The Trowel*, September 1887, 463-64.

⁷⁸ Spurgeon, "The Case Proved," *The Sword and The Trowel*, October 1887, 510.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 511-12.

1887 closed with November and December ST articles reinforcing Spurgeon's position. He called unity at the expense of truth utter treason to the Lord Jesus Christ and refused to "give up the crown jewels of his gospel for the sake of larger charity."⁸⁰ He ended the year with a plea and prayer for revival of the truth. He said, "There would then be small honor paid to men who mar the gospel of our Lord, and truth, which has fallen in our streets, would again ascend her throne."⁸¹ The pastor-theologian revealed his soul and publicly longed for the recovery of biblical truth in the building of the church. He pleaded with ministers to refute error and defend the truth, saying, "Brethren in Christ, in every church let us purge out the things which weaken and pollute."⁸² He ends by asking for fervent, mighty prayer on the part of his audience for the sake of the truth and the advancement of the church. As a pastor-theologian, his concern is ultimately for the church and her public influence for the kingdom. As a truth-bound, strategic controversialist, he brought the audience along in the conflict without ad hominem or unethical chicanery in an effort to establish and extol the truth of biblical revelation. He primarily used comparison and contrast, demonstrating the competing truth claims made by opponents in the Downgrade and then contrasting them with Scripture.

1888 Downgrade articles. Spurgeon had withdrawn from the Baptist Union. The leadership of the Metropolitan Tabernacle demonstrated wholehearted support for their pastor, and he felt there was reason to hope that the Downgrade had slowed due to his protest. The pastor-theologian remarks in the preface to the 1888 articles, "How could

⁸⁰ Spurgeon, "A Fragment Upon the Down-Grade Controversy," *The Sword and The Trowel*, November 1887, 558. This language is characteristically strong, and polemically falls under the category of "Holy War," reducing the options in the conflict to those with God and those against him.

⁸¹ Spurgeon, "Restoration of Truth and Revival," *The Sword and The Trowel*, December 1887, 605.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 606. He continued, explaining that such cleansing was indeed the responsibility of all who called themselves believers. "Believers must also sweep the house of the leaven of worldliness, and the frivolities of a giddy generation. The evil which is now current eats as doth a canker, and there is no hope for healthy godliness until it is cut out of the body of the church by her again repenting and doing her first works." *Ibid.*, 606-7.

the protesting voice have been heard if it had not been for these pages?” He continues, noting the silence of other religious periodicals regarding the truth of the controversy. He advocated the preservation of the truth and asked his readership to aid in the circulation of the ST to their friends and neighbors.⁸³ Spurgeon spoke to the public in London regarding the truth of the controversy and asked his constituency to help spread the message. His longing for a positive shift in the Downgrade was unfulfilled, however, for the Baptist Union answered his accusations with a vote of censure.

Spurgeon responded to the Union Council’s vote of censure in a February article explicitly titled, “The Baptist Union Censure.” He asserted his desire to establish an evangelical creed by which members would be accepted into the Union. The Council refused to establish such a creed, causing Spurgeon great frustration. He exclaimed, “How can we unite except upon some great common truths?”⁸⁴ The public was made privy to Spurgeon’s pastoral theology through his analogy of reconstruction. He admitted that changing the foundation of a building was a difficult undertaking and a job for which he no longer had the desire nor energy. Spurgeon encouraged those who felt they could change the complexion of the Union to do so with courage, assuring them he would not cease from protesting false doctrine. But he would no longer engage the Union itself. He chillingly said, “It is not for me to lead in a work which I have been forced to abandon. The warfare has been made too personal, and certain incidents in it...have made it too painful for me.”⁸⁵

⁸³ “As a rule, the religious papers have united in a conspiracy of silence; or else they have culled from their correspondence letters unfavorable to the truth, and have printed them, while those which were on the right side have been excluded. It is of vital importance that every mouth which bears testimony for truth should be preserved. This much-sneered-at Sword and Trowel will carry on its twofold mission so long as its Editor has breath remaining; but it could do far more if its circulation were increased. We therefore invite our readers’ help to enlarge our constituency. We will do our best to produce the magazine, and to speak boldly for the cause and kingdom of our Lord Jesus; and we ask on the part of our subscribers that they will provide for us open doors by introducing our monthly magazine to their friends and neighbors.” Spurgeon, *The Sword and The Trowel*, January 1888, iv.

⁸⁴ Spurgeon, “The Baptist Union Censure,” *The Sword and The Trowel*, February 1888, 83.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

While he remained stalwart in his refusal to name individual personalities who taught or promoted false doctrine, his brief March ST article delineated several theological errors, bolstering his case against the Union. Post-mortem salvation, purgatory, and other false teaching were a few markers of what he would term “Progressive Theology” in his April article. To these he added salvation by works, as well as the reality of heaven and hell. This “progressive gospel” had become popular in Spurgeon’s circles and he ferociously decried the abandonment of truth.

Pan-indifferentism is rising like the tide: who can hinder it? We are all to be as one, even though we agree in next to nothing. It is a breach of brotherly love to denounce error. Hail, holy charity! Black is white; and white is black. The false is true; the true is false; the true and the false are one. Let us join hands, and never again mention those barbarous, old-fashioned doctrines about which we are sure to differ. Let the good and sound men for liberty’s sake shield their “advanced brethren” or, at least, gently blame them in a tone which means approval. In order to maintain an open union, let us fight as for dear life against any form of sound words, since it might restrain our liberty to deny the doctrines of the Word of God!⁸⁶

Again, Spurgeon was bound to the truth as revealed in Scripture and subsequently sought to persuade his audience to accept his position as right, not merely as a differing point of view. Indeed, he likened the struggle for the authority of biblical truth to the Reformation and urged those within the Union to establish a confessional basis for its membership.⁸⁷

By the end of the year Spurgeon produced several small ST articles in response to critics, ringing the same bell of concern over the denial of biblical authority and substitutionary atonement.⁸⁸ His December article was entitled, “Attempts at the

⁸⁶ Spurgeon, “Progressive Theology,” *The Sword and The Trowel*, April 1888, 159. His mocking tone in this particular article illustrates the absurdity he saw in jettisoning all theological differentiation for the sake of unity. He takes aim at their motive: the freedom to deny the doctrines of the Word of God. Polemically, he uses many different strategies here. He uses a favorable metaphor to describe his opponents, then flatly puts them in an odious category (See appendix 1). While Schopenhauer would designate these moves as “stratagems” or “chicanery,” it is my view that Spurgeon uses them ethically and illustratively to demonstrate the absurdity of error.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁸⁸ Spurgeon, “Notes,” *The Sword and The Trowel*, July 1888, 379.

Impossible,” with the core issue being the need for the Baptist Union to establish an evangelical confession of faith. At this point in the Union’s history, the only requirement for membership in the denomination was an affirmation of believer’s baptism. Spurgeon argued that “at least the elements of the faith should be believed, and the first principles of the gospel should be professed by those who were admitted into the fellowship.”⁸⁹ He then showed that neither side could yield in the conflict, thus making separation inevitable. He established the ground of decision between those in support of a full, robust theological confession and those with no such desire.

Final Downgrade notes. Spurgeon didn’t produce many more long-form articles on the Downgrade Controversy in the ST, but he answered many inquirers in short notes. In one stinging note, however, Spurgeon went at the Union President, John Clifford. It had come to his attention that Clifford filled the pulpit of a church Spurgeon termed “more or worse than Unitarian.”⁹⁰ He pressed the case, arguing the Union could be rightly annoyed at criticism of obscure pastors wandering into error, but not when the President aligned himself with those who denied the divinity of Jesus.⁹¹ His final long-form article about the Downgrade came in December, 1889 in a piece entitled, “This Must Be a Soldier’s Battle.” He drew the lines for the conflict in the same places as years before.⁹² He summarized, “It is Bible or no Bible, Atonement or no Atonement, which we have now to settle. Stripped of beclouding terms and phrases, this lies at the bottom of the discussion.”⁹³ Again, Spurgeon reminded the readers of his reasoning for withdrawal

⁸⁹ Spurgeon, “Attempts at the Impossible,” *The Sword and The Trowel*, December 1888, 618.

⁹⁰ Spurgeon, “Notes,” *The Sword and the Trowel*, May 1889, 244.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² The controversy had thus not been amicably resolved, but stagnated. Spurgeon’s position was established, and under the leadership of John Clifford, the Baptist Union was in no danger of taking a more conservative position regarding an evangelical confession.

⁹³ Spurgeon, “This Must Be A Soldiers’ Battle,” *The Sword and The Trowel*, December 1889, 634.

from the Union. The lack of doctrinal clarity and confession compelled him to break fellowship with the denomination. His polemical strategy was consistent with prior articles as well. He drew a line between truth and falsehood, between those on the Lord's side and those prepared to make an advance on the Bible. He said, "Whoever is on the Lord's side must show it at once and without fail."⁹⁴ He passionately sought to persuade the audience to follow him in his commitment to the truth against error.

Spurgeon's trilingual polemic engagement as pastor-theologian thus began with the academy and spread to the general public, primarily through his written publications and the ST. These two avenues of engagement, as evidenced above, were extremely influential and effective during the Downgrade toward those under his care as pastor-theologian. Ministers were trained to be committed to biblical truth and build the church as a public witness to Christ's kingdom. The Christian public read Spurgeon's apologetic for the truth of Scripture as normative for the Christian life as well as the deficiencies within "new thought" in the eyes of God. Denominationally, Spurgeon sought to influence the Union toward adopting an evangelical creed and to reject higher critical views, but they tragically ignored him.⁹⁵ The moment was urgent. It was time for decision. Truth or error, allegiance to the Lord or advance against him was the core of the conflict in Spurgeon's polemic.

While his polemic is powerfully obvious in the pastor's college and public square, Spurgeon's influence as pastor theologian comes to its zenith in his Metropolitan Tabernacle pulpit ministry. This work examines his sermons from 1887-1892 in *The*

⁹⁴ Spurgeon, "This Must Be A Soldiers' Battle," *The Sword and The Trowel*, December 1889, 635.

⁹⁵ Colquit notes, "Spurgeon never returned to the Baptist Union of Britain. The majority of Baptist churches remained in the Union. The object of the Downgrade Controversy was not to form another denomination. Spurgeon's objective lay in another direction, namely, the purgation of doctrinal and Scriptural error from the church of Jesus Christ." Henry Franklin Colquitt, "The Soteriology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Revealed in His Sermons and Controversial Writings" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1986), 126-27.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, the most comprehensive collection of his sermons available.

The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit

Charles Spurgeon was a brilliant missionary strategist, prolific writer, benevolent philanthropist, and devoted educator. But it was for preaching that he was and is still remembered and revered. His contemporaries and successive generations referred to him as “The Prince of Preachers.” The Metropolitan Tabernacle was the center of his preaching ministry, boasting a membership over five thousand, even during the years of the Downgrade Controversy. Spurgeon’s polemic preaching during the Downgrade reveals how he viewed his pastoral responsibility as guardian of the flock in the midst of theological controversy. Some believe his preaching took on decidedly less evangelistic tones, though the current author disagrees with that assessment. In fact, Spurgeon’s sermons remained evangelistic, adding significant theological definition for the sake of those in his congregation as they faced the errors of the Downgrade.⁹⁶

To examine and analyze Spurgeon’s preaching from the perspective of a pastor-theologian and truth-bound, strategic controversialist, a year-by-year filtering is required. This is accomplished first by noting the number of sermons preached by Spurgeon in each year. Spurgeon preached on most Sunday mornings and evenings, but often on Thursday evenings as well, even during the Downgrade years. Indeed, during the primary period of controversy from 1887-1891 he preached over 475 sermons. He mentioned the Downgrade from the pulpit at times, and thus, an analysis of Spurgeon’s

⁹⁶ Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 287. Drummond notes, “It seems that Spurgeon’s early ministry was in some sense more evangelistically effective than were his later days. As he matured, as suggested, the shift of his emphasis tended to turn more to pastoral preaching. As Spurgeon himself grew older and his responsibilities increased, his entire ministry took on more of a pastoral tone.” Ibid. Larry Michael agrees with Drummond when he says, “He [Spurgeon] was diverted somewhat from the main evangelistic task by his defense of doctrines and his increasing problem with illness. His concern for error and the downgrading of evangelical Christianity was evident in sermons like, ‘A Dirge for the Downgrade,’ in 1889.” Larry James Michael, “The Effects of Controversy on the Evangelistic Ministry of C.H. Spurgeon” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988), 280.

interaction with the controversy itself is presented.⁹⁷ Spurgeon mentions the controversy each year in particular ways, using particular terms. He uses the phrase “Downgrade” in reference to the controversy few times. The majority of his references to the conflict come in oft-used phrases such as “new thought,” or, “modern thought,” or, “new theology/doctrine.” At times he flatly refers to the conflict using the word “heresy.” Each direct reference to the controversy is observed through the pastor-theologian taxonomy and polemic filter in order to clearly see how he preached as a truth-bound, strategic, controversialist pastor-theologian. Simply put, when Spurgeon addressed the conflict directly, how did he do so? What language did he use? What rhetorical strategies did he employ? What larger pastoral aims appear in his interactions?

An additional layer of analysis is also necessary, since Spurgeon didn’t reference the Downgrade in every sermon. He did, however, address particular theological topics during the Downgrade years that provide insight into his intentions as a pastor-theologian to build up the people of God. This analysis is broader, focusing on thematic elements within his preaching rather than particular terms. Spurgeon primarily emphasized the inspiration and authority of the Bible as well as the centrality and sufficiency of the substitutionary atonement of Christ. In this broader analysis, his pastoral aim is more prominent than his polemic, though his rhetorical strategy is clear.

It should also be noted that there is overlap between the specific references made to the controversy and the larger thematic intentions of Spurgeon’s preaching during these years. That is, during many of his messages addressing thematic elements of the authority of Scripture or the centrality of the atonement there are also direct references to the Downgrade Controversy. This is to be expected, as Spurgeon saw these as the core doctrines under attack.

⁹⁷ See appendixes 3, 4.

The analysis of Spurgeon's preaching thus encompasses sermons preached in each year from 1887-1892 looking first at references made to the Downgrade Controversy to understand his polemic as pastor-theologian. Next, an analysis of Spurgeon's preaching covers sermons preached in the same period referencing broader theological themes also to understand his polemic as pastor-theologian.

Sermons Preached in 1887

The first article on the Downgrade Controversy appeared in *The Sword and The Trowel* in March of 1887. Spurgeon referenced the controversy from the pulpit many times during the year. The articles touched off the controversy in earnest, but Spurgeon had begun laying homiletic kindling at The Metropolitan Tabernacle.

Sermons for the time present. In May of 1887, Spurgeon addressed the Downgrade Controversy during a message on Luke 18:8, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" In this sermon, he addressed the criticism of Scripture during the Downgrade with pastoral concern for the church. He asserted that in some places the greatest source of unfaithfulness to Scripture was the Christian pulpit. He noted, "If this is the case, what must become of the churches, and what must come to the outlying world? Will Jesus find faith in the earth when he comes?"⁹⁸ Here, as pastor-theologian, he laid the responsibility for biblical fidelity at the feet of the local church. The polemic means he used to address such ecclesial unfaithfulness is characterized by Schopenhauer and Dascal as "Choosing Favorable Metaphors." In this stratagem, Schopenhauer notes that the rhetor betrays his purpose by the terminology used. Spurgeon uses many favorable metaphors in this message regarding the criticism of Scripture.

⁹⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, 1861-1917* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1974), 33:284.

Men have eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil till they think themselves gods. Revealed truth is not now a doctrine to be believed, but a proposition to be discussed. The loving woman at Jesus' feet is cast out to make room for the traitor kissing Christ's cheek. Like Belshazzar, our men of modern thought are drinking out of the vessels of Jehovah's sanctuary in honor of their own deities. The idea of child-like faith is scouted, and he is regarded as the most honest man that can doubt the most and pour most contempt upon the authority of the divine word. If this continues we may well say, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"⁹⁹

He references Adam and Eve eating forbidden fruit and connects that action to the questioning or doubting of Scripture. He references the sinning woman in Luke 7 being exchanged for Judas, calling those questioning the Scripture traitors to Christ himself. Finally, he connects those of "modern thought" to blasphemous Belshazzar. These metaphors are effective and assuredly favorable to Spurgeon's argument. Schopenhauer notes that using a favorable metaphor is the most popular, oft-used stratagem, and Spurgeon indeed used the technique often.¹⁰⁰

While favorable metaphors were frequent in Spurgeon's preaching, he didn't reply solely on this method when referencing the Downgrade. In his March 24 message (the same month the initial Downgrade article was released), Spurgeon focused on those who believed the gospel, but did so as the "word of men" from 1 Thessalonians 2:13-14. He crafted an analogy of those holding differing views on Scripture, one from Professor

⁹⁹ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 33:284.

¹⁰⁰ In his July 3 message, he compared his stand in the Downgrade to a Roman sentinel standing in Pompeii. He said, "As the Roman sentinel in Pompeii stood to his post even when the city was destroyed, so do I stand to the truth of the atonement though the church is being buried beneath the boiling mud-showers of modern heresy. Everything else can wait, but this one truth must be proclaimed with a voice of thunder." Ibid., 374. Later, he compared "the bulk" of people to sheep willing to follow any leader. He noted, "...if the ringleader should happen to be an infidel or a new-theology man, all the worse..." Ibid., 537. In an October message he referenced so-called advancements in theological thought by saying, "Certain vainglorious minds are advancing—advancing from the rock to the abyss. They are making progress from truth to falsehood." Ibid., 532. On December 18, Spurgeon spoke of his belief in the short-lived nature of modern thought. He said, "You may preach your speculations, and tell them "modern thought" has done away with the old gospel, but as soon as the Holy Spirit shows them their state by nature, and their future danger, they sweep all this rubbish away. As the mower lays the grass in swaths to dry in the sun when he has passed up and down the field, so will the nations of the earth sweep away the green and flowery growths of human philosophy, and either give them to beasts to eat, or cast them into the oven. When men once know what they want, they will have it, despite priests or princes, scientists or sceptics. Oh, it must be so! This dire need of men must be met: the word of the Lord cannot be bound." Ibid., 674.

White, another from Professor Black, and yet another from Professor Gray. His response is sharp, “All these different ‘views’ are supposed to be very much upon a par. Beloved friends, this is not our way; there is the truth of God, and there is a lie.”¹⁰¹ In this example, he reduces differing opinions about the text of Scripture to opinions as to either its truthfulness or error. In this way, he used Schopenhauer’s stratagem of “generalization” where the rhetor generalizes a matter and argues against it. The concern with Professors Black, White, and Gray is over their acceptance of Scripture as true or not.

The most deliberate address Spurgeon gave in 1887 regarding the Downgrade Controversy came in a message on October 30 entitled, “A Sermon for the Time Present.” His text was Zephaniah 3:16-18. Regarding the relevance of the text for the time, Spurgeon said, “If the Lord had fixed his eye upon the condition of his church just now and had written this passage only for this year of grace 1887, it could scarcely have been more adapted to the occasion.”¹⁰² In each heading within his outline, he compares the dilemma of the people of God to the current conflict in which he and his people were engaged. In addition, he contrasts the necessity of fidelity to God and Scripture with the prevalence of devotion to the ideas and inventions of men.

It is a sad affliction when in our solemn assemblies the brilliance of the gospel light is dimmed by error. The clearness of the testimony is spoiled when doubtful voices are scattered among the people, and those who ought to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, are telling out for doctrines the imaginations of men, and the inventions of the age. Instead of revelation, we have philosophy, falsely so-called; instead of divine infallibility, we have surmises and larger hopes. The gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, is taught as the

¹⁰¹ He concludes, “To receive the gospel as the word of man is not to receive the gospel; but to receive it as a revelation from God, true, sure, infallible, so as to risk your whole soul on it, and to feel that there is no risk—this is to receive the gospel in truth. After this manner we receive it with the deepest reverence; not as a thing that I am to judge, but as that which judges me; not as a matter of opinion, but as a sure truth with which I must make my opinion agree. It makes all the difference whether we rule the truth or the truth rules us.” *Ibid.*, 476.

¹⁰² Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 33:602.

production of progress, a growth, a thing to be amended and corrected year by year.¹⁰³

Comparison and contrast are strategies effectively used by Spurgeon in this message, but he takes up the device of “Holy War” as well.¹⁰⁴ In this strategy, the rhetor aims to convince the audience that God is on the side of the speaker and that a failure to side with the speaker is a failure to defend God. Spurgeon returned to this device at other times, but he uses it forcefully in this particular message.

Let the times roll on, they cannot affect our God. Let troubles rush upon us like a tempest, but they shall not come nigh unto us now that he is our defense. Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered! When he is with us they that hate him must flee before him. Be it our concern so to live that we may never grieve away the Spirit of God. Beloved, there is such abundant consolation in the fact of the presence of God with us, that if we could only feel the power of it at this moment, we should enter into rest, and our heaven would begin below. Oh, that we might see a great revival of religion! This is what we want before all things. This would smite the enemy upon the cheek-bone and break the teeth of the adversary. If tens of thousands of souls were immediately saved by the sovereign grace of God, what a rebuke it would be to those who deny the faith!¹⁰⁵

Here, he clearly demonstrates his polemic position as a truth-bound, strategic controversialist. He is reinforcing the idea that God is on the side of those who take his view in the controversy as he is bound by that belief himself. This is not mere rhetorical

¹⁰³ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 33:602. He continues using this strategy elsewhere in the sermon, comparing worldly conformity of the people of God seen in the text to the worldly conformity of those engaged in the current controversy. He said, “Those who are unspiritual care nothing for truth or grace: they look to finances, and numbers, and respectability. Utterly carnal men care for none of these things; and so long as the political aims of dissenters are progressing, and there is an advance in social position, it is enough for them. But men whose spirits are of God would sooner see the faithful persecuted than see them desert the truth, sooner see churches in the depths of poverty full of holy zeal than rich churches dead in worldliness. Spiritual men care for the church even when she is in an evil case and cast down by her adversaries.” Ibid., 604.

¹⁰⁴ See appendix 2.

¹⁰⁵ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 33:607. He continued to exhort his people to take his view and stand with God against the enemy. He said, “When Athanasius was told that everybody was denying the Deity of Christ, then he said, ‘I, Athanasius, against the world’: *Athanasius contra mundum* became a proverbial expression. Brethren, it is a splendid thing to be quite alone in the warfare of the Lord. Suppose we had half-a-dozen with us. Six men are not much increase to strength, and possibly they may be a cause of weakness, by needing to be looked after. If you are quite alone, so much the better: there is the more room for God. When desertions have cleaned the place out, and left you no friend, now every corner can be filled with Deity.” Ibid., 611.

force or argument for Spurgeon. He genuinely believes that he holds the biblical, God-honoring ground and that others should join him where it is safe.

Sermons Preached in 1888

Charles Spurgeon spoke of the Downgrade Controversy in only nine percent of his messages during 1887. The controversy was new, and his views were interspersed through his discourse that year. 1888 saw a rise in his interaction with the conflict from the pulpit, both as a pastor-theologian and as a polemic rhetorician. He spoke directly to the controversy in over twenty-six percent of his preached sermons that year.

No compromise. The Downgrade Controversy had begun to pick up steam in 1888, and Spurgeon's homiletic address of the conflict subsequently increased. He continued to address the conflict from the office of pastor-theologian, inside his primary sphere of influence and involvement, The Metropolitan Tabernacle. He sought to build the body of Christ in faith and protect it from error through direct address of the theological error of the time. His polemic in these references mirrors his tendencies in 1887 to a degree, but the frequency and rhetorical sharpness of his language grew.

His usage of comparison and contrast as rhetorical strategy was often employed as a truth-bound, strategic controversialist. In this strategy, he presents the biblical pattern of belief and the proximity of his people to that pattern. In contrast, he points to those in the "new thought movement" who held errant or opposite views to the biblical paradigm. Early in 1888 he simply noted, "Jehovah our God is a consuming fire. We love him, not as he is improved upon by 'modern thought,' but as he reveals himself in Scripture."¹⁰⁶ Supposed "improvements" upon the gospel were derided by Spurgeon frequently. In a February message, he addressed modern improvements to the gospel, contrasting the practice with biblical fidelity.

¹⁰⁶ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 34:41.

We are told to-day that this is an age of progress, and therefore we must accept an improved gospel. Every man is to be his own lawyer, and every man his own savior. We are getting on in the direction of every man putting away his own sin, just as every chimney should consume its own smoke. But, dear friends, we do not believe these idle dreams. We want no new gospel, no modern salvation. Our conviction is that Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” The way that Paul went to heaven is good enough for me.¹⁰⁷

Following his contrast of biblical fidelity with “modern salvation,” Spurgeon compared the current conflict to that of the Reformers in the sixteenth century. He connected the Downgrade struggle to that of the Reformation, urging his audience to stay on the right side of orthodoxy.

Yet imagine that in those ages past, Luther, Zwingle, Calvin, and their compeers had said, “The world is out of order; but if we try to set it right we shall only make a great row, and get ourselves into disgrace. Let us go to our chambers, put on our night-caps, and sleep over the bad times, and perhaps when we wake up things will have grown better.” Such conduct on their part would have entailed upon us a heritage of error. Age after age would have gone down into the infernal deeps, and the pestiferous bogs of error would have swallowed all. These men loved the faith and the name of Jesus too well to see them trampled on. Note what we owe them, and let us pay to our sons the debt we owe our fathers. It is today as it was in the Reformers’ days. Decision is needed. Here is the day for the man, where is the man for the day? We who have had the gospel passed to us by martyr hands dare not trifle with it, nor sit by and hear it denied by traitors, who pretend to love it, but inwardly abhor every line of it. The faith I hold bears upon it marks of the blood of my ancestors.¹⁰⁸

He plainly says, “It is today as it was in the Reformers’ days,” urging his people to see the comparison and take his position of reformation in the conflict. In a March message on the infallibility of Scripture, Spurgeon gave another contrast between Isaiah, who revered Scripture, and those of “modern thought,” who revealed an irreverence for Scripture in their desire to see it improved upon.¹⁰⁹ Another example of

¹⁰⁷ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 34:80.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁰⁹ Spurgeon explained, “It is noteworthy how he [Isaiah] revered the written Word. The Spirit of God rested upon him personally, without measure, and he could speak out of his own mind the revelation of God, and yet he continually quoted the law and the prophets, and the Psalms; and always he treated the sacred writings with intense reverence, strongly in contrast with the irreverence of ‘modern thought.’ I am sure, brethren, we cannot be wrong in imitating the example of our divine Lord in our reverence for that Scripture, which cannot be broken. I say, if he, the anointed of the Spirit, and able to speak himself as God’s mouth, yet quoted the sacred writings, and used the holy Book in his teachings, how much more should we, who have no spirit of prophecy resting upon us, and are not able to speak new revelations, come back to the law and to the testimony, and value every single word which ‘The mouth of

comparison comes in July, where Spurgeon compared “modern-thought” to the behavior of the Sadducees in the New Testament. His message covers the text of Acts 5 and in mentioning the persecution of the apostles, he connects the Sadducees to people in his own day.

The second persecution of the church, in which all the apostles were put into the common prison, was mainly brought about by the sect of the Sadducees. These, as you know, were the Broad School, the liberals, the advanced thinkers, the modern-thought people of the day. If you want a bitter sneer, a biting sarcasm, or a cruel action, I commend you to these large-minded gentlemen.¹¹⁰

Spurgeon compared “modern thought” to a tavern where deadly substances were consumed and contrasted that image with the “pure spiritual food” of Scripture.¹¹¹ He praised his congregation for their belief in an “old, old, gospel,” rather than those of “modern thought” who had theological difficulties with the inspiration of Scripture and the atonement of Christ.¹¹²

Spurgeon continued to use other familiar rhetorical strategies in 1888 alongside comparison and contrast. He used the strategy of “Holy War” often. He called the Christianity of those in the “modern school” into question over their views on the atonement.¹¹³ He characterized those of “modern thought” as “revilers,” and “ferocious against the gospel.”¹¹⁴ In a message focused squarely on the controversy itself, Spurgeon

the Lord hath spoken?” Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 34:145.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 373.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 459.

¹¹² Spurgeon said, “I am glad that you have no difficulties about the inspiration of Scripture, or the Deity of our Lord, or the fact of his atonement. You do not befog yourself with ‘modern thought,’ but you avow your belief in the old, old gospel.” Ibid., 471.

¹¹³ Spurgeon noted, “I have been made to feel really ill through the fierce and blasphemous words that have been used of late by gentlemen of the modern school concerning the precious blood. I will not defile my lips by a repetition of the thrice-cursed things which they have dared to utter while trampling on the blood of Jesus. Everywhere throughout this divine Book you meet with the precious blood. How can he call himself a Christian who speaks in flippant and profane language of the blood of atonement?” Ibid., 178.

¹¹⁴ He remarked, “Sceptics, swearers, revilers of godliness, and “modern thought” men: these revile the cross, and are ferocious against the gospel.” Ibid., 255.

charges his opponents with rejecting the gospel and assimilating the church into the world.

1888 is not 1648. What was good and great three hundred years ago is mere cant today. That is what “modern thought” is telling us; and under its guidance all religion is being toned down. Spiritual religion is despised, and a fashionable morality is set up in its place. Do yourself up tidily on Sunday; behave yourself; and believe everything except what you read in the Bible, and you will be all right. Be fashionable and think with those who profess to be scientific—this is the first and great commandment of the modern school; and the second is like unto it—do not be singular, but be as worldly as your neighbours. Thus is Isaac going down into Padan-aram: thus is the church going down to the world.¹¹⁵

Spurgeon thus characterizes those in the “modern school” as committing betrayal in an effort to adapt the church to the world. It is an act of treason, using his rhetoric. His opponents had intentionally chosen to be at war with God, and he pressed his audience to remain committed to the true gospel, lest they find themselves damned by God.¹¹⁶

Finally, Spurgeon also spoke in metaphors during his interactions with the controversy in 1888. His usage of metaphor has been mentioned in limited measure, as he compared modern thought to a tavern and those holding it to Sadducees.¹¹⁷ But Spurgeon used particularly favorable metaphors to advance his argument against his Downgrade opponents in other places as well. In September of 1888 he preached a message on Revelation 12:11 and in defending the doctrine of the atonement addressed those of

¹¹⁵ He continued, “Men seem to say—It is of no use going on in the old way, fetching out one here and another there from the great mass. We want a quicker way. To wait till people are born again, and become followers of Christ, is a long process: let us abolish the separation between the regenerate and unregenerate. Come into the church, all of you, converted or unconverted. You have good wishes and good resolutions; that will do: don’t trouble about more. It is true you do not believe the gospel, but neither do we. You believe something or other. Come along; if you do not believe anything, no matter; your “honest doubt” is better by far than faith. “But,” say you, “nobody talks so.” Possibly they do not use the same words, but this is the real meaning of the present-day religion; this is the drift of the times. I can justify the broadest statement I have made by the action or by the speech of certain ministers, who are treacherously betraying our holy religion under pretense of adapting it to this progressive age. The new plan is to assimilate the church to the world, and so include a larger area within its bounds.” Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 34:560.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 564.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 459; 373.

contrary persuasion as “dogs.” He calls on those in his hearing to “let the dogs bark” and continue to preach the gospel they knew. He uses another metaphor to describe the contrary views of his opponents, calling them “vipers of heresy.” His language is strong and his usage of metaphors clear. Describing contrary views using snake language puts his opponents in league with the serpent of old, the devil himself.¹¹⁸ Spurgeon continues with other favorable metaphors, describing modern heresy as a child’s merry-go-round, recycling old error as though it were new.¹¹⁹ He described the modern god of evolutionary error plainly, saying, “The god of modern thought is a monkey. If those who believed in evolution said their prayers rightly, they would begin them with, “Our Father, which art up a tree.”¹²⁰

Spurgeon again evidenced his polemic position in 1888 as a truth-bound, strategic controversialist. He argued that God is on the side of those who take his view in the controversy through the use of favorable metaphors, comparison and contrast, and the rhetorical strategy of “Holy War.” Spurgeon spoke more often to the controversy in 1888 than in the previous year, and he argued that his position and the position of the Tabernacle was the biblically faithful, orthodox view.

¹¹⁸ Spurgeon noted, “You cannot be clinging to an atoning sacrifice, and still delight in modern heresies. Those who deny inspiration are sure to get rid of the vicarious atonement, because it will not allow their errors. Let us go on proclaiming the doctrine of the great sacrifice, and this will kill the vipers of heresy. Let us uplift the cross, and never mind what other people say. Perhaps we have taken too much notice of them already. Let the dogs bark, it is their nature to. Go on preaching Christ crucified. God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ!” Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 34:513.

¹¹⁹ He continued, “Yes, we have seen rubbish venerated as a precious thing, and anon the precious thing carted away as so much lumber. Like a child’s merry-go-round at a fair, heresy is a revolution of the old things over and over again; yet people think it new. The present idols of the mind are just as worthless as those of former times.” *Ibid.*, 663.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* He continued, “Did they not all come from a monkey, according to their own statement? They came by ‘development,’ from the basest of material, and they do not belie their original. If you are not well acquainted with this new gospel, I would not advise you to be acquainted with it; it is a sheer, clear waste of time to know anything about it at all. The moderns are able to believe anything except their Bibles. They credulously receive any statement, so long as it is not in the Scriptures; but if it is founded on Scripture, they are, of course, prepared to doubt and quibble and cavil straight away. The credulity of the new theologians is as amazing as their skepticism. But we shall see the monkey-god go down yet, and evolution will be ridiculed as it deserves to be.” *Ibid.*, 663-64.

Sermons Preached in 1889

Spurgeon spoke of the Downgrade Controversy in twenty-two percent of his messages during 1889. The controversy was in full swing and his views were reinforced via his discourse that year. He preached again as both pastor-theologian and as a polemic rhetorician. The larger aim of his homiletic when addressing the controversy during these years was pastoral, insofar as he aimed to attack the theological error he saw as a danger to his people. His polemic reflects this strategy, as he relied on contrasts and metaphors of good against evil to separate his people from the danger of false teaching.

A dirge for the downgrade. The Downgrade Controversy was well-developed by 1889 and Spurgeon addressed it with resolute attention. His polemic followed patterns observed in previous messages. He used the rhetorical strategy of comparison and contrast often. In so doing, he revealed his intention as truth-bound, strategic controversialist to get his audience to see his view as the side of orthodoxy and truth, and to see the opposing side as that of error and folly. In February, Spurgeon preached a message entitled, “My Own Personal Holdfast,” in which he expounded upon Micah 7:7 discussing prayer. In a section of the message regarding the believer’s confidence in prayer, he contrasted the unchanging nature of the promises of God with the constantly changing nature of philosophy.

According to modern thinkers, what is true on Monday may be false on Tuesday; and what is certain on Wednesday it may be our duty to doubt on a Thursday, and so on, world without end. Every change of the moon sees a change in the teaching of the new theology. Said I not well that the smallest promise of God is worth more than all that ever has been taught, or ever shall be taught, by skeptical philosophers and speculative theologians? Let God be true, but every man a liar. Whatever may be the truth in science, God is true, and on his promise we build our confidence. We will distrust the witness of all men and angels, but we cannot, we dare not, distrust the Lord.¹²¹

¹²¹ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 35:79.

Spurgeon thus compared popular philosophy and biblical orthodoxy as ways of viewing the world and contrasted their consistency. Popular philosophy had to change in order to remain popular, but biblical orthodoxy remained the same, whether popular or not, according to Spurgeon.¹²² In a May 5 message entitled “The Bible Tried and Proved,” Spurgeon began a discussion concerning the infallibility of Scripture through simple logical reasoning. He asserted that objections to Scripture’s truthfulness could be answered by archaeological evidence and personal testimony. He followed that assertion by contrasting the assumed of infallibility those arguing against Scripture’s truthfulness with clear evidence to the contrary. Simply put, Spurgeon argued that opponents of Scripture were willing to believe anything other than Scripture.¹²³

¹²² Spurgeon’s contrast was increasingly stark throughout the message. “The history of philosophy is in brief the history of fools. All the sets of philosophers that have yet lived have been more successful in contradicting those that came before them than in anything else. It is well when the children of Ammon and Moab stand up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir utterly to slay and destroy them; the enemies of God are good at the business of destroying each other. Within a few years the evolutionists will be cut in pieces by some new dreamers. The reigning philosophers of the present period have in them so much of the vitality of madness that they will be a perpetual subject of contempt; and I venture to prophesy that, before my head shall lie in the grave, there will hardly be a notable man left who will not have washed his hands of the present theory. That which is taught to-day for a certainty by *savants* will soon have been so disproved as to be trodden down as the mire in the streets. The Lord’s truth liveth and reigneth, but man’s inventions are but for an hour. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet; but as I have lived to see marvelous changes in the dogmas of philosophy, I expect to see still more. See how they have shifted. They used to tell us that the natural depravity of our race was a myth—they scouted the idea that we were born in sin, and declared with mimic sentiment that every dear babe was perfect. Now what do they tell us? Why, that if we do not inherit the original sin of Adam, or any other foregoing man; yet we have upon us the hereditary results of the transgressions of the primeval oysters, or other creatures, from which we have ascended or descended. We bear in our bodies, if not in our souls, the effects of all the tricks of the monkeys whose future was entailed upon us by evolution. This nonsense is to be received by learned societies with patience, and accepted by us with reverence, while the simple statements of Holy Writ are regarded as mythical or incredible. I only mention this folly for the sake of showing that the opponents of the Word of God constantly shift their positions, like quicksand at a river’s mouth; but they are equally dangerous, whatever position they occupy. In the announcement of heredity philosophical thought has deprived itself of all power to object to the Biblical doctrine of original sin. This is of no consequence to us, who care nothing for their objections; but it ought to be some sort of hint to them.” Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 35:79-80.

¹²³ Spurgeon notes, “I do not hesitate to say that I believe that there is no mistake whatever in the original Holy Scriptures from beginning to end. There may be, and there are, mistakes of translation; for translators are not inspired; but even the historical facts are correct. Doubt has been cast upon them here and there, and at times with great show of reason—doubt which it has been impossible to meet for a season; but only give space enough, and search enough, and the stones buried in the earth cry out to confirm each letter of Scripture. Old manuscripts, coins, and inscriptions are on the side of the Book, and against it there are nothing but theories, and the fact that many an event in history has no other record but that which the Book affords us. The new theory denies infallibility to the words of God, but practically imputes it to the judgments of men; at least, this is all the infallibility which they can get at. I protest that I will rather risk my soul with a guide inspired from heaven, than with the differing leaders who arise from the earth at the call of ‘modern thought.’” *Ibid.*, 257.

Spurgeon returned often to the contrast between his view of doctrine with his Downgrade opponents, pointing to their obsession with creating something “new.” Spurgeon made it clear that their “new doctrine” was not actually new, but merely recycled heresy. He noted, “It is truly so; the old, old gospel is always new. The modern doctrine is only new in name; it is, after all, nothing but a hash of stale heresies and moldy speculations.”¹²⁴ He argued elsewhere that while his opponents argued for a new gospel, there was no life in it.

My learned brethren are trying very hard to make a new gospel for this nineteenth century; but you teachers had better go on with the old one. The advanced men cannot put life into their theory. This living Word is the finger of God. That simple grain of mustard seed must be made by God, or not at all; and he must put life into the gospel, or it will not have power in the heart. The gospel of Sunday-school teachers, that gospel of “Believe and live,” however men may despise it, has God-given life in it. You cannot make another which can supplant it; for you cannot put life into your invention. Go on and use the one living truth with your children, for nothing else has God’s life in it.¹²⁵

Simply put, Spurgeon depicted the controversy as a contrast between the old gospel which led to eternal life, and a “new gospel,” leading nowhere. For him, the Downgrade was not an issue of nuance or minutiae. It was a contrast between life and death, truth and error, good and evil. In a November message, he addressed it in such stark terms.

Would any man jeopardize his life to hear a “modern-thought” sermon? My brethren, there is something in the old gospel worth hearing: there is an election of grace most precious, a redemption which really redeemed, and a work of grace

¹²⁴ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 35:80.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 570. Spurgeon asserted not only that there was no life in the “new thought,” but that there was also nothing worth dying for in it. He said, “This kind of doctrine does not suit the year 1889. If you go over to Scotland, and see where the Covenanters’ graves are, anybody who thinks according to the spirit of this age will say that they were just a set of fools to have been so stubborn and so strict about doctrine as to die for it. Why, really, there is not anything in the new philosophy that is worth dying for! I wonder whether there is any “modern thought” doctrine that would be worth the purchase of a cat’s life. According to the teaching of the broad school, what is supposed to be true to-day may not be true to-morrow, so it is not worth dying for. We may as well put off the dying till the thing is altered; and if we wait a month, it will be altered, and thus, at the last, you may get the old creed back again. The Lord send it and send us yet a race of men who will obey what he bids them, and do what he tells them, and believe what he teaches them, and lay their own wills down in complete obedience to their Lord and Master! Such a people will feel free from responsibility.” Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 39:344.

within which ensures final perseverance and eternal glory. The wish-wash of today's preaching would have gained the preacher in "the desert" no congregation; but when untold treasures are displayed, saints will come to hear of them. That truth, which is a matter of life and death to you, will take hold of your heart and soul, and you will never part with it. I long to see a race of real men, who will know the truth, and believe it in real fashion: men who have received a kingdom which cannot be moved; palaces of God whose foundations are in the rock.¹²⁶

Spurgeon not only used contrast to differentiate his belief from his Downgrade opponents, but he also returned to metaphor, often metaphor particularly favorable to his position in the conflict. In a message aimed squarely at the Downgrade Controversy called "A Dirge for the Downgrade and a Song for Faith," he laments the modern theological state, but assures his people they are not alone, much like the prophets who had not yet bowed the knee to Baal.¹²⁷ He continues in his "dirge" to mourn the error committed by his opponents in the Downgrade by stringing favorable metaphors together, highlighting the depth of theological error.

The latter-day gospel is not the gospel by which we were saved. To me it seems a tangle of ever-changing dreams. It is, by the confession of its inventors, the outcome of the period, the monstrous birth of a boasted "progress," the scum from the caldron of conceit. It has not been given by the infallible revelation of God: it does not pretend to have been. It is not divine: it has no inspired Scripture at its back. It is, when it touches the cross, an enemy; when it speaks of him who died thereon, it is a deceitful friend. Many are its sneers at the truth of substitution: it is irate at the mention of the precious blood. Many a pulpit, where Christ was once lifted high in all the glory of his atoning death, is now profaned by those who cavil at justification by faith. In fact, men are not now to be saved by faith, but by doubt.¹²⁸

He called the "latter-day gospel" a "monstrous birth," the "scum from the caldron of conceit," a sneering, "deceitful" enemy. He used still more metaphors to warn

¹²⁶ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 39:611.

¹²⁷ Spurgeon said, "The plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture, as we have understood it from our childhood, is assailed in a thousand insidious ways. The fall of Adam is treated as a fable; and original sin and imputed righteousness are both denounced. As for the doctrines of grace, they are ridiculed as altogether out of vogue, and even the solemn sanctions of the law are scorned as bugbears of the dark ages. For many a year, by the grand old truths of the gospel, sinners were converted, and saints were edified, and the world was made to know that there is a God in Israel; but these are too antiquated for the present cultured race of superior beings. They are going to regenerate the world by Democratic Socialism and set up a kingdom for Christ without the new birth or the pardon of sin. Truly, the Lord has not taken away the seven thousand that have not bowed the knee to Baal, but they are, in most cases, hidden away, even as Obadiah hid the prophets in a cave." *Ibid.*, 266.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

of the devastating effects of false doctrine. He noted, “When false doctrine breaks forth like the waterfloods, it will surge around all our houses.”¹²⁹ In a July message he described how repulsive modern theology was to him using a musical metaphor.¹³⁰ In an August message he used a powerful culinary metaphor to describe the poison of “new thought” offered to people in the name of religion.

Moreover, I have been informed by those who know most about it, that the theology of the future has not yet crystallized itself sufficiently to be defined. As far as I can see, it will take a century or two before its lovers have licked it into shape; for they have not yet settled what its shape is to be. While the grass is growing, the steed is starving. The new bread is baking: the arsenic is well mixed within it; but the oven is not very hot, and the dough is not turned into loaf yet. I should advise you to keep to that bread of which your fathers ate, the bread which came down from heaven. Personally I am not willing to make any change, even if the new bread were ready on the table; for new bread is not very digestible, and the arsenic of doubt is not according to my desire. I shall keep to the old manna till I cross the Jordan, and eat the old corn of the land of Canaan. Are you hopeful of finding comfort in new speculations? Is that the “secret thing”? Then you feed upon the wind.¹³¹

Spurgeon used such graphic metaphors to describe the state of theology during the Downgrade controversy in an effort to illustrate the difference between truth and error. His language marked off his opponents clearly, setting them up as those making an advance upon God and his Word. Whether through comparison and contrast or metaphorical analogy, Spurgeon’s polemic was aimed at creating a dividing line between truth and error, calling all in his hearing to join him on the right side of the line.

¹²⁹ He continued, “There cannot be a deficiency in the pulpit without its bringing mischief to our households. We are members of one body, and if any part of the body suffers, every other part of the body will have to suffer too. If worldliness abounds, as it does, we shall see our children becoming worldly; we shall see them sucked into the vortex of infidelity and frivolity which now seems to sweep down and carry into the abyss so many hopeful young men and women. None of us will be able to escape scot-free from the terrible damage which evil is working all around.” Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 39:276.

¹³⁰ Spurgeon said, “It is so with my ministry: with Christ, and Christ alone am I at home. Progressive theology! No string of my soul will vibrate to its touch. New divinity! Evolution! Modern thought! My harp is silent to these strange fingers; but to Christ, and Christ alone, it answers with all the music of which it is capable.” *Ibid.*, 392.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 440. This could, along with many of the aforementioned metaphors, be characterized using the rhetorical strategy “Holy War” as well. Spurgeon structured his arguments most often with only two options: the side of eternal truth, or the side of eternal error.

Sermons Preached in 1890

Charles Spurgeon spoke of the Downgrade Controversy less in 1890 than in 1889. He mentioned the conflict in only 17 percent of his messages, down from 22 percent in the previous year. Similar to his messages in previous years, Spurgeon's rhetorical strategy in 1890 consisted of comparison, contrast, and extensive use of metaphor.

The test of taste. Spurgeon's polemic begins with his commitment to Scripture as theological foundation. For him, the commitment to the inerrancy and truthfulness of the Bible was the core preventative defense against "modern thought." In a March message, he commended the study of Scripture as fact in an age of theological fiction.

I am afraid there is but little Bible searching nowadays. If the Word of God had been diligently studied there would not have been so general a departure from its teachings. Bible-reading people seldom go off to modern theology. Those who feed upon the Word of God enjoy it too much to give it up. Comparing spiritual things with spiritual, they learn to prize all revealed truth, and they hold fast the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Dear young people, if you never read a single book of romance you will lose nothing; but if you do not read your Bibles you will lose everything. This is the age of fiction, and hence the age of speculation and error: leave fiction, and give yourself wholly to the truth.¹³²

He returned to this contrast of foundations in May, while preaching on Romans 10:11. He noted, "In this enlightened age little is made of Scripture; the tendency is to undermine men's faith in the Bible and persuade them to rest on something else."¹³³ The goal of those holding to "enlightened," or "modern" thought was to attack or undermine

¹³² Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 36:163.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 278. He returned again to this kind of contrast of foundations in December of 1890, when discussing the historicity of the resurrection. He said, "Our religion is not based upon opinions, but upon facts. We hear persons sometimes saying, 'Those are your views, and these are ours.' Whatever your 'views' may be, is a small matter; what are the facts of the case? We must, after all, if we want a firm foundation, come down to matters of fact. Now, the great facts of the gospel are that God was incarnate in Christ Jesus, that he lived here a life of holiness and love, that he died upon the cross for our sins, that he was buried in the tomb of Joseph, that the third day he rose again from the dead, that after a while he ascended to his Father's throne where he now sitteth, and that he shall come by-and-by, to be our Judge, and in that day the dead in Christ shall rise by virtue of their union with him." Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 38:601.

confidence in Scripture, and Spurgeon sought to address that attack. Indeed, he exhorted his people to reject contemporary arguments against the authority of Scripture.¹³⁴

Along with his contrast of biblical foundations, Spurgeon reveals his polemic in discussing the difficulty of keeping people connected to the truth of the gospel itself. In his December message defending the resurrection he blames the difficulty of keeping men in the truth on the “modern thought” emphasis on works.

The hardest thing in the world seems to be to keep people to this truth, for I have noticed that much of the modern-thought doctrine is nothing but old self-righteousness tricked out again. It is bidding men still to trust in themselves, to trust in their moral character, to trust in their spiritual aspirations, or something or other. I stand here to-night to say to you that the basis of your hope is not even your own faith, much less your own good works; but it is what Christ has done once for all, for “ye are complete in him,” and you can never be complete in any other way.¹³⁵

He contrasted “modern thought doctrine” of self-righteousness with “what Christ has done once for all.” Not only were the foundational principles different, but the central message was different as well.

Spurgeon’s usage of metaphor in 1890 was similar to patterns observed in previous years. At times he is hyperbolic and uses the metaphor in ways particularly favorable to his argument, but his rhetoric was clear and deliberate. In an April message, he returned to the theme of attacking the truthfulness of the resurrection using a metaphor of Goths and Vandals.

Here is a stone to build upon which the Goths and Vandals of modern doubt cannot tear from its place. The resurrection is as certain as any fact recorded in history.

¹³⁴ In his October 12 message, Spurgeon’s exhortations were clear. “Do not hanker after the dilutions and concoctions of ‘modern thought,’ which you will find vended in many a pulpit. Beware of dangerous foods, compounded of speculations and heresies. If you have ever tasted the true milk of the word, you will not desire any other; for there is none like it. When the other foods come into the market, say to yourself, ‘The best is good enough for me, and Christ Jesus is the best of the best. The Lord is so gracious that none can compare with him for a moment, and therefore I shall not leave him.’ Let others fly to poisoned cups of error, or intoxicating draughts of superstition, we will keep to that which is so grateful to our taste, so nourishing to our souls.” Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 36:562.

¹³⁵ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 38:609.

Jesus of Nazareth, though he was killed, did rise from the dead, and we rejoice therein.¹³⁶

In an August message he used several metaphors to describe those holding to “modern thought.” He described them as chaff driven away by the wind and dove dung.

Wherever you go you hear of “advanced thinking,” “modern thought,” and so forth. It is true that ten bushels of the stuff are not worth half a farthing in the estimate of those who hunger for spiritual food; but chaff takes up much room, and as the wind blows it about it excites great attention. A fourth part of a cab of doves’ dung, worth nothing in ordinary times, fetched a long price during the famine in Samaria; and to-day, when there is a famine of true theological learning, a great fuss is made concerning the crude speculations of vainglorious “thinkers.”¹³⁷

In a December message, he likened “new thought” ministers to Saul calling upon the witch of Endor. He argued that when a minister gives up right doctrine, he will try anything and everything to keep his ministry viable, but with little success.

What generally happens with a minister when God has gone? Well, instead of going to God, and humbling himself and crying to him for mercy, he resolves that he will buy a new organ. That will do the trick. The new organ, after all, blow it as they may, does not come to much. Well, then, he will have sensational entertainments, a Sunday-evening concert—fiddling, or something or other. If God will not help him, he is in the same plight as Saul the son of Kish. He will try music first, and if that does not render him aid, he will go to the witch of Endor, now called “modern theology,” and ask assistance there.¹³⁸

Spurgeon also used metaphor to describe how false teaching progresses. In an August message he argued first that proponents of false doctrine eventually turn on each other.

One wing of Satan’s army of doubters always destroys the other. Just now the great scientists say to the modern-thought gentlemen, and say to them very properly, “If

¹³⁶ He continued, assessing the motives of the attackers: “And this is the idle dream of men to this day: they hope to quench the gospel, to silence the doctrines of grace, to exterminate the ancient orthodoxy, and to put modern heresies in its place. Vanity of vanities! Even as the resurrection mocked the guards, the watch, the stone, so shall the revival of true godliness and the restoration of true doctrine baffle the devices of men. They that count the towers, to pull them down, and go about Zion in the hope of destroying her bulwarks, shall yet know that the virgin daughter of Zion hath shaken her head at them, and laughed them to scorn. As the Lord Jesus liveth, “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” shall remain eternally the same. Ye fools, when will ye be wise, and quit your vain rebellions? Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 36:214.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 459.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 688.

there were no serpent, and no Eve, and no Adam, and no flood, and no Noah, and no Abraham, as you tell us now that all this is a myth, then your whole old Book is a lie.” I am very much obliged to those who talk thus to the disciples of the higher criticism. They thought that they were going to have all the scientists on their side, to join them in attacking the ancient orthodoxies. There is a split in the enemy’s camp; Amalek is fighting Edom, and Edom is contending against Moab.¹³⁹

Those advocating evolution and those infatuated with higher criticism were beginning to engage one another. Higher criticism at least allowed for a partial acceptance of the authority of Scripture. Evolutionists allowed no such affirmation. Spurgeon publicized the separation between the two errant viewpoints but also noted that even if they remained united, they would not overcome the truth. He used a graphic metaphor to explain his perspective.

But suppose that they were all to agree. Well, what would happen then? I thought I saw a vision once, when I was by the seaside. To my closed eyes, there seemed to come down to the beach at Brighton a huge black horse, which went into the water, and began to drink; and I thought I heard a voice that said, “It will drink the sea dry.” My great horse grew, and grew, and grew, till it was such a huge creature that I could scarcely measure it; and still it drank, and drank, and drank. All the while the sea did not appear to alter in the least, the water was still there as deep as ever. By-and-by the animal burst, and its remains were washed up on the beach, and there it lay dead, killed by its own folly. That will be the end of this big black horse of infidelity that boasts that it is going to drink up the everlasting gospel.¹⁴⁰

Spurgeon’s opponents in the Downgrade, in his view, were destined to fail in their attacks upon the truth. His commitment to the authority of Scripture drove his arguments against his Downgrade opponents and fueled his use of comparison and contrast in illuminating theological error.

Sermons Preached in 1891

In the final year of Charles Spurgeon’s preaching ministry, he spoke of the Downgrade Controversy in 27 percent of his messages. The percentage is higher than in previous years, sadly because he preached only 56 messages that year. As with his earlier

¹³⁹ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 38:223.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

messages, Spurgeon's rhetorical strategy in 1891 consisted of comparison, contrast, and metaphor.

Is God in the camp? Spurgeon's last message was preached on June 7, 1891. Between January and June, he referenced the Downgrade Controversy 15 times. His polemic is observed in patterns similar to earlier years. He used comparison and contrast often. Early in 1891 he compared modern critics of Scripture to devils in James 2: "We read that 'the devils believe, and tremble.' They hold the faith, and feel something of the power of it, for they tremble, which is more than modern critics do."¹⁴¹ He continued to use this strategy in a March message contrasting the assertions made by modern critics with the claims of the Bible regarding the purpose of Christ's atonement.

You know what the modern babblers say: they declare that he appeared to reveal to us the goodness and love of God. This is true; but it is only the fringe of the whole truth. The fact is, that he revealed God's love in the provision of a sacrifice to put away sin. Then, they say that he appeared to exhibit perfect manhood, and to let us see what our nature ought to be. Here also is a truth; but it is only part of the sacred design. He appeared, say they, to manifest self-sacrifice, and to set us an example of love to others. By his self-denial he trampled on the selfish passions of man. We deny none of these things; and yet we are indignant at the way in which the less is made to hide the greater. To put the secondary ends into the place of the grand object is to turn the truth of God into a lie. It is easy to distort truth, by exaggerating one portion of it and diminishing another; just as the drawing of the most beautiful face may soon be made a caricature rather than a portrait by neglect of proportion. You must observe proportion if you would take a truthful view of things; and in reference to the appearing of our Lord, his first and chiefest purpose is "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."¹⁴²

In his critique of "modern babblers," he additionally pointed to their rhetorical strategy of arguing for the lesser in order to hide the greater. Simply put, his opponents promoted the secondary results of the atonement while neglecting its primary intent. He

¹⁴¹ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 37:112. In a separate message, he made a similar comparison, calling modern divines, "the devil's instruments for spreading infidelity." *Ibid.*, 334. This might be viewed by some as an ad hominem attack, but Spurgeon didn't address particular men in such cases. Instead, he referred to "modern critics," or "new-thought men." His address aimed at a group of errant teachers, not individuals.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 147.

contrasted “modern thought” proponents who distanced themselves from God with the Puritans who drew near to God through their doctrine.

Our Puritanic fathers walked with God the more readily because they believed in God as arranging everything in their daily business and domestic life; and they saw him in the history of the nation, and in all the events which transpired. The tendency of this age is to get further and further from God. Men will scarcely tolerate a Creator now, but everything must be evolved. To get God one stage further back is the ambition of modern philosophy; whereas, if we were wise, we should labour to clear out all obstacles, and leave a clear channel for drawing near to God, and for God to draw near to us.¹⁴³

In a midweek message, Spurgeon encouraged his people not to be afraid of modern advancements in science. He compared the assumed power of popular science with the power of the gospel which converts the learned and un-learned with equal authority.

Modern discoveries need not make us tremble; for that the Spirit of God is not straitened by science is proved by the fact that the most scientific men have been subdued by his power. He is as able to convert the learned as the unlearned; he has often done it; and we have had those who have seemed to know all about the earth, and the heavens, too, who yet were little children at the feet of Christ. Where the Spirit of God comes, he is not straitened in that way.¹⁴⁴

Spurgeon also used metaphor in 1891 to advance his argument against his opponents in the Downgrade. In an April message he reminded his people, “The Holy Ghost rides in the chariot of Scripture, and not in the wagon of modern thought.”¹⁴⁵ He belittled the false teaching of his Downgrade opponents and assured his people that the Holy Spirit would not accompany such error. In a midweek message during the same month, Spurgeon used an extended metaphor, likening the current conflict to that experienced by the Israelites in 1 Samuel 4. The Philistines heard the Israelites shout and thought that God had blessed them with his presence before battle. The Israelites thought

¹⁴³ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 37:280.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 437.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 223.

something new was happening in their midst as well. Spurgeon used this incident to warn his people about the infatuation with the new.

The Israelites probably made the same mistake, fixing their hope on this new method of fighting the Philistines, which they hoped would bring them victory. We are all so apt to think that the new plan of going to work will be much more effective than those that have become familiar; but it is not so. It is generally a mistake to exchange old lamps for new.¹⁴⁶

Spurgeon used descriptions of death to illustrate the lack of assurance “modern thought” provided. In one instance, he described a hypothetical encounter with a dying man at his bedside. He queried, “There is no remedy for him. How can I tell him the cruel dogma of ‘modern thought’ that his own personal character is everything?”¹⁴⁷ He went on to describe “modern thought” doctrines denying the atonement of Christ as hard and stony doctrines of salvation by works. In still another description of death, Spurgeon told of an actual encounter with an elder member of the Tabernacle who was near death. The older saint spoke of his baptism some 35 years earlier, and assured Spurgeon of his confidence in the gospel.

It was thirty-five years ago,” said he; “and yet I remember it as if it were but yesterday, how you prayed for me, and how you finished up by saying, ‘And, when your feet shall touch the cold waters of the river of death, may you find it firm beneath you!’ Oh, dear Pastor,” he said, “it is firm beneath my feet. I was never so happy or so joyful as I am now, in the expectation of soon beholding the face of him I love.” Our brother also added, “How little does modern theology supply to a man on the brink of eternity! I want no theories about inspiration, or about the atonement. The Word of God is true to me from beginning to end, and the precious blood of Jesus is my only hope.”¹⁴⁸

The elder member of the Tabernacle not only recounted the metaphor Spurgeon used to describe his baptism, but he contrasted his confidence with the lack of such found in “modern theology.” The instruction of the pastor had found its way to the heart of this

¹⁴⁶ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 38:23.

¹⁴⁷ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 37:341.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 631.

particular man and he not only saw the deficiencies of modern theology, but he also saw Christ as his only hope. In this man's life, Spurgeon had accomplished his goal as pastor-theologian. He attacked theological error and established faith in the truth of Scripture.

Spurgeon's polemic in the Downgrade emerges in contrasts. He discusses the views of those advocating "modern thought" and contrasts them with right doctrine, exhorting his audience to take his view.

Theological Themes in the Downgrade

When examining Spurgeon's sermons from 1887-1892, two major theological themes dominate the corpus. First, Spurgeon argues explicitly for the inspiration and authority of Scripture. While the authority of Scripture was always a theme in his preaching and writing, the years of the Downgrade brought particular attention to a doctrine Spurgeon felt was under attack. Second, the centrality of Christ's substitutionary atonement was also on full display in his Downgrade sermons. Again, Spurgeon often spoke of Christ's sacrifice, but so many had abandoned the doctrine in the years leading up to the controversy that he was compelled to speak. There were other doctrines addressed by Spurgeon in these messages as well, including the necessity of holiness in the people of God and the reality of hell, but they were mentioned less regularly. In the majority of these arguments, Spurgeon addressed each doctrine as truth and contrasted it with "modern thought" where said truth was under attack. That is, Spurgeon's polemic as pastor-theologian was on full display in his homiletics during the Downgrade, as he sought to persuade his audience to take his view of the truth and in turn to see the prevailing doctrines of "modern thought" as damning error. He aimed toward the public up-building of the Metropolitan Tabernacle and the persuasion of all in her reach to hold fast the truth of Scripture. What follows is a thematic examination of Spurgeon's sermons from 1887 to 1892, primarily considering the Sunday morning and evening messages, though some attention will be paid to messages delivered at other times.

The centrality of the atonement. Spurgeon preached intensely on the atonement of Christ; specifically, its glory and exclusivity.¹⁴⁹ He spoke often of “the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world,” noting, “there is no other sin-bearer, no other atonement, no other sacrifice.”¹⁵⁰ He acknowledged that there were those in the surrounding culture who viewed the atonement in less exclusive ways, flouting the centrality of Christ’s sacrifice, but that his intention and charge to the church was to keep the atonement front and center.¹⁵¹ In a particularly stirring message from 1887 entitled, “A Sermon for the Time Present,” Spurgeon condemned the lack of preaching on the atonement as false teaching, an evil strategy meant to deceive even the elect of God.¹⁵² He urged his congregation to fight for the truth with the knowledge that God would defend himself quite easily from such attacks, saying, “Let the times roll on, they cannot affect our God.”¹⁵³ In 1888 Spurgeon also emphasized the exclusivity and centrality of the atonement, pressing his people to fortify their theology and obey Christ in their practice. He speaks with pastoral encouragement and prophetic exhortation.

Yet I am glad that you have no difficulties about the inspiration of Scripture, or the Deity of our Lord, or the fact of his atonement. You do not befog yourself with “modern thought,” but you avow your belief in the old, old gospel. So far so good; but what shall I make of the strange fact that your acceptance of the truth has no

¹⁴⁹ See appendix 4. He referenced the atonement in 40% of his messages during the Downgrade controversy. The examples to follow contain the most frequent references to the atonement.

¹⁵⁰ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 33:574.

¹⁵¹ He said, “There is a theology abroad in the world which admits the death of Christ to a certain indefinable place in its system, but that place is very much in the rear: I claim for the atonement the front and the centre.” *Ibid.*, 580. He continues, “Atonement is not a mystery scarcely to be spoken of, or if spoken of at all, to be whispered. No, no, it is a sublime simplicity, a fact for a child to know, a truth for the common people to rejoice in! We must preach Christ crucified whatever else we do not preach. Brethren, I do not think a man ought to hear a minister preach three sermons without learning the doctrine of atonement. I give wide latitude when I say this, for I would desire never to preach at all without setting forth salvation by faith in the blood of Jesus. Across my pulpit and my tabernacle shall be the mark of the blood; it will disgust the enemy, but it will delight the faithful. Substitution seems to me to be the soul of the gospel, the life of the gospel, the essence of the gospel; therefore, must it be ever in the front. Jesus, as the Lamb of God, is the Alpha, and we must keep him first and before all others. I charge you, Christian people, do not make this a secondary doctrine.” *Ibid.*, 581.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 604.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 606.

effect upon you? It is a very lamentable case, is it not, that a man should believe the gospel to be true, and yet should live as if it were a lie? If it be the truth, why do you not yield obedience to it?¹⁵⁴

Spurgeon declared belief in the “old, old gospel” of substitutionary atonement as belief in fact, delivered by divine inspiration, contrary to “modern thought,” having neither right belief nor practice. He then pastorally urges his congregation to not merely believe the truths of right doctrine, but to obey them.

The most powerful word on the atonement in 1888 came on September ninth, when Spurgeon preached a message entitled, “The Blood of the Lamb, the Conquering Weapon,” on Revelation 12:11. Spurgeon spoke of the effectiveness of the atonement to take away sin, encouraging his members that Christ’s death alone was sufficient to save them. He plainly revealed his Calvinistic adherence to limited atonement saying, “He did not die to make men savable, but to save them.”¹⁵⁵ In the same message, he argued that the atonement was so central that it would not allow heresy of any other sort. For Spurgeon, the trajectory of theological destruction began with a denial of the inspiration of Scripture, then the denial of substitutionary atonement. His metaphorical use of a “viper of heresy” demonstrates his polemic intensity regarding the denial of the atonement.

You cannot be clinging to an atoning sacrifice, and still delight in modern heresies. Those who deny inspiration are sure to get rid of the vicarious atonement, because it will not allow their errors. Let us go on proclaiming the doctrine of the great sacrifice, and this will kill the vipers of heresy. Let us uplift the cross, and never

¹⁵⁴ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 34:471. Later, he continues, “What do they care whether God’s truth stands or the devil’s lies? I am weary of these drivellers! The thorns have choked the seed in the pulpits and in the churches as well as in private individuals. Oh, that God would return! Oh, that his Spirit would raise up among us men who believe indeed and prove the power of their belief!” Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ He said clearly, “Near nineteen hundred years ago Jesus paid the dreadful debt of *all his elect* and made a full atonement for the whole mass of the iniquities of them that shall believe in him, thereby removing the whole tremendous load, and casting it by one lift of his pierced hand into the depths of the sea. When Jesus died, an atonement was offered by him and accepted by the Lord God, so that before the high court of heaven there was a distinct removal of sin from the whole body of which Christ is the head. In the fulness of time each redeemed one individually accepts for himself the great atonement by an act of personal faith, but the atonement itself was made long before. I believe this to be one of the edges of the conquering weapon. We are to preach that the Son of God has come in the flesh and died for human sin, and that in dying he did not only make it possible for God to forgive, but he secured forgiveness for all who are in him.” Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Ibid., 508-9.

mind what other people say.¹⁵⁶

Spurgeon further contended that if the atonement was not central, God would not bless his church. He reminded his people that the doctrine of the atonement was central in God's revelation to man and thus must be central to their modern ministry.

We shall never give up the doctrine of atoning sacrifice to please modern culture. What little reputation we have is as dear to us as another man's character is to him; but we will cheerfully let it go in this struggle for the central truth of revelation. It will be sweet to be forgotten and lost sight of, or to be vilified and abused, if the old faith in the substitutionary sacrifice can be kept alive. This much we are resolved on, we will be true to our convictions concerning the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus; for if we give up this, what is there left? God will not do anything by us if we are false to the cross.¹⁵⁷

In 1889 Spurgeon repeats similar themes addressed in the previous years. He spoke clearly of the centrality, glory, and necessity of the atonement.¹⁵⁸ He also calculatedly warned his congregation of the prevalence of error and heresy around them as the atonement was continually being denied.¹⁵⁹ The year 1889 also brought a specific message for the controversy itself, entitled, "A Dirge for the Downgrade and a Song for Faith." In that message he took the place of a mourner, lamenting the theological state of the church. He mourned the loss of doctrines that up to that point had been assumed, such as the inspiration of Scripture, the reality of hell, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the deity and resurrection of Christ, and the substitutionary atonement.¹⁶⁰ He noted,

¹⁵⁶ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 34:514.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 516.

¹⁵⁸ For references to the atonement numbering four or more instances, see Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 35:121, 145, 385, 397, 469, 649; See also 39:217, 481, 625; 40:25.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 35:397, 477.

¹⁶⁰ He noted, "The Deity of our Lord and his great atoning sacrifice, his resurrection, and his judgment of the wicked, never were moot points in the church; but they are questioned at this time. The work of the Holy Spirit may be honored in words; but what faith can be placed in those to whom he is not a person, but a mere influence? God himself is by some made into an impersonal being, or the soul of all things, which is much the same as nothing. Pantheism is atheism in a mask. The plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture, as we have understood it from our childhood, is assailed in a thousand insidious ways. The fall of Adam is treated as a fable; and original sin and imputed righteousness are both denounced. As for the doctrines of grace, they are ridiculed as altogether out of vogue, and even the solemn sanctions of the law are scorned as bugbears of the dark ages. For many a year, by the grand old truths of the gospel, sinners were converted, and saints were edified, and the world was made to know that there is a God in Israel; but these are too antiquated for the present cultured race of superior beings. They are going to regenerate the world by Democratic Socialism and set up a kingdom for Christ without the new birth or the pardon of

“Many a pulpit, where Christ was once lifted high in all the glory of his atoning death, is now profaned by those who cavil at justification by faith.”¹⁶¹ While he admits that cause exists for “mourning in Zion,” he did not remain in the dirge.¹⁶² Instead, he used metaphorical references to Luther and Moses, deliverers sent by God to rescue his people, to assure those at the Metropolitan Tabernacle that such rescue was coming again.

The battle is not ours, but the Lord’s. God knows no difficulty. Omnipotence has servants everywhere, and power to create as many more agents of its purpose as there are sands on the sea-shore. Sitting in the chimney side, tonight, a young Luther is preparing, as he looks in the fire, to burn the bulls of the philosophic hierarchy of today. In the workhouse, amongst the poor children, there is a Moses who shall confront our Pharaoh and deliver Israel’s tribes. The coming man who shall startle the world with his brave witness to the everlasting gospel, is at school. Never have a doubt about it: God will appear.¹⁶³

He encouraged his people that the promise and providence of God was with them to continue to hold, proclaim and flourish in the truth of Scripture. He exhorted them to hold to the truth for the sake of their own up-building, carrying the metaphor of blessing forward. He urged the congregation to remain faithful to the gospel of Christ’s atonement, encouraging them to expect God’s blessing as they did.¹⁶⁴

The final years of Spurgeon’s ministry demonstrated no slackening regarding his defense of the substitutionary atonement. He urged his people to hold to Christ without shame and to reject any derogatory treatment of his death from “modern

sin.” Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 35:266.

¹⁶¹ He continued, “In fact, men are not now to be saved by faith, but by doubt. Those who love the church of God feel heavy at heart, because the teachers of the people cause them to err. Even from a national point of view, men of foresight see cause for grave concern.” *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 268.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 272-73.

¹⁶⁴ He said, “Would God that the power of the Lord would come in that way upon all our churches! And we may expect it, if it be the true gospel which we preach, if it be the gospel which we love, if it be in the power of the gospel that we live. So it must be. The Lord will yet be taking numerous out of the midst of his people to be priests and Levites.” *Ibid.*, 274.

thought.”¹⁶⁵ He acknowledged the surrounding error gave no indication of weakening. In an evening message in 1890 he said, “This is an age when men assail the inspiration of the Bible, the atoning sacrifice, and the election of grace. Everything is now attacked.”¹⁶⁶ The times had not improved. But his strategy for meeting the times had not changed. He continued to seek to persuade the congregation to hold to the atonement for the sake of the scriptures and for the sake of their souls.¹⁶⁷

Biblical Inspiration and Authority

A second area of emphasis in Spurgeon’s Downgrade preaching was the inspiration and authority of the Bible. The Word of God had undergone such fierce criticism from those holding to Darwinian thought and Higher Criticism that Spurgeon faced almost constant conflict. He sought to persuade his people to see his view of Scripture as the very Word of God for their own up-building. As pastor-theologian, he knew the means to their spiritual health was the study and application of biblical principle.¹⁶⁸ His preaching during the Downgrade regarding the inspiration and authority of Scripture traversed particular avenues. He established Scripture as the very Word of God, inspired and infallible. Because of his belief in inspiration, he consequently affirmed the absolute, unarguable authority of Scripture. In each argument, he contrasted affirmation of the inspiration and authority of Scripture with “new” or “modern” thought,

¹⁶⁵ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 36:188, 282, 364, 508.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 37:77.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 41, 79; 38:40, 281, 553. See also Henry Franklin Colquitt, “The Soteriology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Revealed in His Sermons and Controversial Writings” (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1986), 113-28.

¹⁶⁸ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 33:4. Spurgeon said clearly, “Brethren, I would that we studied God’s word much more. We read all sorts of books, but many of them are unprofitable. As for a great part of current literature, one might as well open his mouth, and eat the east wind; for there is nothing that can stay his soul therein. One single sentence from God is worth all the books of the Alexandrian library, or of the Bodleian either. All that has been consumed of human literature, and all that still exists, if put together, would not equal one book of the Bible. O my hearer, get thou to know what the Lord has said, and thou wilt be on the way to wisdom! Within the compass of “It is written” lies infinite truth. If thou art well instructed in it, it shall be well with thee.” *Ibid.*

a wholesale abandonment of the former.

First, Spurgeon establishes and proclaims Scripture as the very Word of God. He argues often that while some within the culture sought to silence the voice of God, as long as the Scriptures remained, so thundered the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁹ Congruently, as the Spirit spoke, he did so authoritatively. Man was therefore not allowed to adjust or apologize for Scripture.¹⁷⁰ In addition, Spurgeon argued that because Scripture was the Word of God, it was pure, holy, and authoritative, whereas the word of man was always suspect and often wicked.¹⁷¹ An 1887 landmark message on the inspiration and authority of Scripture was preached on May 17, entitled, “The Word a Sword.” In this sermon, Spurgeon explicitly mentions the phrase “the Word of God” over 60 times. As in other places, he establishes the Scriptures as the very Word of God, carrying God’s authority, connected intimately to the person and work of the living Word, Jesus Christ. He returns to this theme often, stating often that “Christ and his Word must go together.”¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 33:146.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 148. He boldly argued, “Brethren, let me ask you, do you imagine that the gospel is a nose of wax which can be shaped to suit the face of each succeeding age? Is the revelation once given by the Spirit of God to be interpreted according to the fashion of the period? Is “advanced thought” to be the cord with which the spirit of the Lord is to be straightened? Is the old truth that saved men hundreds of years ago to be banished because something fresh has been hatched in the nests of the wise? Think ye that the witness of the Holy Ghost can be shaped and molded at our will? Is the divine Spirit to be rather the pupil than the teacher of the ages? “Is the spirit of the Lord straitened?” My very soul boils within me when I think of the impudent arrogance of certain willful spirits from whom all reverence for revelation has departed. Paul is questioned and quibbled out of court, and the Lord Jesus is first belauded and then explained away. We are told that the teaching of God’s ministers must be conformed to the spirit of the age. We shall have nothing to do with such treason to truth.” He continually pressed his people to stand fast in their commitment to biblical authority and doctrine. In another 1887 message entitled, “The Watchword for Today: Stand Fast,” he exhorted his people to biblical fidelity when he said, “The watchword of the host of God just now is— ‘Stand fast!’ Hold you to the faith once delivered to the saints. Hold fast the form of sound words and deviate not one jot or tittle therefrom. Doctrinally stand fast!” *Ibid.*, 235.

¹⁷¹ Spurgeon noted, “There is an essential difference between man’s word and God’s word, and it is fatal to mistake the one for the other. If you receive even the gospel as the word of man you cannot get the blessing out of it; for the sweetness of the gospel lies in the confidence of our heart that this is the word of God.” *Ibid.*, 476.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 110. He continued, “As I have told you that we will not have Christ without the Word, so neither will we have the Word without Christ. If you leave Christ out of Scripture, you have left out the essential truth which it is written to declare. Ay, if you leave out of Christ as a Substitute, Christ in his death, Christ in his garments dyed in blood, you have left out of it all that is living and powerful.” Spurgeon continued, “We cannot separate Christ from the Word; for, in the first place, he is the Word; and, in the next place, how dare we call him Master and Lord and do not the things which he says, and reject the truth which he teaches?” *Ibid.*, 20.

Elsewhere in 1888 he reasons with his people that because the Christo-centric Word was inspired by God, they needed no other authority, especially those hocking the “new thought.”¹⁷³

Early in 1889 he preached a message entitled, “Trembling at the Word of the Lord,” on Isaiah 66:2. In this message he speaks again of the divergence between himself and Higher Criticism, holding to the Bible as less than it was.

There are plenty of persons who profess and call themselves Christians, and yet do not believe that this sacred Book is the very Word of God. Say that it is inspired, and they answer, ‘So is the Koran, and so are the Vedas.’ They talk after this fashion: ‘This is the religious book of the ancient Hebrew nation. A very respectable book it is, but infallible, certainly not: the very Word of God, certainly not.’ Well, then, we distinctly part company with such talkers. We can have no sort of fellowship with them in any measure or degree with regard to the things of God. They are to us as heathen men and publicans. If we are to come under the head of those that tremble at God’s Word, we must believe that there is a Word of the Lord to tremble at, as we do most assuredly believe, let others talk as they may.¹⁷⁴

He argues for the authority of Scripture and against the Higher Critic who would fail to tremble at the Word. He then charges his people to sound forth the Word of God after the example of the Thessalonians who received it as such, knowing opposition would be inevitable.¹⁷⁵ In his charge he powerfully exhorted his members that as Thessalonica was chosen for its strategic gospel location, so the Tabernacle had been chosen as a strategic bulwark of Scripture.

Whatever was done at Thessalonica would soon be known in all quarters. We are placed in a central position in London. Who does not know the Tabernacle? Hither the tribes come up, and here the multitudes continually assemble. Friends from the country flock to this spot; and on any Sabbath-day of summertime persons from all countries are in these pews and aisles. I state the simple truth when I speak of this house as known to some of all nations, and therefore what is done here is done in the heart of England, and in the center of the world. If you, as a church, can sound forth by your character and exertions the word of God, you are in the fittest place

¹⁷³ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 34:267, 529, 694.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 35:102.

¹⁷⁵ Spurgeon said, “Wherefore, we the more boldly sound forth the word of God. Brethren, unless you can hold on in rough weather, and bear up under opposition, you will do little in sounding out the word of God.” *Ibid.*, 160.

for it. The position demands it of you; act not unworthily.¹⁷⁶

Clearer evidence of Spurgeon's pastoral theology need not be fabricated. He saw the Tabernacle as a bulwark of truth and a beacon to the nations. He sought to build his people up as they declared and demonstrated the gospel in the public square, against consistent opposition.

A May 1889 message illustrated Spurgeon's desire to equip his people to not only take his position on Scripture, but to competently defend it in the public square. He preached a message on Psalm 12:6 entitled, "The Bible, Tried and Proved." He launched into his subject with a crisp introduction: "In this psalm our text stands in contrast with the evil of the age."¹⁷⁷ He encouraged his congregation to make the Word of God their comfort amidst the false doctrine surrounding their church. He said, "Make the Word of God your daily companion, and then, whatever may grieve you in the false doctrine of the hour, you will not be too much cast down."¹⁷⁸ He affirmed the work of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible, saying, "The divine Spirit so operated upon the spirit of the inspired writer, that he wrote the words of the Lord, and we, therefore, treasure up every one of them."¹⁷⁹ He then pointed to the subsequent purity of the Bible because of its plenary inspiration, arguing that while all texts may not be of the same type, "they are so far of a uniform character that they are all 'pure words.'"¹⁸⁰ He ferociously asserted Scripture's infallibility when he crisply noted that within its character there is no mixture of error.

I do not hesitate to say that I believe that there is no mistake whatever in the original Holy Scriptures from beginning to end. There may be, and there are, mistakes of translation; for translators are not inspired; but even the historical facts are correct.

¹⁷⁶ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 35:166.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 254.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 255.

Doubt has been cast upon them here and there, and at times with great show of reason—doubt which it has been impossible to meet for a season; but only give space enough, and search enough, and the stones buried in the earth cry out to confirm each letter of Scripture. The Book has been of late in the furnace of criticism; but much of that furnace has grown cold from the fact that the criticism is beneath contempt. The new theory denies infallibility to the words of God, but practically imputes it to the judgments of men; at least, this is all the infallibility which they can get at. I protest that I will rather risk my soul with a guide inspired from heaven, than with the differing leaders who arise from the earth at the call of “modern thought.”¹⁸¹

He continued his message in affirming the permanence, value, and influence of the Word of God, strengthening his people to follow his lead in the defense of Scripture. His polemic as truth-bound controversialist comes to the surface again in his argument for his congregation to take his view for their good.

Throughout the entirety of the Downgrade, Spurgeon continued to hold his ground on the inspiration and authority of Scripture. He preached in 1890 on Psalm 19:11 and pressed his people to remain tethered to Scripture and to study it diligently. He argued that diligent study of Scripture prevented theological error, saying, “If the Word of God had been diligently studied there would not have been so general a departure from its teachings. Bible-reading people seldom go off to modern theology.”¹⁸² The conflict between truth and error was ever-present in his homiletic. His admonitions to hold to the truth were consistently paired with an acknowledgement that error was at hand. The Christian life necessitated a war for the truth. On April 19, 1891, Spurgeon preached on Ephesians 6:17 in a message entitled, “The Sword of the Spirit.” He introduced the subject matter frankly: “To be a Christian is to be a warrior. The good soldier of Jesus Christ must not expect to find ease in this world: it is a battle-field.”¹⁸³ He continued, proving the necessity of the Scriptures as sword in the battles of the Christian life, saying,

¹⁸¹ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 35:257.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 36:163.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 37:229.

“Defeat awaits that man who forsakes the Word of the Lord.”¹⁸⁴ Holding fast to the sword of the Spirit was the Christian’s only option in Spurgeon’s argument. He sought to arm his congregation in the only possible manner.

Thus, as pastor-theologian, he endeavored to equip the members of the Metropolitan Tabernacle to hold fast to the Word of God as inspired and authoritative, knowing that the days were evil and the contest intense. As truth-bound, strategic controversialist, he ventured not into the arena of *ad hominem* or other rhetorical chicanery to make his point but hammered the nail of authoritative Scripture over and over again, contrasting it with errant “new thought.” He persuaded his people to see his view of Scripture as the very Word of God for their own up-building. He knew the means to their spiritual health was the study and application of biblical principle, and he pursued that goal until his death.

Spurgeon mentioned the Downgrade controversy explicitly in 20 percent of his messages during the years 1887-1891. He did so using different rhetorical strategies and stratagems, respectively. Most common in his rhetoric are his usage of favorable metaphor as well as extensive use of comparison and contrast. He demonstrated his polemic as a truth-bound, strategic controversialist by arguing for a position of revealed truth against opponents he characterized as enemies of that truth. He also addressed the major themes of the inspiration of Scripture and the centrality of the substitutionary atonement of Christ throughout the Downgrade years, mentioning those topics twice as often as the controversy itself. Again, a degree of overlap exists in these references, as he often instructed his congregation on particular doctrines while exposing the error of his Downgrade opponents. But the thrust of his thematic emphases during those years was decidedly to construct and up-build his people in their faith. Simply put, his thematic stance toward his people was more constructive than destructive. Here he behaved as a

¹⁸⁴ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 37:239.

pastor-theologian in full. He was more than willing to enter the fray of controversy but was doubly certain to construct a theological fortress around his people in the midst of the battle.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Charles Haddon Spurgeon indeed served as a model trilingual pastor-theologian in his polemic against theological liberalism during the Downgrade Controversy. He engaged in theological debate with his opponents while reinforcing the theological convictions of his own people. In his context, the historical bifurcation of the pastor and theologian caused Spurgeon to stand alone as an intellectual generalist. He spoke into each arena under his responsibility with an aim of upholding truth and protecting his congregation. His response to the controversy demonstrated that capitulation to cultural ideology and doctrinal divergence did not begin with modern controversy. Simply put, modern pastor-theologians are not the first ones to balance theological rigor with pastoral responsibility. Spurgeon offers direction, reassurance, and energy for resolve in such critical matters. Thus, the aim of this chapter is to summarize the argument made in previous chapters and to recommend Spurgeon to modern pastor-theologians.

Summary

Gerald Hiestand, Todd Wilson, Kevin Vanhoozer, and Owen Strachan have taken the lead in advancing the pastor-theologian paradigm from history. Both sets of authors see their task as a resurrection of the ancient paradigm from which church history has deviated. Their views are similar, but they separate at the point of academic engagement. Hiestand and Wilson call for the pastor to be a producer of theology for the academy, where Vanhoozer and Strachan argue for the pastor to be a particular kind of generalist, applying theological truth to the immediate sphere of the local church. The

Vanhoozer/Strachan model was adopted as a proper taxonomy with which to view Spurgeon's ministry because they view the pastor as a particular kind of generalist, called to build up the people of God. Thus, they keep the focus of the pastor-theologian on building the local church and serving as God's tri-lingual public witness to the ever-expanding kingdom of Christ. This was explicitly Spurgeon's strategy. Spurgeon was first a churchman. His deepest concern was for the advancement and edification of the saints gathered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle and the training of pastor-theologians gathered beneath it.

The Vanhoozer/Strachan taxonomy framed Spurgeon as a pastor-theologian, but an examination of his rhetorical moves was necessary to see how he spoke as such. Simply put, as pastor-theologian, Spurgeon spoke with particular polemic intentionality. A comparison of Marcelo Dascal, Richard Weaver, and Arthur Schopenhauer served as a brief overview of polemic strategy. Marcelo Dascal's work provided the best filter through which to examine Spurgeon's trilingual polemic. Dascal differentiated polemic strategy between discussion, dispute, and controversy. In a discussion, the goal is to establish the truth or disseminate information. In a dispute, the goal is to gain rhetorical victory over the opponent. In a controversy, the goal is to persuade an audience to accept one's position on a particular issue. In his teaching, writing, and preaching, Spurgeon primarily adopted the polemic strategy of controversy, arguing strategically for a truth-bound position. That is, he argued for a position of revealed truth against his opponents, whom he characterized as enemies of that truth. He persuaded those in his hearing to take his position and encouraged those who already took his position to remain steadfast.

As a pastor-theologian, Spurgeon's importance cannot be exaggerated. He preached in the pulpit of New Park Street until the coming crowds overextended the facilities, which were only able to hold 2,000 at maximum capacity. Eventually the Metropolitan Tabernacle was completed, holding almost 6,000 people. It was there that Spurgeon's impact was most clearly in view as a pastor-theologian. Spurgeon's

publishing ministry, whether through the *Penny Pulpit*, his books, or the *Sword and Trowel* magazine, extended his theological ministry far beyond London to those who never attended the Tabernacle. His printed sermons had an average circulation of 25,000 per week, and when Spurgeon preached a special message, such as the controversial attack on Baptismal Regeneration, the number swelled to over 350,000. These works were eventually compiled to form the multi-volume *New Park Street Pulpit* and later, the sixty-three volume *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. His ministry grew for over thirty years until he died in 1892. Spurgeon centered his ministry upon the Tabernacle itself as a particular kind of generalist, building up the body in London. It was from the epicenter of ministry at the Tabernacle that the multitude of Spurgeon's enterprises were launched. He was, indeed, an artisan in the house of God whose theological voice resounded from his pulpit with great consequence.

A natural result of such a far-reaching theological pastorate was conflict and dissent. While the Downgrade Controversy of 1887-1892 was the most public and painful of Spurgeon's battles, he was terribly conversant with conflict in his life and ministry. The so-called Media Controversy in the 1850s along with strife over his Calvinism marked his early ministry at New Park Street. During the middle years of his ministry, controversy intensified over issues of slavery, evolution, and baptismal regeneration. The later years of his life were the most controversial, however. He engaged his denomination over issues of fundraising and theological confessionalism within the Missionary Society from 1863-1866, foreshadowing the larger Downgrade Controversy to come over twenty years later.

Again, two primary historical factors influenced the Downgrade Controversy. First, after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species* in 1859 an avalanche of evolutionary thought descended upon the church and Spurgeon sought to fight back. Secondly the rise and cancerous denominational influence of Higher Criticism deeply concerned Spurgeon. The Baptist Union initially fought against Higher Criticism, but

their tenacity waned as time went on. As the tsunami of evolutionary acceptance and academic infatuation with Higher Criticism crashed on the shores of orthodoxy, Spurgeon defiantly rose to stand against the tide. His voice reverberated from the pulpit of The Metropolitan Tabernacle into the public square.

In his preaching, teaching, and writing, Spurgeon adopted the polemic strategy of controversy, arguing strategically for a truth-bound position. He was gravely concerned that developments within the Baptist Union because of Darwinism and Higher Criticism would lead to the destruction of Christian orthodoxy in London. Doctrinal error had begun to infiltrate his denomination and associations, demanding a response. His actions, constrained by the truth as he saw it in Scripture, had a consistent teleological aim toward the ultimate good of his hearers. He was a truth-bound controversialist. His actions within the house of God via the office of pastor-theologian demonstrate his polemic clearly.

An analysis of Spurgeon's methodology, sermons, and writing reveals a sincere commitment to the authority of Scripture and the centrality of Christ's atonement as well as a desire to protect his hearers from the encroaching error of "the new thought." Simply put, he preached, wrote, and taught with an entrenched commitment to Scripture in order to build the body of Christ. When he spoke to the Pastors' College, he did so in an instructional manner with an ecclesial goal. His intention was to build up the body of Christ through the ministers under his charge, newly fortified against error. When he published material for popular consumption in London, he assumed the authority of Scripture and aimed at either the conversion of the lost, or the sanctification of the redeemed. His church and denomination were public bodies and thus he spoke as a public-theologian to protect their theological purity. From his pulpit, Spurgeon's role as a pastor-theologian is unmistakably perceived. He begins with a clear commitment to the

authority and supremacy of Scripture and delivers each sermon with the aim of building the body of Christ as an artisan in her midst.¹

Spurgeon founded the Pastors' College in 1856 with the goal of producing pastor-theologians to build the church. That is, according to the Vanhoozer/Strachan taxonomy, the Pastors' College was an institution of public ecclesial theology. The College met in the church, was supported by the church, launched from the church, and ultimately extended the ecclesial reach of the church. Thus, Spurgeon's lectures to his students and his conference dedicated to their ministerial furtherance had decidedly ecclesial aims. In addition, during the Downgrade, his training for these men as pastor-theologians included admonitions against theological error prevalent in the surrounding culture. He pressed them to study and stand in the faith once for all delivered to the saints, to anchor their souls to the atonement of Jesus, and to fight for truth even though they fight alone. He sought to persuade them to follow him in the fight.

Spurgeon's trilingual polemic engagement as pastor-theologian began with the Metropolitan Tabernacle and spread to the general public, primarily through his written publications and *The Sword and The Trowel* magazine. These two avenues of engagement were extremely influential and effective during the Downgrade. Indeed, it was *The Sword and The Trowel* that coined the controversy "The Downgrade," bringing unfavorable attention to the doctrinal error of the Baptist Union. Spurgeon's apologetic argued for the truth of Scripture as normative for the Christian life as well as against the deficiencies within "new thought."

Spurgeon mentioned the Downgrade controversy openly in 20 percent of his messages during the years 1887-1891. He addressed the conflict using different rhetorical strategies, the most common being his usage of favorable metaphor as well as

¹ For "artisan" language, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 142.

comparison and contrast. He demonstrated his polemic as a truth-bound, strategic controversialist by arguing for a position of revealed truth against opponents of that truth. When examining Spurgeon's Downgrade sermons, two major theological themes dominate the collection. First, he argues feverishly for the inspiration and authority of Scripture in 30 percent of his messages.² The theological confusion of the Downgrade made it necessary to pay particular attention to this doctrine. Second, the centrality of Christ's substitutionary atonement was also on full display in his Downgrade sermons.³ There were other doctrines addressed by Spurgeon in these messages as well, but the atonement and authority of Scripture comprise the majority of his doctrinal arguments against his opponents in the Downgrade. In these arguments, Spurgeon addressed each doctrine as truth and contrasted it with "modern thought" where said truth was under attack. That is, Spurgeon's polemic as pastor-theologian was on full display in his homiletics during the Downgrade, as he sought to persuade his audience to take his view of the truth and in turn to see the prevailing doctrines of "modern thought" as damning error. He aimed toward the public up-building of the Metropolitan Tabernacle and the persuasion of all in her reach to hold fast the truth of Scripture.

Thus, as tri-lingual pastor-theologian, Spurgeon strove to equip the members of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, those in the Pastors' College and the larger public to hold fast to the Word of God as inspired and authoritative. He articulated his intentions in stark contrast with the theological degeneration of the denomination of which he was a part. Thus, as truth-bound controversialist, he employed his forceful rhetorical argument to display the truthfulness of authoritative Scripture, and the destructive falsehood of those holding to "new thought." He persuaded his people to see his view as truth for their

² See appendix 4.

³ See appendix 4. Spurgeon referenced the atonement in 40 percent of his Downgrade messages.

own up-building.

Application

In the field of Christian preaching, few are better known or more revered than Charles Spurgeon. He was indeed an excellent model of textually faithful, theologically-focused Christian homiletics. However, in the historical survey of pastor-theologians, Spurgeon is either given cursory mention or no mention at all. The intention of this work was to argue that Spurgeon was also an excellent pastor-theologian worth studying, and in fact, worth emulating. In the modern discussion of pastor-theologians, three reasons for studying and emulating Spurgeon surface. First, there is a desperate need for pastor-theologians today. Second, from a rhetorical perspective, truth-bound controversialists are needed as well. The cultural climate of disagreement often resembles chicanery-laden disputes rather than well-reasoned arguments in the midst of controversy. Spurgeon offers clear guardrails to traverse the theological milieu. Finally, as a truth-bound, controversialist pastor-theologian, Spurgeon offers a model of theological instruction, public engagement, and homiletic delivery well worth emulating.

The Need for Pastor-Theologians

This work argued that the office of pastor-theologian is often bifurcated into separate vocational undertakings. Such bifurcation came at the hand of a pragmatic public, calling on the pastor to be CEO, manager, strategic planner, and administrator. Also at fault was an austere academy, restricting theological contribution to those having certain qualifications. In addition, a lack of biblical familiarity with the pastor's role and an ignorance of church history where this role has been competently filled has helped to produce a kind of anemia in the modern evangelical church and academy. The modern church suffers from theological anemia, caricaturing theology as erudite academics, having nothing to do with "real life." The modern academy conversely suffers from ecclesial anemia, forgetting that theology has been and must be created by and for the

local church. R. Albert Mohler, President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, an institution tasked with training pastors since 1859, argues the remedy for this anemic situation is the pastor-theologian.

Every pastor is to be a theologian. This may come as a surprise to those pastors who see theology as an academic discipline taken during seminary rather than as an ongoing and central part of the pastoral calling. Nevertheless, the health of the church depends upon its pastors functioning as faithful theologians—teaching, preaching, defending, and applying the great doctrines of the faith. One of the most lamentable developments of the last several centuries has been theology’s transformation into an academic discipline more associated with the university than the church.⁴

Mohler goes on to note that the emergence of theology as an academic discipline coincided historically with the rise of the modern university. Theology became a disconnected discipline, altogether separate from its ecclesial moorings, grouped together with other academic endeavors. Moreover, as the academy became increasingly secular, theology suffered secularization as well. He urgently calls for the church to combat the current state of ecclesial theology. “All this must be reversed if the church is to remain true to God’s Word and the gospel.”⁵ Hiestand/Wilson and Vanhoozer/Strachan echo Mohler, noting the lack of biblical understanding and historical awareness regarding the theological nature of the pastoral office. They too argue that the pastor-theologian is the need of the hour.

If the pastor-theologian is so necessary, further definition is also necessary. While both Hiestand/Wilson and Vanhoozer/Strachan provide compelling visions of the pastor-theologian, Vanhoozer/Strachan offer a more comprehensive, church-centric model. Their argument is clear: first, pastors must be theologians; second, every theologian is in some sense a public theologian; and third, a public theologian is a very

⁴ R. Albert Mohler, *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 105.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

particular kind of generalist.⁶ They keep the focus of the pastor-theologian on building the local church as God's tri-lingual public witness to the ever-expanding kingdom of Christ. The argument is traced through the establishment of a particular kind of generalist called to a particularly public kingdom location.

Charles Spurgeon was this brand of pastor-theologian. He was a capable theologian, steeped in Word-saturated, Christo-centric, Calvinistic, Puritanic doctrine. He was a public theologian, intentionally engaging every sphere over which he enjoyed influence with doctrinal principle. He was a particular kind of generalist, bringing God's Word to bear on issues ecclesial, denominational, cultural, anthropological, social, philanthropic, or scientific. He provides an example of the pastor-theologian deserving mention alongside the likes of Luther, Calvin, and Edwards. The modern identity crisis among pastors necessitates the recovery of the office's doctrinal centrality. Vanhoozer/Strachan offer a compelling model of the pastor-theologian of which Charles Spurgeon is exemplar.

The Need for Arguments

In modern culture pastor-theologians are needed, but so are truth-bound controversialists capable of making biblically cogent arguments. In the culture at large, Dascal's polemic categories of discussion, dispute, and controversy are observable, though the category of dispute comes to the surface most often. Randall Smith laments the degeneration of modern discourse, calling it, "something more akin to a children's mud fight than the rational discourse America's founders hoped would characterize the civic life of the American republic."⁷ Stephen Zack similarly warned the legal community of the volatility of public discourse. He reminded the audience of the familiar

⁶ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 5.

⁷ "Uncivil Discourse: Modern Media's Ideological Junkspace," *Public Discourse* (blog), November 12, 2015, <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/11/15675/>.

saying, “I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.” He then described modern discourse as the direct opposite of this principle. He said, “Today, we hear, ‘I don’t agree with what you say, you shouldn’t say it and, if you do say it, you are a bad person and I will raise my voice to try to keep you from being heard.’”⁸ Zack and his colleagues lay responsibility for civility in public discourse at the feet of the legal community. Smith instead posits a return to classical rhetoric and academic humility as a means of civility in public discourse. Interestingly, he also argues for a commitment to concrete truth in order to correct the wayward trajectory of discourse. He said, “If we are to live in the truth, we must first strive to know the truth. Not just my truth or the truths thrown around by my side or the right sort of people, but the truth.”⁹ Rhetoricians like Dascal, Weaver, and Schopenhauer would echo modern calls for civility and the search for truth more broadly to anyone who speaks in the public square. Vanhoozer and Strachan carry that argument further, to a Christian end, arguing that the responsibility of Christian public discourse lies with the church, led by a pastor-theologian.

The era of the spoken word is, in point of fact, not over. Media personalities continue to fill the air with political analysis, dissection of sporting events, and the personal confessions of the podcast. In such a time as this, pastors do well to reclaim their prophetic mantle. It is not the psychologists, advertising executives, or life-coach gurus that should train the pastor. It is not the latest sociological trend but the prophet, charged with the often-unpopular task of speaking forth God’s word, who should inspire pastors to preach with fresh power and zeal today.¹⁰

Dascal’s model of controversial polemic speech as modeled by Charles Spurgeon provides an outstanding example of the truth-seeking, audience-persuading discourse called for. The modern public square necessitates a manner of speech not

⁸ Stephen Zack, “Fostering Civility in Public Discourse,” *Dispute Resolution Magazine* 18, no. 2 (2012): 22.

⁹ “Uncivil Discourse, Part Two: A Call for Intellectual Humility,” *Public Discourse* (blog), November 13, 2015, <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/11/15678/>.

¹⁰ Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 55.

tempted to wander into Dascal's chicanery-filled, fallacy-laden dispute model which is so prominent, but committed to know and deliver truth. Spurgeon provides a way forward in the arena of modern conversation. In his preaching, teaching, and writing, Spurgeon adopted the polemic strategy of controversy, seeking to persuade all in his hearing to take his position. He was, however, constrained by the truth as he saw it in Scripture, with a teleological aim toward the ultimate good of his hearers.

Spurgeon as a Model

As a truth-bound, controversialist pastor-theologian, Spurgeon offers a model of theological instruction, public engagement, and homiletic delivery well worth emulating. Following the Strachan/Vanhoozer paradigm, the Pastors' College was an institution of public ecclesial theology. The College met in the church, was fed through the church, launched out of the church, and ultimately extended the reach of the church. Therefore, Spurgeon's lectures to his students and his conference dedicated to their ministries had a decidedly pastoral aim. During the Downgrade, his training for these men as pastor-theologians included serious warnings and admonitions against the theological error so rampant in the culture around them. He pressed them to study and stand in the faith once for all delivered to the saints, to anchor their souls to the atonement of Jesus, and to fight for truth even though they fight alone. He sought to persuade them to follow him in the fight and follow him they did.

Spurgeon's polemic as pastor-theologian began with the local church and spread to the general public, primarily through his written publications and the magazine. These two avenues of engagement, as evidenced in chapter 6, were extremely influential and effective during the Downgrade. The public read Spurgeon's apologetic for the truth of Scripture as normative for the Christian life as well as the deficiencies within "new thought" in the eyes of God. The moment was urgent. It was time for decision. Truth or

error, allegiance to the Lord or advance against him was the core of the conflict in Spurgeon's polemic.

As pastor-theologian, Spurgeon endeavored to establish and equip the members of the Metropolitan Tabernacle to hold fast to the Word of God as authoritative in his preaching. As truth-bound controversialist, he ventured not into the arena of ad hominem or rhetorical chicanery to make his point but argued clearly for authoritative Scripture consistently. He contrasted biblical truth with the error of "new thought," and persuaded his people to see his view of Scripture as the very Word of God for their own up-building. He knew the means to their spiritual health was the study and application of biblical principle, and he pursued that goal in homiletical emphasis upon the authority of Scripture and the centrality of the atonement.

Spurgeon homiletically established Scripture as the very Word of God, inspired and infallible. Consistently, because of his belief in inspiration, he affirmed the absolute, unarguable authority of Scripture. In each argument, he contrasted a commitment to the inspiration and authority of Scripture with "new" or "modern" thought, which had succumbed to the influence of evolutionary theory and Higher Criticism. He devoted much homiletic time and energy to the maligned substitutionary atonement as well. He professed allegiance to the "old gospel" of substitutionary atonement as belief in fact, delivered by divine inspiration. This confident and consistent assertion was altogether contrary to "modern thought," having neither right belief nor practice. For him, the trajectory of theological downgrade began with a denial of the inspiration of Scripture, then the denial of the atonement, ending ultimately in the destruction of the faith. He worked as a truth-bound controversialist pastor-theologian to establish and equip his people in truth and expose error in the denominational liberalism surrounding them.

The affirmation of Scripture as divinely authoritative is just as necessary in modern ecclesial settings as it was for Spurgeon during the Downgrade Controversy. Indeed, the atonement still requires defense. Spurgeon stands as a model worth emulating

in the protection of biblical truth in the context of the local church. He sought to establish and equip his people to weather the storm of theological liberalism swirling in the Baptist Union, and he did so effectively. As the modern ecclesial landscape slides and changes over issues of morality and cultural preference, may Charles Spurgeon yet again persuade a generation of pastor-theologians to follow in his steps. Lead on, Mr. Valiant for Truth.

APPENDIX 1

SCHOPENHAUER'S POLEMIC ART

Table A1. Schopenhauer's Stratagems¹

Stratagem	Definition/ Description
Extension	This consists in carrying your opponent's proposition beyond its natural limits; in giving it as general a signification and as wide a sense as possible, so as to exaggerate it; and, on the other hand, in giving your own proposition as restricted a sense and as narrow limits as you can.
Homonymy	The trick is to extend a proposition to something which has little or nothing in common with the matter in question but the similarity of the word; then to refute it triumphantly, and so claim credit for having refuted the original statement.
Generalize Opponent's Specific Statements	To take a proposition which is laid down and in reference to some particular matter, as though it were uttered with a general or absolute application.
Conceal One's Game	Getting premises admitted one by one, unobserved, mingled within the talk itself. A conclusion is then reached by making a circuit.
False Propositions	To prove the truth of a proposition, you may also employ previous propositions that are not true, should your opponent refuse to admit the true ones, either because he fails to perceive their truth, or because he sees that the thesis immediately follows from them.
Postulate What Has to Be Proved	To beg the question in disguise by postulating what has to be proved. 1. Under another name

¹ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Art of Controversy*, Kindle (Adelaide, Australia: The University of Adelaide Library), accessed June 20, 2018, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/au/>.

Table A1—continued

Stratagem	Definition/ Description
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. By making a general assumption covering the particular point in dispute 3. If two things follow one from the other, and one is to be proved, you may postulate the other. 4. If a general proposition is to be proved, you may get your opponent to admit every one of the particulars.
Yield Admissions Through Questions	The plan is to ask a great many wide-reaching questions at once, so as to hide what you want to get admitted, and, on the other hand, quickly propound the argument resulting from the admissions; for those who are slow of understanding cannot follow accurately, and do not notice any mistakes or gaps there may be in the demonstration.
Make One's Opponent Angry	When an opponent is angry he is incapable of judging aright and perceiving where his advantage lies.
Change the Order of Questions	One may put questions in an order different from that which the conclusion to be drawn from them requires, and transpose them, so as to disguise your aim.
Take Advantage of the Negative	If you observe that your opponent designedly returns a negative answer to the questions which, for the sake of your proposition, you want him to answer in the affirmative, you must ask the converse of the proposition, as though it were that which you were anxious to see affirmed; or, at any rate, you may give him his choice of both, so that he may not perceive which of them you are asking him to affirm.
Generalize Admissions of Particular Cases	If you make an induction, and your opponent grants you the particular cases by which it is to be supported, you must refrain from asking him if he also admits the general truth which issues from the particulars but introduce it afterwards as a settled and admitted fact.

Table A1—continued

Stratagem	Definition/ Description
Choose Favorable Metaphors	What one man calls “placing in safe custody,” another calls “throwing into prison.” A speaker often betrays his purpose beforehand by the names which he gives to things. One man talks of “the clergy”; another, of “the priests.” Of all the tricks of controversy, this is the most frequent, and it is used instinctively.
Get Opponent to Reject the Counter-Proposition	To make your opponent accept a proposition, you must give him the counter-proposition as well, leaving him his choice of the two; and you must render the contrast as glaring as you can, so that to avoid being paradoxical he will accept the proposition, which is thus made to look quite probable.
Claim Victory Despite Defeat	When your opponent has answered several of your questions without the answers turning out favorable to the conclusion at which you are aiming, advance the desired conclusion, — although it does not in the least follow, — as though it had been proved, and proclaim it in a tone of triumph. This... is an impudent trick.
Use Seemingly Absurd Propositions	If you have advanced a paradoxical proposition and find a difficulty in proving it, you may submit for your opponent’s acceptance or rejection some true proposition, the truth of which, however, is not palpable, as though you wished to draw your proof from it.
<i>Arguments Ad Hominem</i>	When your opponent makes a proposition, you must try to see whether it is not in some way — if needs be, only apparently — inconsistent with some other proposition which he has made or admitted, or with the principles of a school or sect which he has commended and approved, or with the actions of those who support the sect, or else of those who give it only an apparent and spurious support, or with his own actions or want of action. For example, should he maintain that Berlin is an unpleasant place to live in,

Table A1—continued

Stratagem	Definition/ Description
	you may say, “Why don’t you leave by the first train?”
Subtle Distinction	If your opponent presses you with a counter-proof, you will often be able to save yourself by advancing some subtle distinction.
Interrupt, Break, and Redirect the Dispute	If your opponent has taken up a line of argument which will end in your defeat, you must not allow him to carry it to its conclusion, but interrupt the course of the dispute in time, or break it off altogether, or lead him away from the subject and bring him to others.
Generalize the Matter, Then Argue Against It	Give the matter a general turn and then talk against that. If you are called upon to say why a particular hypothesis cannot be accepted, you may speak of the fallibility of human knowledge, and give various illustrations of it.
Draw Conclusions Yourself	Refrain from allowing your opponent to draw a conclusion but draw it at once for yourself. Even if a premise is lacking you may take it as though it too had been admitted and draw the conclusion.
Meet An Opponent With a Counter-Argument as Faulty as His/Hers	When your opponent uses a merely superficial or sophistical argument and you see through it, you can, it is true, refute it by setting forth its captious and superficial character; but it is better to meet him with a counter-argument which is just as superficial and sophistical, and so dispose of him.
<i>Petitio Principii</i> (Begging the Question)	If your opponent requires you to admit something from which the point in dispute will immediately follow, you must refuse to do so, declaring that it is a <i>petitio principii</i> . For he and the audience will regard a proposition which is near akin to the point in dispute as identical with it, and in this way, you deprive him of his best argument.
Make Your Opponent to Exaggerate His Statement	Contradiction and contention irritate a man into exaggerating his statement. By contradicting your opponent, you may drive him into extending beyond its proper

Table A1—continued

Stratagem	Definition/ Description
	limits a statement which, at all events within those limits and in itself, is true; and when you refute this exaggerated form of it, you look as though you had also refuted his original statement.
State a False Syllogism	Your opponent makes a proposition, and by false inference and distortion of his ideas you force from it other propositions which it does not contain and he does not in the least mean; nay, which are absurd or dangerous. This is the <i>diversion</i> .
Find One Instance to the Contrary	A single instance to which the proposition does not apply is often all that is necessary to overthrow it.
<i>Retorsio Argumenti</i> (Turning the Tables)	An opponent's argument is turned against himself. He declares, for instance, "So-and-so is a child, you must make allowance for him." You retort, "Just because he is a child, I must correct him; otherwise he will persist in his bad habits."
Observe Anger to Indicate a Weak Point	Should your opponent surprise you by becoming particularly angry at an argument, you must urge it with all the more zeal; not only because it is a good thing to make him angry, but because it may be presumed that you have here put your finger on the weak side of his case.
Persuade the Audience, Not the Opponent	This is argument <i>ad auditores</i> ; that is to say, you can start some invalid objection, which, however, only an expert sees to be invalid. Now your opponent is an expert, but those who form your audience are not, and accordingly in their eyes he is defeated; particularly if the objection which you make places him in any ridiculous light. People are ready to laugh, and you have the laughers on your side.
Diversion	Suddenly begin to talk about something else as though it had a bearing on the matter in dispute and afforded an argument with your opponent.
<i>Argumentum Ad Verecundiam</i> (Appeal to Authority)	This is the. It consists in making an appeal to authority rather than reason, and in using such an authority as may suit the

Table A1—continued

Stratagem	Definition/ Description
	degree of knowledge possessed by your opponent.
Declare Yourself an Incompetent Judge	“What you now say passes my poor powers of comprehension; it may be all very true, but I can’t understand it, and I refrain from any expression of opinion on it.” In this way you insinuate to the bystanders, with whom you are in good repute, that what your opponent says is nonsense.
Put Opponent’s Assertion in to An Odious Category	If you are confronted with an assertion, there is a short way of getting rid of it, or, at any rate, of throwing suspicion on it, by putting it into some odious category; even though the connection is only apparent, or else of a loose character. You can say, for instance, “That is Arianism,” or “Pelagianism,” or “Idealism.”
Assert a Proposition Right in Theory, Not Practice	The assertion is based upon an impossibility: what is right in theory must work in practice; and if it does not, there is a mistake in the theory; something has been overlooked and not allowed for; and, consequently, what is wrong in practice is wrong in theory too.
Don’t Let an Opponent Turn the Subject	If your opponent tries to turn the subject, it is a sure sign that you have touched a weak spot. You must, therefore, urge the point all the more, and not let your opponent evade it, even when you do not know where the weakness which you have hit upon really lies.
Work on An Opponent’s Will, Rather Than Insight	Instead of working on your opponent’s intellect by argument, work on his will by motive; and he, and also the audience if they have similar interests, will at once be won over to your opinion, even though you got it out of a lunatic asylum.
Bewilder One’s Opponent by Mere Bombast	If an opponent is secretly conscious of his own weakness, and accustomed to hear much that he does not understand, and to make as though he did, you can easily impose upon him by some serious fooling that sounds very deep or learned, and deprives him of hearing, sight, and

Table A1—continued

Stratagem	Definition/ Description
	thought; and by giving out that it is the most indisputable proof of what you assert.
A Faulty Proof Refutes an Opponent's Entire Position	Should your opponent be in the right, but, luckily for your contention, choose a faulty proof, you can easily manage to refute it, and then claim that you have thus refuted his whole position.
<i>Argumentum Ad Personam</i> (Become Personal, Insulting, Rude)	But in becoming personal you leave the subject altogether, and turn your attack to his person, by remarks of an offensive and spiteful character. It is an appeal from the virtues of the intellect to the virtues of the body, or to mere animalism. This is a very popular trick, because every one is able to carry it into effect; and so it is of frequent application.

APPENDIX 2
GENERAL RHETORIC

Table A2. Common Rhetorical Strategies¹

Device	Description
Alliteration	The repetition of the same letter at beginning of words or syllables.
Analysis	Looking at an artifact or a text and breaking down its parts.
Anecdote	A short, entertaining account of some happening, frequently personal or biographical.
Anticipation of Objection	A technique by which the writer or speaker anticipates objections his audience may have to his argument and points out the error in their objections.
Aphorism	A concise statement of principle or a precept given in concise words.
Appeal to Authority	Citation of information from people recognized for their special knowledge of a subject for the purpose of strengthening a speaker's or writer's argument.
Appeal to Fear	An emotional appeal using information likely to frighten the audience for the purpose of strengthening a speaker's or writer's argument.
Appeal to Patriotism	An emotional appeal to the audience's love of country, persuading them to act by implying they are treasonous if they chose not to.
Appeal to Pride	An emotional appeal used to convince the audience that they must act in order to maintain dignity and self-respect.

¹ Compilation of "Rhetorical Strategies," Illinois State University, accessed November 19, 2018, http://isuwriting.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Rhetorical_Strategies.pdf; "Rhetorical Devices," The Latin Library, accessed November 19, 2018, <https://www.thelatinlibrary.com/101/RhetoricalDevices.pdf>.

Table A2—continued

Device	Description
Argument	To argue a position by having a clear stance on what you are arguing about and then proving that point through the use of evidence. Considering an opposing point of view and offering a rebuttal are also important elements of many genres that use argumentative techniques.
Bandwagon	An attempt to strengthen an argument by convincing the audience that accepting the writer's or speaker's view will put them on the popular or apparently winning side.
Cause-Effect	Exploration of the reason something happens and the consequences of that action.
Classification/Division	To classify is to categorize and to divide is to break a larger category into smaller pieces.
Comparison/Contrast	Exploration of the way things are similar and the ways they are different.
Conceit	An extended metaphor or analogy of two strikingly different things.
Concession	An acknowledgement of objections to a proposal.
Correction of Erroneous Views	Pointing out where another's observations need modification or correction
Corrective Measures	Proposing measures to eliminate undesirable conditions.
Definition	To define how one intends to use a word.
Description	Describing physical characteristics and sensory details in order to create a picture with words.
Emotional Words	Use of words likely to engage strong emotions in the audience.
Entertainment	Elements used to make people feel good or pass free time. But entertaining elements can also be used in genres that are designed to inform, argue, persuade, etc.
Exemplification	The use of example to support or back up a claim.
Extended Metaphor	A protracted metaphor which makes a series of parallel comparisons
Flattery	Using excessive, untrue, or insincere praise in an attempt to ingratiate oneself

Table A2—continued

Device	Description
	with the audience, and therefore make them more likely to accept your opinion.
Holy War	An attempt to convince the audience that God is on the side of the speaker or writer and that failure to side with the speaker's or writer's argument will be the equivalent of a failure to defend God.
Hyperbole	An extravagant exaggeration of fact used whether for serious or comic effect.
Imagery	Lively descriptions which impress the images of things upon the mind: figures of speech.
Irony	A method of humorous or sarcastic expression in which the intended meaning of the words is the opposite of their usual meaning.
Last Resort	A logical argument (often a fallacy) that attempts to convince the audience that they have no other choice by to accept the writer's or speaker's views.
Logical Reasoning	Arguing according to the principles of correct reasoning; showing what can be expected because of what has gone before.
Metonymy	Using a part to name the whole, or using the name of one thing for that of another associated with it.
Name-Calling	The use of disparaging or abusive names to attack those who oppose the speaker or writer.
Narration	To tell a story using details that evoke both time and place.
Parallelism	Using the same part of speech or syntactic structure in (1) each element of a series, (2) before and after coordinating conjunctions (and, but, yet, or, for, nor), or (3) after each of a pair of correlative conjunctions (not only...but also, neither...nor, both...and, etc.).
Persuasion	Persuasion is convincing an audience of something. This can be through the use of emotion (indirect persuasion), reason (direct persuasion), or through a knowledge of what the reader wants (personal persuasion). Persuasion can be

Table A2—continued

Device	Description
	used in the service of other rhetorical strategies (for example, argument and persuasion can be difficult to tell apart because they are often used to complement each other), but persuasion can also be the primary goal in some genres.
Process	Explaining a process offers the audience a step-by-step explanation of how to do something.
Repetition	Repeating words or phrases for emphasis when speaking or writing.
Rhetorical Question	To ask a question of an audience to engage them without having a response from the audience.
Sarcasm	A taunting, sneering, cutting or caustic remark.

APPENDIX 3

DIRECT REFERENCE TO DOWNGRADE
CONTROVERSY IN THE METROPOLITAN
TABERNACLE PULPIT

Table A3. Downgrade references

Year	Number of Sermons Preached	Number of Sermons Explicitly Referencing the Downgrade Controversy	Percentage of Sermons Addressing the Controversy
1887	103	9	9%
1888	104	27	26%
1889	103	23	22%
1890	109	19	17%
1891	56	15	27%

APPENDIX 4

REFERENCE TO INSPIRATION AND ATONEMENT
IN THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

Table A4. Inspiration and atonement references

Year	Number of Sermons Preached	Number of Sermons Referencing Inspiration of Scripture	Percentage of Sermons Referencing Inspiration of Scripture	Number of Sermons Referencing Substitutionary Atonement	Percentage of Sermons Referencing Substitutionary Atonement
1887	103	40	39%	44	43%
1888	104	24	23%	39	38%
1889	103	30	29%	40	39%
1890	109	25	23%	45	41%
1891	56	19	34%	20	36%

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ABSTRACT

MR. VALIANT FOR TRUTH: THE POLEMIC OF CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON AS PASTOR- THEOLOGIAN DURING THE DOWNGRADE CONTROVERSY (1887-1892)

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The primary purpose of this dissertation is to answer the question: what was the polemic of Charles Haddon Spurgeon during the Downgrade Controversy? This question is best answered using the Vanhoozer/Strachan paradigm of the pastor theologian. Using their taxonomy, Spurgeon's theological discourse both inside and outside the Metropolitan Tabernacle is given context. He is an exemplary model of the pastor as a public theologian. Addressing Spurgeon's polemic in this fashion produces numerous accompanying questions. From what theological perspective was Spurgeon speaking? Was Spurgeon truly trilingual during the Downgrade? From a rhetorical perspective, how did he speak to the academy, the public at large, and his congregation during this time? How significant was his preaching ministry as the locus of his pastoral theology and public rhetoric during the Downgrade?

This dissertation argues that Charles Haddon Spurgeon served as a model trilingual pastor-theologian in his polemic against theological liberalism during the Downgrade Controversy from 1887-1892. The implications of this study are far reaching. The bifurcation of the pastor and theologian was gathering steam in post-Enlightenment Victorian England and Spurgeon stood alone as a particular kind of intellectual generalist. His controversy also demonstrates that capitulation to cultural ideology and

doctrinal divergence didn't begin with modern controversies over inerrancy, the atonement, or morality. Thus, modern pastor-theologians are not the first ones to wrestle with these things. Spurgeon offers great instruction, encouragement, and fuel for resolve in such critical matters.

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