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HIGHLIGHTS  
IN THE LIFE OF  
CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

*by Eric W. Hayden*

*To the Students of the Words, Works and Ways of God:*

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# CONTENTS

- Chapter 1 — The 1834-55 The Formative Years
- Chapter 2 — 1855 “Catchem Alive-O”
- Chapter 3 — 1856 Controversy and Confession
- Chapter 4 — 1857 The Wider Ministry
- Chapter 5 — 1858 The American Interest
- Chapter 6 — 1859 The Tabernacle Stone-laying
- Chapter 7 — 1860 Raising Funds
- Chapter 8 — 1861 The Tabernacle Opened
- Chapter 9 — 1862 The Pastor’s College
- Chapter 10 — 1863 The Sermons Translated
- Chapter 11 — 1864 Tenth Anniversary
- Chapter 12 — 1865 Thirty Years of Age
- Chapter 13 — 1865 Battling and Building
- Chapter 14 — 1866 Three New Institutions
- Chapter 15 — 1867 The Tabernacle Renovated
- Chapter 16 — 1868 Protestants Encouraged
- Chapter 17 — 1869 Thirty-Five Years of Age
- Chapter 18 — 1870 Sermon Sales
- Chapter 19 — 1871 Preaching in Rome
- Chapter 20 — 1872 An Attempt at Church Unity
- Chapter 21 — 1873 The New College Building
- Chapter 22 — 1874 Forty Years of Age
- Chapter 23 — 1875 D. L. Moody at the Tabernacle

- Chapter 24 — 1876 Mrs. C. H. Spurgeon’s Book Fund
- Chapter 25 — 1877 “Open Day” at the Orphanage
- Chapter 26 — 1878 Testimonial Year
- Chapter 27 — 1879 Silver Wedding Testimonial
- Chapter 28 — 1880 “Sermon House”
- Chapter 29 — 1881 Friend of the Baptist Union
- Chapter 30 — 1882 The Secret of Success
- Chapter 31 — 1883 Spurgeon and Luther
- Chapter 32 — 1884 Fiftieth Birthday Celebrations
- Chapter 33 — 1885 The Treasury of David Completed
- Chapter 34 — 1886 Spurgeon and the Revised Version
- Chapter 35 — 1887 The Down Grade Controversy
- Chapter 36 — 1888 The Controversy Continued
- Chapter 37 — 1889 Aftermath
- Chapter 38 — 1890 The Tabernacle Refurbished
- Chapter 39 — 1891 The Breakdown
- Chapter 40 — 1892 Home Call
- Chapter 41 — 1893 The Broken Mould
- Chapter 42 — 1895 The Influence of Spurgeon’s Sermons
- Chapter 43 — 1896 The Unabated Glow
- Chapter 44 — 1897 “Dinna Forget Spurgeon”
- Chapter 45 — 1898 Reporting Spurgeon
- Chapter 46 — 1900 Spurgeon’s Voice
- Chapter 47 — 1901 Spurgeon the Open Air Preacher
- Chapter 48 — 1914 Put Your Name In!

- Chapter 49 — 1912 Introducing Tirshatha
- Chapter 50 — 1904 The Four Dimensional Spurgeon
- Chapter 51 — 1907 A Bunch of Sweet Peas
- Chapter 52 — 1911 Walks and Talks with Spurgeon
- Chapter 53 — 1899 Spurgeon and Money
- Chapter 54 — 1902 Spurgeon’s Humor
- Chapter 55 — 1905 Spurgeon’s Handwriting
- Chapter 56 — 1910 Spurgeon as Poet and Hymn-writer
- Chapter 57 — 1916 Spurgeon’s Working Week
- Chapter 58 — 1903 Spurgeon the Children’s Friend
- Chapter 59 — 1908 Spurgeon the Countryman
- Chapter 60 — 1906 Spurgeon and the Railway
- Chapter 61 — 1909 A Prime Minister Speaks about Spurgeon
- Chapter 62 — 1915 The Architect of the Tabernacle
- Chapter 63 — 1913 The Small Clasped Book
- Chapter 64 — 1917 Publications — The “Afterglow”

\* As each chapter is a record of “highlights” it is impossible to give an overall, comprehensive title to the chapters. One outstanding highlight has been chosen for each chapter title.

# CHAPTER 1 — 1834-1855

## THE FORMATIVE YEARS

The biographical history of the most remarkable nineteenth century preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon can be summed up in a few stark facts and figures. He was born at Kelvedon, Essex, 19 June 1834; was converted to Christ at Artillery Street Methodist Chapel, Colchester, 6 January 1850 and baptized by immersion in the river Lark at Isleham on 3 May 1850. After local preaching in the Fen country around Cambridge he became pastor of Waterbeach Baptist Chapel in 1852, but a year later accepted a call to the fashionable church in New Park Street, London.

What was the secret of this early success? The Christian explanation is the sovereignty of God and the influence of the Holy Spirit. On a human level, however, the above facts and figures have to be looked at more closely.

When he was born he was the first of seventeen children. At the age of eighteen months his father moved to Colchester to become ledger clerk to a coal merchant and pastor of the Independent Church at Toilesbury. Charles was sent to live with his grandfather at Stambourne. He was also a saintly, devout and worthy Independent pastor, preaching on Sundays but farming during the week. This he did for fifty years.

From an early age Charles read his father's and grandfather's theological books. At eleven years of age he went to school in Colchester and later spent two years in a school at Maidstone. He became an assistant master at a school in Cambridge, and doubtless would have proceeded to the university of Cambridge if it had then been open to nonconformists. Instead, he taught in a school in that famous university town.

Spurgeon did not even go to a theological college, attending an interview but failing to meet the Principal owing to a mistake made by the maid who admitted him.

At that time he was already Pastor at Waterbeach and the congregation had grown from a mere handful to over 400. His very first sermon, as a boy-preacher of sixteen years of age, had been blessed in a cottage in

Teversham, and so it continued until he went to Waterbeach. During his two years at Waterbeach the chapel had to be enlarged to accommodate those who wanted to hear him. They came from near and far.

One day he was the special speaker at a Sunday School union rally in Cambridge. A Mr. George Gould was in the congregation and recommended Spurgeon to his friend Thomas Olney, a deacon of New Park Street Chapel, London. After four visits to New Park Street Chapel Spurgeon agreed to serve them as a probationer minister for six months. Within a few weeks a special church meeting was called to ask Spurgeon to become their settled pastor. In April 1854 that is what he became.

As at Waterbeach the chapel was soon too small to accommodate the large and growing congregation. The chapel had not seen such blessing for many years. The influence of a Godly father and grandfather, that of a praying mother, the Puritan works with which he was surrounded (and which he eagerly devoured), and “higher” education he received from a perceptive schoolmaster (so that at an early age he could read Latin, Hebrew and Greek) — all these, during the formative years of his life, contributed to Charles Haddon Spurgeon becoming the Prince of Preachers, first at New Park Street Chapel and then in his own Metropolitan Tabernacle.

## CHAPTER 2 — 1855

### “CATCHEM ALIVE-O”

Spurgeon was now thoroughly established in London with increasing popularity. Occasional sermons published singly had whetted the appetite of the Christian public and he now proposed to publish a weekly sermon under the title of *The New Park Street Pulpit*. He had been encouraged in this venture by Joseph Passmore, a young printer and publisher in membership with New Park Street Chapel, Southwark. A life-long friendship between the two men resulted.

An ever-increasing congregation resulted in two drastic measures: the old New Park Street Chapel was enlarged and while the building was being carried out the Exeter Hall in the Strand was hired for worship. The first service in the Exeter Hall was held on 11 February 1855 and crowds of people flocked there with Bible and Dr. Rippon’s hymn-book tucked under their arms! The newspaper caricaturists were soon at work, “Mr. Brimstone” and “Catch-’em-alive-O” being two favorite pictures.

The first Sunday in June 1855 the congregation met in the newly enlarged Chapel. It could accommodate 300 more but was still too small!

The same month Spurgeon celebrated his twenty-first birthday, preaching on James 4:14, “What is your life?” Entitled *Pictures of Life*, the sermon was published separately and had a large sale.

In July Spurgeon traveled to Scotland and had great success preaching in northern towns on the way and then in Edinburgh, Glasgow and other Scottish towns. He drew the largest congregations ever seen in Scotland. In Glasgow 20,000 were unable to gain admission to one service!

On the last night of 1855 New Park Street Chapel was crowded for a watchnight service when Spurgeon preached on Lamentations 2:19, “Arise, cry out in the night.” Many were converted at this midnight service.

## CHAPTER 3 — 1856

### CONTROVERSY AND CONFESSION

Spurgeon began 1856 by preaching on the text that had resulted in his own conversion in Colchester: “Look unto Me and be ye saved” (Isaiah 45:22). In the same month (January) he married Miss Susannah Thompson, the service being conducted by Dr. Alexander Fletcher of Finsbury Chapel. Two thousand people braved the severe cold to witness the ceremony, most of them failing to get inside the church as they had no ticket. After a brief honeymoon Spurgeon began preaching again at New Park Street on 20 January.

In February Spurgeon preached on behalf of the West Kent Sunday School Union on “Come ye children” (later issued in book form and to be republished by Pilgrim Publications).

Spurgeon’s first controversy occurred at this time — the “Rivulet Controversy,” caused by a volume of hymns published by Thomas Toke Lynch: *Hymns for Heart and Voice, The Rivulet*. In Spurgeon’s view many of the hymns, were mere “nature poems” and lacked distinctive evangelical truth.

The *Baptist Confession of Faith* of 1689 was republished at this time and Spurgeon wrote a Preface for the volume. He greatly admired this summary of what the “fathers” of the denomination believed.

In May he visited Stambourne and the scenes of his boyhood. He preached there at jubilee services celebrating the long ministry of his grandfather, his text being Isaiah 46:4, “Even to your old age I am he...”

Since the New Park Street Chapel was still too small, a second series of services in the Exeter Hall was arranged in June of 1856. About the same time he undertook to train T. W. Medhurst for the ministry and thus the Pastors’ College was begun. It began in Spurgeon’s home with this one student, then moved to the lecture halls of the Tabernacle before a proper college building was erected.



Since the Exeter Hall could not be hired for an extensive period, Spurgeon had to transfer to the Royal Surrey Gardens Music Hall. There he could preach to 12,000 or more each Sunday. Sunday evening, 19 October, was the first occasion and the building was densely crowded (some 20,000 people being present). Mischief-makers shouted "Fire!" during the service, and then, "The galleries are giving way!" Uproar ensued resulting in seven killed and many injured. Spurgeon was greatly upset over this tragedy and never really recovered from its effect. He could not preach for a time; however, the services were resumed and continued in the Music Hall for another three weeks, perfect order and reverence being main-ained and many being converted.

## CHAPTER 4 — 1857

### THE WIDER MINISTRY

The year began on a sad note for Spurgeon. His old friend Richard Knill of Chester died on 2 January 1857. Knill had had more tracts printed than any other man — between six and seven million in England and more than seven million in America.

The continuation of services in the Royal Surrey Gardens Music Hall began to tax the preacher's strength. Spurgeon's voice failed on one occasion in February, a Church of England Bishop being in the congregation. Others in "high society" attending these services ' included Lord Palmerston, Dr. Living-

stone, the Princess Royal, the Duchess of Sutherland, and Lady Franklin, widow of the Arctic explorer. Many could not gain admittance to these services, and on 17 May more than one thousand were turned away.

Meetings were now held in London for the express purpose of raising money for the proposed new Tabernacle. The initial sum of £12,000 was now seen to be insufficient and £20,000 was asked

for. Eventually the Tabernacle cost £32,000. In his wider ministry Spurgeon also stipulated that the collections should go towards the Tabernacle fund.

Some of Spurgeon's wider ministry engagements were memorable ones, taking place in fields (shades of his great model, George Whitefield!) as well as in congested towns. One such was held at the little Cambridgeshire village of Melbourn when eleven hundred gathered to hear the gospel. These open-air meetings reached the working classes as well as the "carriage folk."

The most amazing service of the year, however, was on 7 October when Spurgeon preached in the Crystal Palace on a day set apart for humiliation and prayer on account of the Indian Mutiny. The collection for the Indian

Relief Fund was over £675; the Hallelujah Chorus closed the service; 23,654 people were present.

Towards the end of 1857 Spurgeon's first book was published: *The Saint and His Savior* (since republished by Pilgrim Publications). Spurgeon sold the copyright for £50 and thereby lost a great deal in royalties! The book was written "chiefly for the Lord's family," but there are passages especially for the un-converted reader.

# CHAPTER 5 — 1858

## THE AMERICAN INTEREST

The year 1858 was remarkable for many reasons. A new comet was observed by astronomers; there was a near total eclipse of the sun; and a mighty spiritual revival broke out in the United States of America. So, too, in England, the services at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall were even greater blessed than before. Many additions to the membership of the New Park Street Chapel were recorded each month (a total of 231 by the end of the year).

Spurgeon was now causing greater interest in America than before, his sermons having an immense sale.

On 7 April Spurgeon visited Halifax where a disaster occurred that was similar to the one in the Music Hall in 1856. A number of planks gave way in the temporary building erected for Spurgeon's visit. Many were injured but no one was killed. High winds and snow caused the damage.

For the first time Spurgeon preached the annual Baptist Missionary Society's annual sermon and the occasion surpassed anything known before in the history of the denomination. It was the first of many such occasions. Held in the Music Hall, the building was densely crowded long before the service was due to begin. £150 was collected for the Society.

On 11 June Spurgeon preached in the Grandstand on Epsom racecourse. Soon after he visited Ireland, with the same success that he had experienced in Scotland in 1855.

In September he was able to tell his congregation that a site at the Elephant and Castle had been bought for the new Tabernacle at a cost of £5,000 from the Fishmongers' Company.

In October, however, Spurgeon became seriously ill for the first time since coming to London and could not preach for a month. The year ended happily, however, with his Music Hall services being resumed and with a

meeting at New Park Street Chapel at which it was reported that £10,000 had been collected for the new Tabernacle.

## CHAPTER 6 — 1859

### THE TABERNACLE STONE-LAYING

1859 began with a lecture rather than a sermon by the great preacher. Giving it a Latin title, *De Propaganda Fide* (The Propagation of the Faith), Spurgeon delivered the lecture in the Exeter Hall to the Young Men's Christian Association. He was very outspoken about many matters, including women's fashions!

About this time Spurgeon expected to make a tour of the United States of America, an offer of £10,000 for four sermons in the Music Hall of New York having been received. The tour was postponed for twelve months. However, America was never to have a personal visit from the Prince of Preachers.

In February he went to Scotland once again, holding a fortnight of meetings in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and on the first day of March he preached in Whitefield's Tabernacle at Moorfields on behalf of the London City Mission.

In June a man was killed in a thunderstorm on Clapham common while sheltering under a tree. Spurgeon, in order to impress upon people the unexpectedness of death, preached under the tree on Sunday afternoon, 10 July, and 10,000 were in his congregation. A collection was taken up for the man's widow.

Preliminary services in connection with the foundation-stone laying of the Tabernacle were held in New Park Street Chapel on 15 August, Spurgeon's father being one of the preachers.

The actual stone-laying ceremony on 16 August was performed by Sir Samuel Morton Peto. An anonymous cheque for £3,000 was laid upon the stone. Three thousand attended the ceremony and then adjourned for tea in the nearby Horse Repository, the Lord Mayor of London being present.

Spurgeon had now begun his sixth year in London and discovered that the directors of the Surrey Gardens Music Hall were booking Sunday evening

concerts. He immediately announced his intention to discontinue his Sunday morning services there. The directors soon discovered their mistake. They suffered not only financial loss but the building itself was soon burned to the ground (June, 1861).

“Field preaching” on the pattern of Wesley and Whitefield continued during 1859. In October, 4,000 listened to Spurgeon preach on “Come unto Me” in a meadow at Carlton, Bedfordshire.

About this time Spurgeon’s antislavery sentiments became more widely known and at a weeknight meeting at New Park Street Chapel on 8 December Spurgeon had John Andrew Jackson, a fugitive slave from South Carolina on the platform with him. It lost Spurgeon some American supporters and hurt the sale of his sermons in the United States.

During the year 217 new members joined New Park Street Chapel.

# CHAPTER 7 — 1860

## RAISING FUNDS

In 1860 Spurgeon held services in the Exeter Hall instead of in the Surrey Gardens Music Hall.

The building of the Tabernacle was progressing and a meeting was held in April at New Park Street Chapel to adopt further methods for raising money. £12,000 was still needed before the building could be opened free of debt.

In May Spurgeon visited South Wales and preached to 20,000 in a field at Abercarn. The Lord-Lieutenant of Mon-mouthshire was present, also Lord and Lady Tredegar and family with Lord and Lady Llanovet and family.

Having now been seven years in London the signs of strain were beginning to be seen.. He had been preaching an average of ten sermons a week to congregations totaling 30,000 people. In order to take a rest a tour of the Continent was arranged for June. Welcomed back on 29 July he preached with renewed vigor in the Exeter Hall. The following month he gave a lecture on his Continental tour and over £1,000 was collected for the Tabernacle building fund.

In September he preached in Holy-head to over 5,000, including many nobility.

The year ended with Spurgeon being appointed joint-editor of *The Baptist Magazine*. In all 207 had joined the membership of New Park Street Chapel during 1860.



## CHAPTER 8 — 1861

### THE TABERNACLE OPENED

The Metropolitan Tabernacle was nearing completion at the beginning of 1861. Spurgeon himself was only twenty-five but was being described in the newspapers as “the great preacher of the age.” He was preaching nationwide: Sunderland, York, Leeds, Newcastle, Carlisle, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, being some of the places visited.

At the end of March the Tabernacle was completed, Spurgeon’s first sermon in it being an exposition of Acts 2:42. The end of *The New Park Street Pulpit* is on page 167 of this 1861 volume, and *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* begins on page 169 with this first sermon by Spurgeon in his new Tabernacle. Details of the five weeks of opening celebrations are given on pages 135 and 136 (“Never was such an edifice so built — never was any edifice so opened!”). The Doctrines of Grace were expounded by Spurgeon and several invited preachers (see Nos. 385-388) — the doctrines that were the foundation of Spurgeon’s ministry throughout his thirty-one years at the Tabernacle.

Soon after the opening services one hundred new members were received into the church fellowship at a Communion Service, and one hundred and forty at another — a total membership of 1,900.

Wales was visited by the preacher during the summer of this year and some ten thousand Welshmen welcomed him and listened to him. It was said that if only Spurgeon had had one blind eye he would have ranked with their own great Christmas Evans!

On 19 August the centenary of the birth of William Carey was celebrated at the Tabernacle. Sir Morton Peto was in the chair and Spurgeon spoke on Carey as an example to young men.

Also in August occurred a train crash, in the Clayton Tunnel on the way to Brighton. In September another train disaster took place as people traveled to the south coast. Spurgeon denied that this was Divine judgment because

the disasters happened to occur on Sundays (see No. 408 — Accidents, not Punishments).

In October Spurgeon instituted a series of lectures in the Tabernacle. They were given on Friday evenings and not only drew large congregations but hostile criticism from the national press.

The last sermon in this volume, No. 426, edged with black, was delivered by Spurgeon on the occasion of the death of the Queen of England's Prince Consort.

His printed sermons were now steadily increasing in popularity. During 1861 over 200,000 had been distributed in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and a special edition in German had been printed for the Leipsic Book Fair. American newspapers reprinted them in their entirety each week.

## CHAPTER 9 — 1862

### THE PASTOR'S COLLEGE

As a result of the abolition of tax on paper larger type was now able to be used for the printed sermons and the number of pages increased from eight to twelve.

This eighth volume of sermons contains several important pulpit utterances by C. H. Spurgeon during 1862 on the occasion of certain national disasters. In January over two hundred miners were killed in a coal mine disaster (see No. 432). Later in the year economic conditions in Lancashire were serious owing to a stoppage of cotton supply. It soon became a national calamity and Spurgeon not only referred to it in the pulpit but took up collections at the Tabernacle for the relief of distress, over £700 being donated on one occasion (see No. 479 — A Sermon for the Lancashire Distress ).

It was another good year for the Pastor's College. Over twenty students were being trained for the Christian ministry and a further one hundred and fifty were attending evening classes as part-time students. By the end of the year there were thirty-nine full-time students. Spurgeon believed with conviction that the college was his chief life's work, next to preaching the gospel. As there were no college buildings yet in existence the rooms and lecture-halls of the Tabernacle were used for college purposes.

In the Spring of the year there were two important and interesting incidents. John Bunyan's tomb in Bunhill Fields was restored and Spurgeon attended the ceremony with the Earl of Shaftesbury. Spurgeon spoke, of Bunyan as preacher, author and sufferer. He stated that he valued *The Holy War* more than *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Also in the month of May he welcomed Dr. Merle d'Aubigne of Geneva (the historian of the Reformation) to the Tabernacle. The Doctor preached in the Tabernacle on Sunday morning, 18 May (see No. 450). On 27 May a meeting for one thousand British nonconformists, emigrating to New Zealand was held. Spurgeon preached and exhorted them to go with

“strong doctrine — sixteen ounces to the pound — election and perseverance” as well as strong limbs for the work of colonization.

In September 10,000 heard “the Prince of Preachers” in the open air at Cheddar Cliffs. With his back to the rock one can imagine the great preacher’s delight in singing “*Rock of Ages*” before delivering his sermon.

The Friday evening lectures at the Tabernacle were still drawing large audiences, especially one given by Spurgeon on George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends.

The year ended on a sad note. One of Spurgeon’s predecessors at New Park Street, James Smith, died. Spurgeon summed up his friend in typical fashion: “His was a converting ministry.”

# CHAPTER 10 — 1863

## THE SERMONS

Translated Spurgeon had now been joint-editor of *The Baptist Magazine* for two years. At the beginning of 1863 he resigned, hoping to start another “and cheaper magazine to teach truth and discover error” — but it was two more years before *The Sword and the Trowel* came into being in 1865.

New members were now being received into the Metropolitan Tabernacle on an average of nine per week. During 1863 there were 311 baptized by immersion, 116 transferred from other churches, making a total of 427. The number on the the church roll was now 2,5171 making the Metropolitan Tabernacle the largest church in Christendom. Among those baptized in February was Sir Arthur Blackwood of the Post Office. Since being Pastor of the church Spurgeon had baptised 3,000.

The Pastor’s College continued to flourish, with three Jews and several Primitive Methodists among the students. Now seven-and-a-half years old the college had sixty-six students. Spurgeon’s evening classes at the Tabernacle drew almost 200 part-time students.

The published sermons were in great demand. They were being read in Central Africa, the Bahamas, and, New Zealand, and were being translated into German, Dutch, Norwegian, Swedish, French and Italian. They had now been published for eight years (including the six volumes of *The New Park Street Pulpit*) and over a million copies a year were sold. On Sunday, 15 March, No. 500 to be published was preached in the morning service at the Tabernacle (see p. 157).

The great event of the year was Spurgeon’s preaching tour of Holland. He set off on 21 April with the aim of preaching twice or three times a day in towns, cities and to university students. He was met on Dutch soil by a high court official, Baron van Wasnaer and a few days later had an interview with the Queen of Holland at the royal palace, lasting over an hour.

He preached in Leyden, Amsterdam, in Utrecht's University and Cathedral, and in Rotterdam.

By contrast he paid a visit to Cambridgeshire in the summer of the year, visiting the scene of his first pastorate, Waterbeach. The church was still going from strength to strength and Spurgeon was asked to lay a memorial stone for a new chapel on the old site. Nearly 2,000 people watched the proceedings. Spurgeon donated £120 to the building fund, and a deacon of the Tabernacle presented him with a silver trowel as a memento of the occasion.

In August Spurgeon visited Scotland once more, combining a holiday with preaching engagements. His greatest delight was a visit to his first student, now the Rev. T. W. Medhurst, recently settled in a church in Glasgow.

Besides these preaching "tours", Spurgeon was often away on weekday engagements. During 1863 he preached to 6,000 in Birmingham, 3,400 at Dudley, and 3,000 at Wolverhampton. He never neglected the smaller towns, however, and was frequently to be seen and heard in the open air on a village green or in a farmer's barn.

Biographers have aptly described the year 1863 as "a year of progress in all respects satisfactory."

# CHAPTER 11 — 1864

## TENTH. ANNIVERSARY

An early biographer of C. H. Spurgeon described the year 1864 as one of “work and progress.” In all departments Spurgeon’s work for the Lord prospered. He had now been ten years in London and his great Tabernacle, holding over 6,000, was packed every Sunday morning and evening. At its opening in 1861 the church membership was 1,200; by the close of 1864 this total had been increased to 2,910. He wrote to a Scottish pastor: “The good work grows in my hands...the College prospers abundantly.” Forty-seven of his congregation had now become ministers of the Gospel and seven were working as city missionaries.

His wider ministry, outside of London, was signally blessed during the same year. Because of wintry weather, a meeting near Marlborough, which should have been held in the open air, was in a tent erected by a wealthy farmer. A thousand people crowded into the tent, having trudged through fourteen inches of snow to get there! He also attracted large congregations in Scotland, especially in the City Hall, Glasgow.

The year ended with two thousand people attending a tea at the Tabernacle, with double that, number forming the congregation for the meeting that followed on behalf of Spurgeon’s college.

And all this blessing and prosperity prevailed during a year of great controversy. The 1864 volume of the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit is one of the most important of all the fifty-six for it contains the controversial sermons on Baptismal Regeneration\*, Children Brought to Christ and not to the Font, and The Book of Common Prayer Weighed in the Balances. Spurgeon knew that he had “stirred up a rattlesnakes’ den” and fully expected his printed sermons to drop in sale but “they increased greatly in sale at once.”

Finally, the sermon on The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews, (This sermon is available in pamphlet form) preached on behalf of the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews, is being fulfilled before our very eyes today.

# CHAPTER 12 — 1865

## THIRTY YEARS OF AGE

The year 1865 may be described as a year of commencement and consolidation in the life and ministry of C. H. Spurgeon. In January of that year he commenced a monthly magazine, *The Sword and the Trowel*, which continued in existence until 1969. Having been joint-editor of *The Baptist Magazine*, Spurgeon was well-fitted to edit his own magazine as “a Record of Combat with Sin and Labor for the Lord.” Besides sermons, articles and book reviews, the magazine kept readers informed of the state of the Spurgeonian institutions — the Tabernacle, the Orphanage, and the College..

The Pastor’s College was now well consolidated. Going from place to place during the summer of 1865 Spurgeon was greatly encouraged at the interest in it — over one thousand subscribers. The then editor of *The Christian World* had collected over £160 from the readers of his paper for the work of the college. Spurgeon presented him with the first ten volumes of his printed sermons (*The New Park Street Pulpit* and *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*).

The Sunday afternoon Young Ladies Bible Class had also been consolidated. Started in 1859 with three members, it numbered over 700 by the end of 1865. Conversions were frequent and the converts came from all strata of society.

During 1865 two infamous murderers were brought to justice in England. Dr. Pritchard poisoned his wife and mother-in-law (pleading “not guilty”), and Constance Kent pleaded “guilty” to the murder of her four-year-old brother. C. H. Spurgeon preached a powerful sermon around, these trials (No. 641 in the 186.5 volume).

Other notable sermons in this 1865 volume are: No. 607, “True Unity Promoted,” which is very up-to-date in these days of spurious ecumenism. This is followed by a “A Discourse for a Revival Season,” another pressing need for the churches of this unspiritual twentieth century. “A Blow for



Puseyism” (No. 653) still has much to teach us and warn us against regarding High Church doctrinal errors.

The only sad note during 1865 is that Spurgeon, now thirty years old, and having served his Lord in London for eleven years, had to inform his congregation in May that he would be leaving England for a change of scene and a period of rest and refreshment. He was becoming exhausted through overwork. He made a tour of the Continent without undertaking any preaching engagements.

Greatly benefitting from the change of eight weeks away, Spurgeon resumed his work at the Tabernacle and was also able to share in the autumnal meetings of the Baptist Union at Bradford and in the re-organization of the London Baptist Association, the meetings, being held at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

# CHAPTER 13 — 1865

## BATTLING AND BUILDING

On the first day of January, 1865, there appeared in England a new religious monthly magazine. It was soon to become well known on the other side of the Atlantic and in many other countries of the world. *The Sword and the Trowel* was the title given by Charles Haddon Spurgeon to his new venture (soon to be nicknamed “The Soap and Towel” by his college students!). The subtitle was: “A Record of Combat with Sin and Labor for the Lord.” Referring to Nehemiah 4:17-18, Spurgeon aimed at a magazine that would provide material for working and ammunition for warring (battling and building with sword and trowel).

Spurgeon saw the magazine as “an extension of his pulpit ministry” and 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.”

The magazine was used to inform interested friends of the work and witness of The Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, and also other Spurgeonian institutions: college, orphanage, almshouse, colportage association, and the many mission stations connected with the Tabernacle. But primarily it was “to supplement our weekly sermon.”

*The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* sermons have been reprinted on several occasions, although not in their entirety as a set as at present by Pilgrim Publications. *The Sword and the Trowel* contents, however, have never been reprinted, yet they contain a wealth of biographical material about Spurgeon, sermons not included in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* volumes, interesting book reviews, and many rare and choice contributions about many subjects by Spurgeon himself. Many of his

published works first saw the light of day in his magazine: *The Treasury of David*, *Lectures to My Students*, *John Ploughman’s Talks*, *The Bible and the Newspaper*, *Eccentric Preachers*, to name but a few.

The extracts from these volumes will show the reader the kind of comments on then current events, fashions, theological trends, the state of the Baptist denomination and the Christian church at large. Some of the book reviews are examples for reviewers today, they are so honest. No wonder Spurgeon's son, Thomas, said that it would be "better for the Sword to rust in its scabbard, and the Trowel to be buried beneath a mountain of rubbish, than for the magazine established by C. H. Spurgeon ever to be disloyal to him."

The author of this capsule history had the privilege of occupying the editorial chair of the magazine for several years while Pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Some years later a notice appeared by his successor to the Pastorate, declaring: "It is with much sorrow that we announce that we are having to cease publication of *The Sword and the Trowel*." The last issue was December 1968.

The magazine has been restarted by the present Pastor of the Tabernacle but is only a shadow of its former self. It is now described as "a tract for the times" and contains a sermon by the Tabernacle minister. Domestic news of the Tabernacle is issued separately. Gone are the book reviews, news of other Spurgeonic institutions and other articles of interest to admirers of C. H. Spurgeon.

It is splendid that Pilgrim Publications is re-issuing the works of Spurgeon from the original volumes of *The Sword and the Trowel*, allowing the Christian public a view of Spurgeon as an editor for thirty-six years.

“Battling and Building” was a term first used by the American preacher Dr. A. T. Pierson when he “filled in” for Spurgeon during his last illness. The sword for doing battle and the trowel for building.

Early, and later, readers soon discovered that the magazine was not only inspirational and evangelical in character and content but also interdenominational and Protestant. Spurgeon wrote:

“We have waged determined war with Popery for ours is pre-eminently a Protestant magazine. But we fight against doctrinal Popery, not in Rome alone, but at Oxford too. To us the sacramentarianism of the English Church is not a thing to be winked at. We hold that he who hates Popery because of its unchristian teaching, will never stay his hand because it assumes a Protestant dress. These are not times to keep this matter in the background, and we have not done so.”

Naturally Spurgeon was criticized. “This magazine has not been conducted in a timid, crouching spirit, neither have we pandered to popular tastes. Some of our articles have brought down upon us upbraidings which we have borne without regret. Our reviews, when we have felt conscientiously bound to censure, have cost us many a postal lecture. We are not, however, penitent; we have nothing to retract, but doubt not that we shall sin again; we would not needlessly irritate, but we will not be silent in the presence of error, neither will we bespatter with flattery where honesty demands denunciation.

“A magazine which is not outspoken, and is destitute of principle, is a literary nuisance. We use the trowel wherever we can to aid every good cause, but we have a sword also and mean to use it. We expect to receive blows, and therefore when we do we are overwhelmed with dismay. Christ’s truth is too dear to us for us to flinch from its defense.”

Yes, Spurgeon suffered much at the hands of lesser minds, and from those whose dearly-held traditions he tilted at, but from the Great-Hearts like himself he received nothing but support, honor and esteem.

He was an extremely conscientious editor. During bouts of illness, which became more frequent as time went on, he delegated much editorial work to his brother, Dr. James Archer Spurgeon. Even so it was his proud declaration: “We trust that the matter and style of *The Sword and the Trowel* have not deteriorated, for we have spared no pains, and have read every line carefully ourselves.”

After some years a new cover design was adopted, but Spurgeon commented: “There will be no change in doctrine, nor in its method of promoting it.” He was able to add: “The Sword has not lost its edge, nor has the Trowel grown rusty.”

On one occasion *The Sword and the Trowel* was mentioned in the English Parliament by an Anglican Bishop in the House of Lords. The Bishop of Rochester described it as “a lively newspaper.” One book: review was read by Canon Wilberforce who wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury about it. The result was a special committee or ecclesiastical commission to enquire into the matter of public houses (taverns) built upon land owned by the Church of England — such was the wide social influence of Spurgeon’s sword and trowel.

It was “devoured” by humble believers living in outlandish crofters cottages in Scotland, and yet at the same time was read by officials in high office. The press, religious and secular, took note of Spurgeon’s magazine and frequently reprinted articles (often without acknowledging the source!).

The magazine was compiled, and the proofs read, in the summerhouse in Spurgeon’s garden. This he called the “mental fountain head” of the magazine. The “mechanical” fountain head was the printing house of Alabaster and Pass-more, but the main fountain head “cannot be pictured” for it was “that overflowing spring” — Holy Spirit inspiration.

# CHAPTER 14 — 1866

## THREE NEW INSTITUTIONS

Serious National and Ecclesiastical events during 1868 are reflected in this volume of sermons.

The unsanitary conditions and crowded quarters of much of London at that time resulted in a widespread plague of cholera (see sermon No. 705, *The Voice of the Cholera*). A few days recession in commerce resulted in much panic among financiers and others (sermon No. 690, *A Lesson from the Great Panic*).

Towards the end of the year Spurgeon preached on Isaiah 59:19 (sermon No. 718, *The Standard Uplifted in the Face of the Foe*) for Ritualism was gaining ground in the Established Church. Even the secular papers at that time commented that “decided measures should be taken to repress such pernicious extravagances.”

Again the first sermon in the volume is on the subject of Unity (as in the previous 1865 volume). Spurgeon showed his own sympathies towards true Christian unity by visiting Scotland in the Spring of the year, attending the Free Church of Scotland’s Assembly and preaching at Free St. George’s and the United Presbyterian Churches in Edinburgh. In both places fences were climbed and doors broken down by the crowds without tickets trying to get in.

The year 1866 was notable for the final closing down and sale of the Old New Park Street Chapel in Southwark and also for the first volume of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* to be translated into the Welsh language.

It was also a significant year because three new Spurgeonic Institutions were founded. The first was the Spurgeon’s Colportage Association. Spurgeon was not happy about the French word “colporteur” but used it for the sake of convenience. The colporteur was a Bible and Christian literature selling evangelist in rural areas, carrying their heavy packs of books from village to village and door to door, engaging in personal evangelism.

In the final month of the year Spurgeon announced that three acres of land had been purchased in the Clapham Road (about a mile from the Tabernacle) and on this ground it was proposed to build an orphanage and there house children on “a family system” and not “huddled together as in the workhouses.”

Thus with renewed emphasis upon foreign missions (farewell was taken of Tabernacle members departing for India), Spurgeon declaring that he wanted to see “the heroic age of missions come back”, it is clear that 1866 saw no diminishing of the great preacher’s power in the pulpit, or any waning of his wider activities to extend the Kingdom of God through his various Institutions. It is worthy of note that Spurgeon’s Colportage Association continued in existence until 1955, when it amalgamated with the Christian Colportage Association of England’s Christian Brethren; thus a Spurgeonic witness came to an end after 89 years.

# CHAPTER 15 — 1867:

## THE TABERNACLE RENOVATED

Spurgeon's Orphanage project really began to take shape during 1867, the ground having been purchased at the end of the previous year. With a gift of £20,000 from Mrs. Anne Hillyard, widow of a Church of England clergyman, Spurgeon was able to proceed with the stone-laying ceremony, people climbing trees in order to get a good view of the proceedings.

The year began, however, with Spurgeon writing an appeal on behalf of the cholera victims of the previous year, and by encouraging Sunday School work among the working classes. One of his converts was working among the costermongers in the East End of London and owing to Spurgeon's interest and support a mission to costermongers was established.

The greatest event during 1867, however, was a month of preaching in the Agricultural Hall, Islington. The Metropolitan Tabernacle, now in use for six years, was in need of complete renovation. The Exeter Hall in the Strand was considered too small this time, and so the Agricultural Hall was hired, although able to accommodate three times as many people as the Tabernacle itself? And it was several miles away from the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Into this building, with a seating capacity of 15,000, as many as 20,000 crowded, many of the congregation standing for the whole service, and a sermon which lasted from fifty minutes to one hour! Fears as to the wisdom of hiring a secular hall were once again groundless. There was a reverent atmosphere, an attentive listening, and resultant conversions. In the 1867 volume of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* Nos. 743 to 746 are sermons preached in the Agricultural Hall, notable among them being "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ" and "The End of the Righteous Desired." Spurgeon preached with great unction and it is no wonder that some Sundays thousands were turned away.

Health-wise 1867 was not a good year. There was only one course open to the Tabernacle deacons, the appointment of an assistant Pastor. Spurgeon's brother (three years his junior) was the natural choice, and



James Archer Spurgeon undertook much of the daily routine work of the Tabernacle besides becoming Pastor of the West Croydon Baptist Church.

To avoid the confusion of two Mr. Spurgeons, C.H.S. told his brother to accept an American doctorate if ever one were offered. It was, but not until after the death of C. H. Spurgeon. The Colgate University conferred on him the LL.D. in recognition of his skill in ecclesiastical law.

At the end of the year the Almshouses were completed — twelve rooms for aged women, Spurgeon himself giving the sum of £5,000 to endow them.

1867 ended with a great Watch-night Service at the Tabernacle at which Spurgeon preached two sermons: one to church members (now 3,634 in number), and one to the unsaved. A “giant” prayer meeting followed on New Year’s Day.

## CHAPTER 16 — 1868

### PROTESTANTS ENCOURAGED

The beginning of 1868 in England was characterized by great distress among the working class of London. Owing to the stagnation of trade, a severe winter, squalid and unsanitary conditions, great hardship was felt.

In February a heavy gale swept the south of England and Spurgeon's Stockwell Orphanage was badly damaged. This, however, was a blessing in disguise, for it served to create new and widespread interest in the work. A few days after the gale Spurgeon received two envelopes. One contained £2000 and the other £1 — the latter returned by an anonymous writer who said he had wrongfully begged it from him previously! Four hundred and sixty Baptist Churches contributed to a testimonial which was presented to the preacher on Whit Monday — it totaled the cost of two orphans' homes.

In April, the Exeter Hall in the Strand was crowded for the annual meeting of the Young Men's Christian Association. Lord Shaftesbury was in the chair and Spurgeon preached in spite of gout in one leg. His interest in evangelizing young men was further seen in that he preached the annual sermon to the young men of the London Missionary Society (the Congregational Union's missionary society) at Westminster Chapel (see Sermon No. 811 in this volume).

1868 was also a year of great ecclesiastical excitement. The disestablishment of the Irish Church was hotly debated, and some began to agitate for the disestablishing of the Church of England. Some were frightened of a return to Rome. To encourage Protestants Spurgeon preached on Christ as "The Head of the Church" (Sermon No. 839). He also published a controversial tract entitled "A Fable for the Time". It contained an engraving of a pig and a clergyman feeding out of one trough, the clergyman in full canonicals and the pig with pope's mitre and keys! Needless to say, C.H.S. was sharply criticized in the press.

He preached to crowded congregations in Liverpool and in Bristol during the year 1868, and in Bristol he had to preach at nine o'clock in the morning as well as at night, in order to accommodate the crowds.

In November that year an American evangelist conducted meetings for children at the Tabernacle. As a "preface" to Mr. Hammond's meetings, and to emphasize the Importance of child conversion, Spurgeon preached a sermon entitled "Do not Sin Against the Child" (No. 840).

# CHAPTER 17 — 1869

## THIRTY-FIVE YEARS OF AGE

Spurgeon's New Year Sermon at the beginning of 1869 was based, as usual, on a text supplied by all Anglican clergyman. Entitled "Jesus Christ Immutable," the text was one from which he had preached eleven years previously in the New Park Street Chapel.

At a public meeting at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in January it was announced that 285 men had now been through the Pastor's College since its foundation, a number "equal to what some colleges had received during a period of fifty years!" The influence of the college had spread to Australia through one of Spurgeon's assistants at the Tabernacle emigrating to that country for health reasons. There he founded a college on "Spurgeon lines" and C.H.S. regarded it as a branch of his own, granting £100 towards its funds.

The financial accounts of the Tabernacle issued early in the year showed that a total of over £20,000 had been donated during the past year, £4,300 of which had been subscribed for the work of the college.

The circulation of the printed sermons continued to grow throughout the world, several American newspapers reprinting them as they appeared in London.

Early in the year, Spurgeon's *John Ploughman's Talk* (Plain Advice for Plain People) was published and well reviewed. Tens of thousands were soon sold. At the end of the year, in December, one month earlier than the publication date, the first volume of *The Treasury of David* appeared, Spurgeon's commentary on the Book of Psalms (Psalms 1-26 in the first volume). It was soon looked upon as one of Spurgeon's most informative books, helpful to ministers and laymen alike.

The work at the Tabernacle was greatly blessed throughout 1869, thirty-two people being baptized in one month alone, although this was a busy year, the year of Spurgeon's Presidency of the London Baptist Association.

Usually the President instituted the erection of a new Baptist Church during his year of office. Spurgeon saw *three* erected!

He was now thirty-five years of age, and during the year suffered from neuralgia, then smallpox, necessitating his absence from the pulpit for some weeks.

## CHAPTER 18 — 1870:

### SERMON SALES

A visit to America seemed imminent during the early part of 1870. There were high hopes that Spurgeon might visit New York and speak at a great gathering of the Evangelical Alliance. Spurgeon had been asked to resign from the Alliance, however, because of his much-publicized sermon on *Baptismal Regeneration* (see Volume for 1864, sermon No. 573).

It was now twenty years since Spurgeon began preaching as a “boy preacher.” During that period he had preached 1000 sermons before twenty-one years of age and 6000 more during the next fourteen years. The sale of his published sermons was now 25,000 per week. They were being translated into Welsh, Gaelic, German, French, Italian, Swedish, Dutch, and some out-of-the-way languages.

The beginning of Sermon No. 919 describes the spiritually healthy state of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1870. At the end of two sermons Spurgeon inserted an appeal for donations for building an Infirmary for his Orphanage. The response to the appeal was generous, much of the amount required being raised by the readers of his sermons.

During the year he lost a much-valued friend, Sir James Simpson, the eminent surgeon who had operated on Mrs. Spurgeon two years previously. At the age of twenty-nine Sir James had discovered chloroform.

The Baptist Union held its autumnal meetings at Cambridge in September of 1870 and Spurgeon had the joy of preaching in St. Andrew’s Street Baptist Church with which he had been associated soon after his conversion. He was thus able to revisit some of the scenes of his youth as well as preach to 10,000 people in the open air on Parker’s Piece, Cambridge. His pulpit was a waggon, and his text, “Preaching peace by Jesus Christ,” obviously given also to his Tabernacle congregation (see No. 952).

On Sunday morning, 6 November, Spurgeon preached on *Right Replies to Right Requests* (No. 959) in preparation for a day of prayer on the Monday, set apart by the London Baptist Association for special intercession on behalf of the London Baptist Churches.

In March, *Feathers for Arrows* (Illustrations for Preachers and Teachers) was published, the present writer possessing an autographed copy by C. H. Spurgeon at the close of the year the second volume of *The Treasury of David* appeared, being as enthusiastically received as the first volume.

# CHAPTER 19 — 1871

## PREACHING IN ROME

The fifteenth anniversary of the Pastor's College was celebrated at the beginning of 1871 and it was reported that Spurgeon's men were now settled in churches as far afield as the North of Scotland, with two converted Jews working as evangelists among their own people.

In January Spurgeon the Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association. The Association wanted less work on Sundays for postmen Spurgeon wrote to all Ministers urging them to petition Parliament to that effect.

On 20 February, a Monday, an all-day prayer meeting was held at the Tabernacle, beginning before sunrise, prayer continuing for 14 hours.

Symptoms of overwork again appeared and deputy preachers had to take over at the Tabernacle and for some of Spurgeon's outside engagements. He was away from his pulpit for thirteen Sundays over a period of six months.

In July the one thousandth printed sermon was published (No. 1,000 in this volume, *Bread Enough and to Spare*, page 385). Spurgeon had now been in London for seventeen years and twenty million of his printed sermons were scattered throughout the world in many languages.

Sermon No. 999 — *The Withering Work of the Spirit* was highly commended by a Strict Baptist periodical.

In September it was reported that the Orphanage now had 200 boys in residence and an endowment fund of over £23,090.

Field-Marshal Sir John Burgoyne, and Lady Burgoyne, regular attendants at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, both died within a few weeks of each other in September. Lady Burgoyne had distributed many copies of Spurgeon's weekly sermons, especially among her friends of the aristocracy.

In November the preacher left for the Continent for a rest.



He took the opportunity, however, of preaching in Rome for two evangelists. In spite of the difficulty of preaching through an interpreter his sermons were greatly blessed and caused quite a stir in the national English press of that time. Besides making the gospel plain he also appealed for financial support for the Lord's work in that, "idolatrous city."

## CHAPTER 20 — 1872

### AN ATTEMPT AT CHURCH UNITY

The year began with a special Tuesday night lecture on January 2 when Spurgeon Spoke of his recent visit to Rome. “Dissolving views” (the forerunner of today’s color slides) were shown to a packed Tabernacle, many standing in the aisles and others outside, the building protesting that they had paid ten shillings for their ticket and could not get in! The lecture had to be repeated a few days later. Some of the press described it as a “comic Christmas entertainment” but others were more generous in their assessment.

In March, James Wells, Spurgeon’s Strict Baptist neighbor died. Wells was a hyper-Calvinist who often criticized Spurgeon’s evangelical Calvinism. It is probable that the two never met, yet Spurgeon wrote Wells a most loving and gracious letter during his final illness, and, although not invited as a mourner he followed the funeral procession to the grave.

1872 was another year of progress for the Metropolitan Tabernacle and other Spurgeonic institutions. Early admission tickets were advertised so that worshippers coming from a distance need not queue outside the Tabernacle. They cost one, shilling each. New buildings for the Pastor’s College were proposed. The work of the Colportage Association was extended. A new house at Stockwell Orphanage was envisaged for the orphans of ministers.

Volume 3 of *The Treasury of David* was published during the summer. This included Psalms 53 to 78 and the whole work had now reached the half-way stage.

Also in the summer, at the opening of a new Baptist church at Addlestone, Spurgeon preached beneath an ancient and historic tree known as Crouch Oak. This tree was associated with Wycliffe and Queen Elizabeth (the former preached and the latter dined beneath it.)The tree was twenty-four feet in circumference, nine feet above ground level. It was so named because of the cross cut upon it as the boundary-mark of Windsor Forest. The sermon is said to have been one of the most striking and telling that

Spurgeon preached in the open air. Unfortunately it is not in print. His text was: “He was moved with compassion” (Matthew 9:36).

In the autumn Spurgeon was present at the Baptist Union meetings in Manchester and proposed a yearly congress of “all the voluntary churches for spiritual purposes”, asking the Baptist Union to invite, the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists, the Congregationalists, and all other evangelical denominations. He also preached in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, when an overflow meeting had to be held in the Friends’ Meeting House. During the assembly he attended, and preached at, the opening of a new Strict Baptist College at Rusholme.

At the close of the year the first monthly part of *The Interpreter* appeared, being selections of Scripture, with comments, for use at family worship. He refused to incorporate prayers and the sales did thus not reach his expectations.

## CHAPTER 21 — 1873

### THE NEW COLLEGE BUILDING

Spurgeon's catholicity had been shown by his appointing two Independents or Congregationalists to influential positions: one as Master of the Stockwell Orphanage and the other as President of the Pastor's College. At the beginning of 1873 Mr. Charlesworth, Master of the Orphanage, was baptized by immersion.

On March 12 Spurgeon preached at the opening of West Croydon Baptist Church, the cause founded by his brother, Dr. James A. Spurgeon.

A letter from America invited Spurgeon to engage in a lecture tour. He was promised \$25,00 for twenty-five lectures but he refused the invitation on the grounds that he was a preacher and not a lecturer, and in any case could not leave his church, orphanage and college. The Watchman and Reflector commented that it was a pity American ministers did not take a similar view of the sanctity of their calling! However, Spurgeon was a good lecturer, and lectured frequently on a variety of subjects. My Run to Naples and Pompeii was a lecture given at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in January and published later in 1873.

On October 14 he laid a foundation stone for the new college buildings at the rear of the Tabernacle. Up to that time classes had been held in the basement rooms of the church. The cost of the new buildings was about 5,000 pounds (English money) and Spurgeon wished the new project to be a memorial of his twenty years in London.

A controversy on Infant Baptism arose out of sermon No. 1,135 — Signs of the Times, Spurgeon emphasizing that infant sprinkling was associated with Romanism. He had many ardent sympathizers and defenders.

In November he once again suffered ill-health and was unable to preach at the Tabernacle or keep outside engagements.

Published sermons up to this time had been those preached at the Tabernacle on Sunday mornings. Many people desired to have some

evening sermons in print and so Spurgeon brought out *Types and Emblems*, containing Sunday and Thursday evening addresses. This book was recently republished by Pilgrim Publications.

The year closed with a crowded Watch-night service at the Tabernacle, even the aisles of the church being thronged. Preaching on the Passover night from Exodus 12:42, Spurgeon with uplifted hands, ended his sermon with a passionate plea for souls: "Thy life is measured now by seconds; but all things are possible with God, and there is still time in 1873 for the salvation of many souls."

# CHAPTER 22 — 1874

## FORTY YEARS OF AGE

News of the death of Dr. David Livingstone arrived in England at the beginning of 1874. A worn copy of one of Spurgeon's sermons was found on Livingstone's person and given to the preacher as a souvenir.

The membership of the Metropolitan Tabernacle was now 4,366 — the largest in the world (the second was said to be the First African congregation, Richmond, Virginia).

In January Spurgeon replied to a newspaper article by Dr. R. W. Dale of Birmingham., asserting that Calvinism would be obsolete among the Baptists were it not for Spurgeon's influence. Spurgeon asserted that the main body of Dissenters was still true to the Calvinistic faith.

Flashes of Thought, one thousand extracts from the works of Spurgeon, alphabetically arranged, was published in April.

An outstanding sermon, one hour and ten minutes in length, was preached by C. H. S. in a shed of the Britannia Iron Works, Bedford. Changing his text at the last moment Spurgeon preached on 1 Chronicles 27:9 — "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee."

In September the new Pastor's College building was opened at the back of the Tabernacle. Up to that time twenty thousand people had been baptized by pastors educated at the Pastor's College. By the end of the year, forty-seven men had completed their training in the college and twenty-three of them had settled in the United States of America. In the Conference Hall of the college a bust of Spurgeon was unveiled. An "excellent likeness", it was the work of sculptor Adams-Acton. Sermons in Candles, later published in book form (with many illustrations) was first delivered as a lecture in the new college building.

Sermon No. 1,161, had a special plea from the preacher printed at the top — it was requested that it be used for evangelistic outreach.

Now forty years of age Spurgeon had labored for the Lord in London for half of his lifetime. Sermon No. 1,179, Forty Years, gives an insight into Spurg-eon's thoughts on middle age. The final sermon (No. 1,909) completed twenty volumes of published sermons, six being The New Park Street Pulpit, and fourteen The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit. Spurgeon entitled the sermon A Grateful Summary of Twenty Volumes.

## CHAPTER 23 — 1875

### D. L. MOODY AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE

After preaching at the Tabernacle on the first Sunday of the year Spurgeon became ill and was absent from his pulpit for twelve Sundays, the longest break there had ever been. He preached again on Easter Sunday. His return to the Metropolitan Tabernacle was celebrated with a welcome meeting and the presentation of an illuminated address.

The fourth volume of *The Treasury of David* (Psalms 79 to 103) came from the press, and, like the former volumes, was highly prized.

A lecture syndicate in Boston, U.S.A., made another attempt to persuade Spurgeon to visit America, but again Spurgeon refused, fearing his many institutions in England might suffer if he left them.

On Friday, April 16, the American evangelists Moody and Sankey held a meeting in the Tabernacle, but Spurgeon was unable to be present through illness. The following Sunday he was able to preach, however, and took as his text Joshua 24:15 (Sermon No. 1,229 — “Decision.”) On June 6 he preached a special “Watchword for Messrs. Moody and Sankey’s campaign in South London” (Sermon No. 1,238 — “Beware of Unbelief.”) In between, on May 7, Spurgeon preached in the Bow Road Hall, erected for Moody and Sankey, to the largest congregation ever witnessed indoors. He defended the doctrines preached by D. L. Moody on Sunday evening, May 16 and subsequently attended some of Moody’s meetings.

On August 15 Spurgeon preached a sermon entitled “The Priest Dispensed With” (No. 1,250), which caused a great deal of controversy in High Church newspapers.

The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland met at Plymouth in the autumn of 1875. Dr. Alexander Maclaren presided and C. H. Spurgeon gave one of his greatest sermons in the Guildhall. He also gave an evangelistic address in a Wesleyan Chapel which was repeated in the



Metropolitan Tabernacle: “There Go the Ships” (No. 1,259). It was inspired by a walk by the sea side at Plymouth.

The year closed with an encouraging meeting for friends of the Pastor’s College when it was reported that a Portuguese student had just left and others had applied from America, Canada and the Continent of Europe. Spur-geon then left for Menton, hoping that a change of air and scenery would benefit him for the ensuing year’s work.

## CHAPTER 24 — 1876

### MRS. C.H. SPURGEON'S BOOK FUND

Seventy-five new members were added to the membership roll of the the Metropolitan Tabernacle at the opening of 1876, thus making a total of of 4,900 (see Sermon No. 1,292).

At a prayer meeting on the last night of January Spurgeon spoke against the title “Reverend” (although he still used it “for the convenience of the postman!”). He stated that nobody had ordained him and nobody ever would. His only ordination was that “of the pierced hand.”

In March a new book was published. — *Commenting and Commentaries*—two lectures given to the students of his college. He consulted between three and four thousand volumes in order to comment on and commend books suitable for students and young ministers. In April the new *History of the Metropolitan Tabernacle* was published.

Mrs. Spurgeon decided to inaugurate a Book Fund and Pastors’ Aid. She began it with her own money, buying and distributing a hundred copies of her husband’s *Lectures to My Students*. Sympathizers sent in gifts and not only books were able to be sent to poor Pastors but also, gifts of money and clothes. By the time of Spurgeon’s death in 1892 nearly 150,000 books had been distributed to ministers of all denominations.

In the Spring of 1876 yet another invitation to lecture in the United States of America was turned down by Spurgeon.

On the first Sunday evening in July the regular congregation at the Tabernacle was asked to vacate their seats that strangers might come under the sound of the gospel. A second “free night” was held in October when a congregation of 7,090 crowded into a building designed to accommodate 6,000!

In August, Spurgeon undertook an extensive preaching tour in Scotland. One Sunday he preached to over 3,000 on a hillside overlooking the Firth of Clyde, his matchless voice carrying the message a great distance.

It is sometimes said that Spurgeon never preached series of sermons. The 1876 volume of sermons is characterized by several “double” sermons: “Conversions Desired” and “Conversions Encouraged” (Nos. 1,282 & 1,283); “Good News for Seekers” and “A Second Word to Seekers;” (Nos. 1,312 & 1,313); and a series of five sermons in December on “Christ the End Of the Law,” “Christ the Conqueror of Satan,” “Christ the Overcomer of the World,” “Christ the Maker of all Things New” and “Christ the Destroyer of Death” (Nos. 1,325-1,329).

## CHAPTER 25 — 1877

### “OPEN DAY” AT THE ORPHANAGE

After preaching on the first two Sundays of the year, Spurgeon was taken ill with rheumatism while on holiday in Paris. He did not preach again in the Tabernacle until the third Sunday in March (note the undated sermons included by the publishers in this volume — Nos. 1334-1342). When he resumed his ministry the congregation stood to sing the Doxology as he entered the pulpit.

During 1877 Spurgeon preached on several special occasions for various organizations. In May he addressed the Liberation Society on the disestablishment of the state church; in June he preached on behalf of London’s hospitals (No. 1366); and in October he observed, with other ministers, a day of prayer for Sunday Schools (No. 1381).

On two Sundays of the year his regular congregation gave up their pews so that strangers might attend the Tabernacle and hear Spurgeon: 13 May (No. 1355) and 19 August (No. 1389).

He went to his beloved Orphanage on his forty-second birthday. It was an “open day” and thousands attended. The grounds were illuminated at night. At the public meeting the chairman was Thomas Blake, Liberal member of Parliament for Leominster.

In July Spurgeon went to Scotland, preaching in a skating-rink at Dunoon, some of his congregation walking 22 miles and crossing two lochs to be present. An invitation to visit the Australian colonies, however, was turned down.

The work of the Pastors’ College continued to be blessed. Dr. Hodge, the American theologian, visited the annual picnic on behalf of the college, and Spurgeon was able to report that his men had built over forty chapels in the Metropolis

Two publications by Spurgeon during the year are worthy of note: *Christ’s Glorious Achievement*, a collection of seven sermons on Christ

overcoming Satan, the world, death, etc. was published in his “shilling series” in February. In July, *Commenting and Commentaries* was published—originally two lectures given to the students of the Pastors’ College, a catalogue of sound Biblical commentaries and expositions was added.

## CHAPTER 26 — 1878

### TESTIMONIAL YEAR

The year 1878 was “Testimonial Year” in the life of C. H. Spurgeon. To mark the completion of 25 year’s in the ministry money was raised by wellwishers to endow Spurgeon’s almshouses. Over £5,000 was necessary and that figure was surpassed.

It was an appropriate year for a bust of the preacher to be executed. The sculptor was John Adams-Acton, gold medalist of the Royal Academy. He had already provided the bust of John Wesley for Westminster Abbey and one of Queen Victoria for the Bahamas was also his work. Small statuettes, replicas of the original bust of Spurgeon, are still to be found in many church vestries and ministers’ manses in England and other parts of the world.

At the beginning of the year Spurgeon was ill again. Once more he set out for the beneficial air of southern France. He was not in his pulpit again until mid-March.

The church roll at the beginning of the year stood at 5,040, a net increase of 100 over the previous year.

On 12 May the regular congregation stayed away from the evening service so that strangers could attend. The sermon Spurgeon preached was entitled *No Difference* (No. 1414).

In July he went on holiday to Scotland but was persuaded to preach in front of the Rothesay Academy in the open air. There were 15,000 people present.

Also in July a choice little volume was *published* — *The Bible and the Newspaper*. Spurgeon believed with John Newton that the newspaper should be read “to see how my heavenly Father governs the world.” The book was a collection of newspaper reports of various incidents, spiritualized by Spurgeon for the sake of preachers and Sunday School teachers. Sometimes Spurgeon took such an incident and preached a full-

length sermon about it. This he did on two Sundays in September when he based his messages on the sinking of the ship *The Princess Alice* (Nos.1432 & 1433).

Also in September appeared the fifth volume of *The Treasury of David*, Spurgeon's commentary on Psalms 104-118.

In October *Speeches by C. H. Spurgeon at Home and Abroad* was published. This volume of eighteen speeches contained three given during the year 1878, the last one being "Drive On," a sensational address delivered at the Baptist Union meetings held at Leeds.

An invitation to visit Canada was declined as he did not feel he had "the Master's permit to leave his post."

## CHAPTER 27 — 1879

### SILVER WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Referred to by biographers as “the invalid Pastor,” Spurgeon left England for Menton, France on January 15, 1879 to recuperate. While away his Almshouses were given much publicity in the secular daily press.

Half-way through April Spurgeon returned to London and when he preached on Easter Sunday it was “like the opening of a new era at the Tabernacle.” His sermon was entitled *The Philosophy and Propriety of Abundant Praise* (No. 1,468). On the Thursday of that Easter week Spurgeon gave what many consider to be one of his most “striking discourses.” Based on the text Hosea 14:6 all the illustrations came “fresh from the olive-groves of Menton.”

An article in an American paper charged a popular London preacher with intemperance, stating that his gout necessitated frequent visits to France, the gout being caused by excessive drinking of beer, brandy and sherry! Needless to say it was incorrect to attribute this to the Pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

The great event of the year at the Tabernacle was the presentation of the Silver Wedding Testimonial to Spurgeon on May 20. Special sermons were preached on Sunday, May 18 (see Nos. 1,474 and 1,475) and at a public meeting the following Tuesday £6,233 was presented to the Pastor. He refused to keep any of it for himself but accepted a study clock as a memento of the occasion. The “silver wedding” was, in fact, the celebration of twenty-five years of ministry over the church meeting in the Tabernacle. Spurgeon donated £5,000 to his almshouses and the rest to other worthy causes, such as Mrs. Spurgeon’s fund for poor ministers.

In June C. H. Spurgeon attained the age of forty-five — another occasion for gifts to be channeled into the almshouses project.

Political troubles at home and abroad in the summer of 1879 stirred Spurgeon to preach on war, trade depression and other national troubles in a sermon entitled *The Present Crisis* (No. 1,483).



A small book, *Eccentric Preachers*, was published in July in the Spurgeon's Shilling Series. It was published, he said in the Preface, "in self-defense," as an attempt to prevent God's servants in the Christian ministry suffering from carping criticism, fault-finding and falsehood.

In October a girls' Orphanage was inaugurated, the houses being larger than those already in existence for boys. Preaching that month at the autumnal meetings of the Baptist Union in Glasgow Spurgeon received an offering of £273 towards the girls' Orphanage. The same month was issued sermon No. 1,500 or, *Lifting Up the Brazen Serpent* (see page 589).

# CHAPTER 28 — 1880

## SERMON HOUSE

For the first six weeks of the year Spurgeon was absent from the Tabernacle pulpit, having been convalescing in France for three months. During January evangelistic services were held by Spurgeon's evangelists, Smith and Fullerton.

Before returning to England Spurgeon heard of the death of Mrs. Hilliard, his great benefactor to the Orphanage (her last words were, "My boys! my boys!").

The preacher began again at the Tabernacle on 15 February 1880, and although he had been absent for so long it was reckoned that his influence was now greater outside the Tabernacle than within, the readers of his printed sermons now being not less than a million people! The sermons had been printed for twenty-five years and six months and so when the memorial stone was laid for a new girls' house at his orphanage it was fitting that June to call it "Sermon House."

In the Spring of the year a General Election was held and Spurgeon, a staunch Liberal, was thrilled with the new Gladstone government. He did deny, however, in the press, a story that the Tories perpetuated, that "he would vote for the devil if he were a Liberal"!

He was able to report at the annual College conference that 511 men had gone from the College into churches, and that baptisms since 1868 had reached a total of over 39,000.

Spurgeon was now 46 years old and for the sake of his health, on doctor's advice, moved to "higher ground.", to "Westwood", Upper Norwood. There was a medicinal spring in the grounds which it was thought would help his rheumatism (there is now a modern school erected in the grounds of "Westwood" and they have kept the name, also calling the street "Spurgeon Road").

On Christmas Day the preacher's health failed once again. He tried to do without going to France but the experiment did not prove very successful. However, during the month of December he received over 100 into the membership of the Tabernacle.

Sermon No. 1,518 in this volume is interesting as it was given to an audience of invalid ladies at Menton, France — “Beloved, and yet Afflicted.”

One more book from the prolific pen of Spurgeon came off the press during the year. In August John Ploughman's Pictures (with the sub-title: “More of his plain talk for plain people”) was published for one shilling (gilt edges two shillings!). It was a sequel to John Ploughman's Talk which had had an immense circulation and an influence for good. John Ploughman's Pictures was written to “smite evil — and especially the monster evil of drink.”

# CHAPTER 29 — 1881

## FRIEND OF THE BAPTIST UNION

Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon had now been married for twenty-five years. A fitting Silver Wedding celebration would have been held at the Metropolitan Tabernacle if only Spurgeon had been in good health. From January to the end of March he was ill, on and off, at home, preaching at the Tabernacle only intermittently. A small book, *Be of Good Cheer!*, was the outcome of this period of bodily suffering. It was published in his Shilling Series.

In April Spurgeon preached regularly once again, beginning with the annual meetings of the Baptist Missionary Society in the Exeter Hall (see Nos. 1596 and 1633).

The following month he spoke at a meeting of his beloved colporteurs (there were now 73 of them) promising a prize of £5 to the man who did best during the following twelve months (with a second and third prize of £3 and £2).

The Revised Version of the New Testament came off the press during the year and Spurgeon made reference to it in a sermon on *Heart-disease Curable* (see pages 342-3).

By September Spurgeon was ‘in full harness’ again at the Tabernacle and the work was most encouraging. He could report that on one day he sat in his vestry interviewing enquirers from two in the afternoon until seven o’clock in the evening, thirty-three people being talked to without a break. “I never had a more joyous time” was his comment. On 11 September the Tabernacle was given over to “all comers”, the regular congregation relinquishing their seats for the occasion (see No, 1620).

Although there was some criticism of the Baptist Union at his College conference that year he hastened to assure people through the medium of *The Baptist* that he was “a hearty friend of the Baptist Union and all its works” and on 26 October he attended the Union’s annual meetings held at Portsmouth, preaching in the music hall on the text, “Without me ye can do

nothing.” Many were unable to gain admission, even to the overflow hall. Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar was a guest on the platform of dignitaries, accompanied by the Mayor of Portsmouth. The next day he preached in the skating rink at nearby Southampton.

In November he departed for Mentone, inviting the American evangelist D. L. Moody to preach from his pulpit on the 20th of the month. On 28 December a “welcome home” meeting at the Tabernacle was attended by 4,000 people. Spurgeon seemed to be rested and in good health. He expressed the desire that his Thursday night service might be as well-attended as the Sunday ones.

## CHAPTER 30 — 1882

### THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

A visit to the Metropolitan Tabernacle by the Prime Minister of England made an auspicious opening to the year. An American schoolboy is said to have answered the question, “Who is the Prime Minister of England” with the reply, “Mr Spurgeon”! Mr. Gladstone’s visit was unexpected so there was no special sermon prepared for the occasion. The Premier sat with Spurgeon in his vestry for fifteen minutes before the service began, and retired to the vestry afterwards to congratulate him on the fine work the Tabernacle was doing.

It was Spurgeon himself who worked harder than all and overwork brought on more illness during March. The bout lasted over a month, and during that time the Bishop of Rochester called at “Westwood”, Spurgeon’s home, and prayed with him for his recovery.

Spurgeon celebrated his forty-eighth birthday on 19 June and £450 was given him in birthday gifts, which he said he would use for the children in his Orphanage.

During August a ten-day temperance mission was held at the Tabernacle, Spurgeon openly declaring his support for the crusade and “teetotal” principles.

When asked by some American visitors to the Tabernacle what was the secret of his success, Spurgeon replied: “My people pray for me.” He tried during the latter half of 1882 to make his Monday night prayer meeting more attractive and effectual. On 6 October he preached a memorable sermon in Hengler’s Circus. Liverpool, at the annual assembly of the Baptist Union — “Helps and Hindrances to Prayer”.

In late October he set off for rest and recuperation at Mentone, return in December when a large congregation gathered at the Tabernacle on Christmas Eve to welcome him home. He was still in pain but preached with power on the subject of the Savior’s herald star”. The next day he was confined to bed.

It is sometimes said that Spurgeon never preached series of sermons. He did, on several occasions, though they were probably not planned beforehand as a series, but one text or subject progressed to another as the Holy Spirit led the preacher week by week. Thus on Sunday mornings, 5, 12, 19 and 26 February he preached a series on “Our Lord before the Sanhedrin, Pilate and Herod”, followed by two others about Pilate (see Nos. 1643-45 and 164’1-48).

In sermon number 1649 (page 151) we have Spurgeon’s views upon the weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper.

His ministry through published works was as active as ever during 1882. Volume 6 of *The Treasury of David* was published in the autumn, having been preceded by *Farm Sermons* in June. The same month *Twelve Selected Soul-Winning Sermons* was published in his *Shilling Series*, followed by *Twelve Striking Sermons*.

# CHAPTER 31 — 1883

## SPURGEON AND LUTHER

A time of sadness prevailed over the Metropolitan Tabernacle at the start of the year. Two of Spurgeon's much-loved deacons died: Messrs Higgs and Mills (see memorial sermons 1700 and 1701).

The next month, February, Spurgeon exchanged pulpits with the renowned Dr. Joseph Parker of the City Temple, London, the collection at the City Temple being for Dr. Parker's Colportage Society for London.

In March Spurgeon gave the first of three sermons on 1 John 2:12-13 (see Nos. 1711, 1715 & 1751). It is interesting to note that on the first occasion Spurgeon announced part of his text from the Revised Version of the Bible. The same month a companion volume to *Feathers for Arrows* (Now available: from Pilgrim Publications) was published: *ILLUSTRATIONS AND MEDITATIONS: or Flowers from a Puritan's Garden*. It sold for two shillings and six pence and was 280 pages in length.

Two happy events occurred in the month of May. Spurgeon's father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. John Spurgeon (still an active Independent Pastor), celebrated fifty years of married life at a family reunion at Spurgeon's London home, "Westwood." Children, grand-children and great grand-children (seven of them being preachers of the gospel!) and a few friends made up a party of thirty attending the event. A few days later, on 21 May, the memorial-stone of Haddon Hall, a mission outpost of the tabernacle was laid, a work very dear to Spurgeon's heart (this mission station still remains to this day, see *A History of Spurgeon's Tabernacle* by E. W. Hayden).

The Sunday morning sermons from the Tabernacle began to be telegraphed to the United States of America for publication in the following day's papers. It was not satisfactory, however, and the enterprise was soon abandoned.



On two further occasions the Tabernacle's regular congregation gave up their seats that strangers might come under the sound of the gospel: see Nos. 1717 and 1746.

In September another new volume appeared from the press: THE PRESENT TRUTH, a collection of sermons that had been preached at the Tabernacle on Sunday and Thursday evenings. While in November Spurgeon preached two commemorative sermons on Martin Luther (see Nos. 1749 and 1750), that year being the four hundredth celebration of Luther's birth. The second sermon of the two was given to a crowded congregation in the Exeter Hall, the Strand, London, the majority of the audience being young men. A lantern lecture on Luther was also given in the same month at his Pastors' College.

Spurgeon then left for France to winter at Menton and while there prepared a small volume The Clue of the Maze.

## CHAPTER 32 — 1884

### FIFTIETH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

The Metropolitan Tabernacle pulpit was not occupied by Spurgeon until February 1884 as he was still recuperating in France during January. On 24 January, however, he preached to a crowded congregation in the French church at Menton.

By March he seemed to be much better in health. In the same month a new book, *The Clue of the Maze*, was published. Reviewed as “charming in style” and full of “forcible illustrations”, its aim was to set forth “honest faith” and also warn believers of the snares of Satan.

In April Spurgeon preached to a crowded congregation of young men in the Exeter Hall, the Strand, London, on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society (see No. 1778), and at the request of the Sunday School Union preached at Union Chapel, Islington, London (see No. 1785).

The great event of the year 1884, however, was the celebration of the preacher’s fiftieth birthday on 18 and 19 June. Newspapers recorded the event and congratulated him on being one of the best-known men of his time, having been first “a curiosity and then a notoriety!” The Tabernacle was crowded for the two evening meetings, 7000 being present on the second night. In a characteristic reply to the good wishes expressed Spurgeon said that he “would not go across the road to hear (himself) preach.” Speeches were made by such eminent men as D. L. Moody and O. P. Gifford of America, Canon Wilberforce, Drs. Newman Hall and Joseph Parker. £4,500 was presented to the Pastor as a birthday gift which he immediately gave away, distributing it to St. Thomas’ Hospital, the Baptist Missionary Society, the Baptist Fund for the relief of poor ministers, his own Colportage Association, his wife’s book fund, and his son’s church then being built in Auckland, New Zealand. A Jubilee Album was published containing a brief account of his life and his many Tabernacle institutions.

In August he was invited by Canon Wilberforce to be his guest for a short holiday and during the “rest” he preached to a great congregation in the Skating Rink at Southampton. He then addressed clergy of the Church of

England in the garden of the Deanery the following day, thus proving once again his catholicity and his love for evangelical brethren whatever their denomination He resumed work at the Tabernacle in September but was unwell again in November. He struggled through the rest of the year, fulfilling some engagements and cancelling others, dining at the Stockwell Orphanage on Christmas day with Mrs. Spurgeon. He was extremely weak and it was to be his last Christmas dinner with his beloved children and friends of the Orphanage.

## CHAPTER 33 — 1885

### THE TREASURY OF DAVID COMPLETED

Spurgeon preached at the Tabernacle on the first Sunday of the year but was unable to leave for Menton the next day owing to illness. At the end of the month he traveled to the South of France and soon began to hold services at the Villa les Grottes mission-room as his health improved. Cholera was prevalent on the Continent at that time and there was a scarcity of visitors.

It was 12 April before the preacher was in his Tabernacle pulpit once again. At once he undertook his usual wider ministry, opening the twenty-first annual Conference of his College on 2 May and meeting with his colporteurs in their Conference a week later.

Two notable literary events occurred during the summer of 1885. Spurgeon issued the first of his series of My Sermon Notes in April (Genesis to Proverbs and the second volume (Ecclesiastes to Malachi) the following month. He also completed the Treasury of David, his monumental commentary on the Book of Psalms that had taken him twenty years to compile.

In July Spurgeon went on his third visit to Scotland and preached to a congregation of 4000 at Benmore. Perhaps the highlight of the year was 28 September, when, by invitation of Sir R. N. Fowler, the Lord Mayor of London, Spurgeon went to the Mansion House to address the prayer union of bank clerks and others in the banking profession (see sermon No. 1,864).

Illness again struck at the end of the year and on 11 December Spurgeon once more went to France to recuperate. He was to be away from London for two months.

# CHAPTER 34 — 1886

## SPURGEON AND THE REVISED VERSION

Spurgeon's ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, was limited to the months of February to November during 1886. The beginning and the end of the year was marred by illness and recuperation in France.

It was a sad home-coming from Menton in February for the preacher's friends were dying one by one and he especially mourned the Homecall of Dr. Charles Stanford of Denmark Place Baptist Church, Camberwell (only just over one mile from the Tabernacle). Spurgeon's memorial sermon to Dr. Stanford (author of *From Calvary to Olivet*, *Voices from Calvary*, etc.) is No. 1892 in this volume of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* — "Why they leave us".

During the ten months ministry of 1886 Spurgeon preached with unusual power. In February he was so captivated by the theme of "the blood of sprinkling" that after preaching on Hebrews 12:24-25 in the morning he continued on the same text in the evening (see Nos. 1888-89). Staunch Calvinist that he was, he revealed his catholicity by preaching in April on behalf of the Wesleyan Missionary Society.

His pen, too, was still active. In April the third instalment of *My Sermon Notes* was published and in June *All of Grace*, "an earnest word with those who are seeking salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ."

The year 1886 was also marked by the receipt of the first American legacy ever for his Orphanage, amounting to four hundred pounds.

Two extracts from this present volume of sermons show the stature of the man. In this present age when there are those who revere the Authorized or King James' version of the Bible to the exclusion of all other translations, Spurgeon in 1886 preached from the Revised Version (No. 1935 — "And we are", subtitled "A jewel from the revised version." Then, when today the children's address or talk has fallen into great disfavor, Spurgeon stated in *Jesus and the children* (No. 1925) that there should be

at least a part of every sermon and service that will suit the little ones. It is an error which permits us to forget this.”

Leaving England for France in mid-November, suffering great pain from rheumatism and gout, Spurgeon could rejoice in the fact that in such a shortened year 418 had been baptized by immersion and had joined the membership of the Tabernacle. They had now been in the building twenty-five years.

# CHAPTER 35 — 1887

## THE DOWN GRADE CONTROVERSY

The year 1887 was the year in the life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon according to biographers and church historians. Because of the course of events in that year, and a certain decision taken by the preacher and Pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, he has been criticized, commended and assessed ever since. It was the year of the Down Grade Controversy which resulted in Spurgeon severing his connection with the Baptist Union, and that body passing a vote of censure upon him.

At the beginning of the year Spurgeon was still recuperating from illness in France. He began preaching at the Tabernacle on the last Sunday of the month, at the same time that a new mission station of the Tabernacle was opened — Surrey Square Mission (see *A History of Spurgeon's Tabernacle*, chapter 8, Pilgrim Publications).

1887 was also the year for the people of Great Britain for, their Queen celebrated her Jubilee in June, Spurgeon preaching an appropriate sermon on Sunday, 19 June (see No. 1968): “Jubilee Joy.”

In spite of the controversy that raged it was a year of great spiritual blessing for Spurgeon. His orphanage received a hundred times as many applications for admission as he was able to accept. His literary output was as great as ever: According to Promise, a companion volume to the previous year's *All of Grace*; a devotional commentary on Psalm 119, *The Golden Alphabet*, abridged from *The Treasury of David*; and the concluding volume of *My Sermon Notes* (Romans to Revelation). The number of those baptized by immersion and who joined the Tabernacle membership roll was 357.

The Down-Grade Controversy began with two unsigned articles in Spurgeon's magazine, *The Sword and the Trowel*, and was continued month by month. On 16 October, however, Spurgeon preached a sermon on John 1:29 (see No. 1987) which was taken to be his reply to the many criticisms leveled at him by the Baptist Union Council. (For a full assessment of the controversy *A History of Spurgeon's Tabernacle*,

chapter 14 should be consulted). Spurgeon's own comment on the whole affair was: "The pain of heart I have endured I would not wish any other man to bear."

Since Spurgeon returned to Menton, France early in November, much of the detail of the controversy is available only in correspondence that passed between Spurgeon and his friends in England. Meanwhile the Baptist Union Council was arranging for a deputation to wait on Spurgeon as soon as he returned from the Continent.

Sermor No. 2000 was published at the close of year, the final sermon in this volume, although it was not intended for reading until January 1888.



# CHAPTER 36 — 1888

## THE CONTROVERSY CONTINUED

The Down Grade Controversy with the Baptist Union that had begun the previous year resulted in Spurgeon's resignation from the Union being accepted on 18 January. He had charged them with having no credal basis and suggested "a simple basis of Bible truths". The Union passed a resolution stating that certain allegations made by Spurgeon "ought not to have been made."

In March, at a special meeting of the London Baptist Association, a resolution was put calling on the Union to prepare a sound evangelical basis of faith. The motion was not carried and Spurgeon felt led to leave the London Baptist Association as he had the Baptist Union.

The controversy had repercussions on the College Conference during the year. The old Conference was disestablished and a new one formed, men trained at the college being asked to sign the new basis. Over 430 out of 496 voted in favor of the new basis as recommended by their President.

The Down Grade became a talking point in America and Canada during the year. The National Baptist of Philadelphia censured Spurgeon for naming living prominent preachers connected with the Baptist Union. The Baptist Convention of the Maritime Province of Canada, by contrast, passed a resolution of sympathy with Spurgeon's stand for the truth.

The preacher confessed that the "strain (of the controversy) has nearly broken my heart" and it was not surprising that he suffered a partial breakdown in March. He was well enough to speak at the first meeting of the new Pastors' College Evangelical Association on 16 April and once again made a bold stand for the evangelical gospel. Encouragement had come to him in the form of generous subscriptions, and he had received hundreds of letters from well-wishers of all denominations, including one from Bishop Ryle.

At a meeting of the Baptist Union on 23 April a resolution was adopted which it was hoped would put an end to the controversy forever. It was

tragic that Spurgeon's own brother, Dr. James Archer Spurgeon, should have been the seconder of this resolution.

The controversy was reflected in the preaching that year: see No. 2007 — Holding Fast the Faith, No. 2013 — The Infallibility of Scripture, and No. 2047 — No Compromise.

The year was a sad one for Spurgeon in another way. His mother died on 23 May, Spurgeon himself giving the funeral address.

He was now 54 years of age, and at a fete given in his honor at the Stockwell Orphanage, he was only able to stay for a few moments as he was so physically weak. By October he was bedridden for a time and in November went to the South of France to recover. He was to be absent from his pulpit for four months. On the last Sunday of the year he slipped on some stairs in Menton, fell badly, broke some teeth (“Painless dentistry” he called it!), and had to retire to bed.

(See Spurgeon's article, “*The Baptist Union Censure*” from his magazine, which we have included in the front of this volume of MTP).

# CHAPTER 37 — 1889

## AFTERMATH

Spurgeon left the South of France on 18 February, spending a night in Paris before continuing his journey back to England. He was welcomed back at the Metropolitan Tabernacle by a large gathering of members and friends on 24 February, the deacons advising him to confine his ministry to the Tabernacle and restrict his outside engagements in order to conserve his strength.

That the Down-Grade Controversy was still weighing upon him is evident from his preaching — see No. 2085: A Dirge for the Down-Grade.

He attended the College Conference on 6 May and delivered a powerful address on “Our Power, and the Conditions of Obtaining it.” The same month he addressed his band of colporteurs and the following month he preached to a special congregation of sailors at the Tabernacle.

In June, also, the first volume of *The Salt-Cellars* was published, with volume 2 appearing in November. For 20 years Spurgeon had issued a *Sheet Almanack* for hanging up in workshops and kitchens (*John Ploughman’s Almanack*). These almanacks contained pithy proverbs designed to promote temperance and religion among working people. He brought them all together in the two volumes of *The SaltCellars* so that preachers and teachers might use them “discreetly” in sermons and addresses. New material was added and the proverbs listed alphabetically (A-L in volume 1 and M-Z in volume 2).

In July Spurgeon disobeyed his deacons advice and preached further afield once more, speaking several times at special services in Guernsey.

At that time his Orphanage had received 6000 applications for admission within 12 months, but only 60 could be accepted.

At an All Day Missionary Convention on 15 October Spurgeon preached (also Dr. MacLaren and Mr. McNeil) and shook hands with young men

and women going out to China as Missionaries. He was also the guest of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

On 20 October he preached a special sermon for Sunday school teachers (see No. 2110) — The Mustard Seed, that being the time of year when Sunday school teachers met together for special prayer for their important work among boys and girls.

By November Spurgeon was again in severe pain and feeling very weak. On 17 November he preached his last sermon in the Tabernacle for that year and left once again for France.

During 1889 there had been 433 baptized and received into the membership of the Tabernacle, a record number for several years, making good the two leaner years of the Down-Grade Controversy, although even then the number of new members was over 300 each year.

## CHAPTER 38 — 1890

### THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE REFURBISHED

At the beginning of 1890 Spurgeon was still recuperating at Menton in the South of France. He was far from idle, however, but was working on a manuscript that would be published posthumously — *The Gospel of the Kingdom\** (his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew). During his absence in France, *Around the Wicket Gate* (Books marked above by an asterisk have been republished by Pilgrim Publications and are available from Book Dealers or the Publisher) (a friendly talk with seekers concerning faith in the Lord Jesus Christ) was published.

The first Sunday in February Spurgeon was back in his beloved pulpit and continued until November preaching and advocating his various causes: the orphanage, college and colporteurs. However, Sermon No. 2128 (“Heaven above and heaven below”) contains several premonitions of the preacher’s soon entry into the “many mansions.” He was now fifty-six years old.

He preached powerfully for the Bible Society in May to a large congregation in the Exeter Hall. In July the Metropolitan Music Hall was filled to hear him preach on behalf of the Hyde Park Open Air Mission.

In October he lost his “right hand man,” deacon William Olney (see No. 2169 — “The man who shall never see death”). A memorial stone was laid in the foundations of the Surrey Gardens Memorial Hall, one of the twenty or so mission outposts of the Tabernacle, then being erected to commemorate Spurgeon’s preaching in the Surrey Gardens Music Hall.

While Spurgeon was at the Hotel Beau Rivage, Menton, from mid-November onwards, the Tabernacle was cleaned, renovated and repainted, costing over £1,000. “Arctic” conditions prevailed over England and France during December that year and the wet and cold did not help the preacher in his recovery. He wrote home to Mrs. Spurgeon speaking of tornadoes, frost, fog and bitter cold. He was to be a “prisoner” in Menton until February 1891.

In October Sermon in Candles (two lectures which first appeared in print in *The Sword and the Trowel*) was published.

During the year 379 people were baptized and received into the membership of the Tabernacle. The end of the year also saw the completion of thirty-six years of consecutive sermons published which caused Spurgeon to exclaim, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

# CHAPTER 39 — 1891

## THE BREAKDOWN

The death of deacon William Olney in the previous year was followed by several other Tabernacle veterans in the early part of 1891. For the first time ever deaths outnumbered the new intake of members (261 were baptized and joined the church during the year, the lowest figure since the Tabernacle was opened). However, the membership was still over 5,000, there were twenty-three mission stations, twenty-seven Sunday schools with 8,000 scholars and nearly 600 teachers. After his return from Menton in February Spurgeon interviewed 84 people for membership of the Tabernacle.

An epidemic of influenza prevailed in London at that time but Spurgeon continued working and preaching, his health steadily deteriorating. A week in the month of May was typical of his labors at that time. After preparing the weekly sermon for the press on Monday he presided at the Tabernacle prayer meeting in the evening. The following night he preached to Sunday school teachers in Bloomsbury Chapel. On Thursday he preached to a congregation of sailors in the Tabernacle (on behalf of the British and Foreign Sailors' Society) — see No. 2,206: “Am I a sea, or a whale?”, and on Friday he attended the Ministers' Fraternal at Hendon.

He broke down finally, however, not from influenza or overwork, but from a combination rheumatism, gout and Bright's disease. On Sunday morning, 7 June, he preached for the last time in the Tabernacle (see No. 2,2138 — “The statute of David for the sharing of the spoil”), completing forty years of preaching the gospel (although only 57 years of age), over thirty of them in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. In June, also, the Surrey Gardens Memorial Hall had to be opened without his being present.

His symptoms became alarming and a specialist was called in. Twice daily prayer meetings for his recovery were held at the Tabernacle. The doctor's verdict was: “The case is a very difficult and dangerous one.”“ Among those who sent letters or messages of sympathy were the Prince of Wales, the Prime Minister (Mr. Gladstone), and several members of the nobility.

The Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England, as well as the Chief Rabbi, prayed publically for him.

In September he seemed to rally a little and was allowed out for short drives in the country. He went to Eastbourne at the beginning of October and then to Menton at the end of the month. He left England as Dr. A. T. Pierson of America began in his place at the Tabernacle.

In France Spurgeon had periods free from pain and continued working on *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, also completing his *Memories of Stambourne*, published in November.

Just before Christmas he said, "I have turned the corner . . . I shall hail the day when I may again speak with you." It was not to be. His last exposition of the doctrines of grace was to a small company of guests in the Hotel Beau Rivage at Menton.



## CHAPTER 40 — 1892

### HOME CALL

The title is ironic for Spurgeon only lived just over thirty days of 1892, dying at 11:00 p.m. on 31 January, in the presence of his wife and a few friends.

Selecting and editing the first sermon to be published that year Spurgeon chose: “Gratitude for deliverance from the grave” (Psalm 118:17-18). It was Martin Luther’s text on his study wall and it was also inscribed on Spurgeon’s Jubilee House at the back of the Tabernacle. He was not to be delivered from the grave for long. He became too ill to write letters by 6 January and by 24 January had seriously declined. Seven days later he entered heaven. He had given two short readings from his own printed sermons in his hotel room in Menton to a number of guests, the last two occasions (10 and 17 January) on which he spoke “in public.”

The telephone wires to Menton became blocked with many messages of condolence from all parts of the world, including one from the Prince and Princess of Wales,

The preacher’s body was placed in an olive wood coffin and after a memorial service at the Scottish Presbyterian Church it was removed for burial in London. He was buried in Norwood Cemetery among his elders, deacons and members who had pre-deceased him.

Before the burial the body lay in state in the Tabernacle. Four memorial services were held in one day: the morning for members of the church, the afternoon for ministers and students, the evening for members of other denominations, and a late night one (10:30 p.m.) for the general public. Ira D. Sankey sang “Sleep on, beloved, sleep and take thy rest” and “Only remembered by what I have done.” Among others who took part were Drs. Alexander MacLaren and F. B. Meyer.

Hundreds of thousands lined the five-mile route from the Tabernacle to the cemetery, the writer’s grandfather and father (then a boy of 12) being among them. Flags were at half-mast and church bells were tolled. The

burial service was conducted by one of Spurgeon's own men, Pastor Archibald Brown. Dr. A. T. Pierson of America led in prayer and the Bishop of Rochester pronounced the benediction.

A rather ornate vault housed the preacher's coffin, embellished with a sculptured portrait of the Prince of preachers and an open Bible.

The voice that was once described as "a silver bell" now lay silent, having uplifted the Savior and drawn many to Him. During his pastorate a total of 14,692 had been baptized and joined the Tabernacle. His sermons continued to be published for a further twenty-seven years (and have been republished from time to time ever since) so "He being dead yet speaketh."

At once the biographies began to appear (on an average of one a year for over ten years!). The first "authorized" biography was by one of his own men, Pastor R. Shindler, and was in two parts: I — From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit; II — From the Pulpit to the Palm Branch.

# CHAPTER 41 — 1893

## THE BROKEN MOULD

It is often said that when God has done with a man He breaks the mould. Certainly it seemed so when Charles Haddon Spurgeon died, although that does not mean that his influence did not live on. It did, and has to this day.

*The Sword and the Trowel* magazine for 1893 begins with a photographic frontispiece entitled “The Empty Study at Westwood.” Not only was the preacher’s study empty, but the Tabernacle pulpit was bereft of the Prince of Preachers and the presidency of his many institutions was vacated by him. For twenty-seven years he had edited *The Sword and the Trowel*, and he had left behind him a wealth of material which successive editors could use. He also left many unprinted sermons and others in note form.

The College, Colporteur’s Association, Almshouses, Orphanage and other institutions still continued to be supported by those who had contributed during the preacher’s lifetime. In fact, the Memorial Fund had reached the sum total of £9,647 in May 1893, the money to be devoted to the above Spurgeonic institutions.

The Tabernacle pulpit was now temporarily supplied by Dr. A. T. Pierson of America (who had been doing so during Spurgeon’s last illness at Spurgeon’s request). Spurgeon’s son, Thomas, however, was called home from New Zealand to pastor his father’s church in March 1893. (For the future of the Tabernacle’s varied ministry *A Centennial History of Spurgeon’s Tabernacle*, published by Pilgrim Publications, should be consulted.)

*The Sword and the Trowel* now began to publish in monthly parts the Gospel of the Kingdom, Spurgeon’s commentary on Matthew’s Gospel (the volume came out as a separate book in April that year). About this time began to appear a succession of biographies of Spurgeon, beginning with a brief one by a Primitive Methodist who had been admitted to the Pastors’ College by Spurgeon to repay the debt he owed that denomination for his conversion (*Pastor C. H.*

*Spurgeon: His Conversion, Career and Coronation* by Danzy Sheen).

About that time Spurgeon's printed sermons were analyzed as to subject matter. Out of 2000 there were 571 with Jesus Christ as the theme; 322 referring to the Church (see page 378 of the 1892 volume of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* for Spurgeon's references to a worldwide, non-denominational church!); 222 sermons on salvation; 172 on God; 129 on failing; 96 on sin; 88 on prayer; 77 on conversion; 50 on the Holy Spirit; 25 on election! The remainder were on general Biblical themes. "Election," said Spurgeon, "should bear the same proportion in our teaching as condiments in our food."

*In The Sword and the Trowel* for 1893 Dr. A. T. Pierson wrote on "The Fall of a Giant," asserting that: God had given him "to the whole church." Dr. W. Y. Fullerton wrote in the same volume on "Twelve Months After" and since Spurgeon died in January of the previous year he pointed out that after January comes fairer, brighter, more fragrant and more fruitful months. He stated that "the savor of the ministry of the Word has been kept fresh by the printed sermons week by week .... Spurgeon is not dead!"

No, he "being dead yet speaketh," especially while his sermons are continually being reprinted.

## CHAPTER 42 — 1895

### THE INFLUENCE OF SPURGEON'S SERMONS

In 1933, forty-one years after the death of Charles Haddon Spurgeon in 1892, there was still in being a society called “The Spurgeon Sermon Society,” devoted to printing and distributing a weekly sermon by the Prince of Preachers. At that time, 2,000 families within the neighborhood of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, were supplied with sermons by Spurgeon.

The weekly sermons were published for more than sixty-two years, the last one appearing on 10 May 1917 (No. 3,563). They had gone round the world, being translated into twenty-three different languages, including Russian, Chinese and Japanese, Syriac and Arabic. It is impossible to estimate the marvelous spiritual influence of Spurgeon's voice and pen through these weekly publications. The publisher of the first sermon expected a sale of about five or six hundred, but from the very beginning of the venture the circulation was from 5000 upwards. Steele's *Tatler*, Addison's *Spectator* and Johnson's *Ramblers* and *Idlers* were largely limited to London; Spurgeon's sermons encircled the globe. There are some amazing stories connected with some of these single, one penny sermons.

One woman who worked for the publishers, Alabaster and Passmore, stole a copy of one sermon, hiding it in her clothing when leaving for home. After reading it she brought it back the next day and confessed to the foreman with tears of repentance that she had found Christ as her Savior through reading it. The foreman was so impressed that he too, “borrowed” and read the sermon and was converted. Both joined the Tabernacle membership.

A London merchant was sitting with his wife in the lounge of a Riviera hotel. The night was wet and there was nothing to do. Nobody seemed to want to play cards. On the table was a sermon by Spurgeon. To kill time the man read it and jokingly passed it over to his wife to read. They returned to London earlier than they had planned and went to a service at

the Tabernacle. Both were converted and baptized; both became zealous workers at the Tabernacle and intimate friends of Spurgeon.

The sermons were read for many years on lonely American ranches, in mining camps, in Scottish highland cottages, and on Sundays in churches where there was no preacher. Sailors at sea, spending lonely hours “on watch,” would pass the time reading a sermon.

Just as the spoken sermon was the center of worship at the Tabernacle in London, so the reading of the sermons became a thing of importance around the world. Sermonic material has been described as “the graveyard of many a preacher’s reputation.” It enhanced Spurgeon’s and became the means of perpetuating his name, but more so his Savior’s, long after “the great preacher’s voice was silent. “He being dead yet speaks.”

## CHAPTER 43 — 1896

### THE UNABATED GLOW

Dr. W. Y. Fullerton, in his book, *C. H. Spurgeon*, divides the total output of Spurgeon's sermons into three classes: from "extreme youth," through "the period of his greatest powers" (that is, up to 1876), during which time there was "the unabated glow, the force, the grip, and the strenuousness of appeal he himself never rivaled." Finally there were the discourses of the remainder of his ministry, "more full of mellowed wisdom."

Dr. Fullerton admits that a true appraisal of these sermons is impossible because of the number of them. The idea of seeing his sermons in print occurred to Spurgeon as a boy preacher after reading the "penny sermons" of Joseph Irons: "I conceived in my heart that some time or other I should have a penny pulpit of my own." Beginning to go into print in 1854, *The Waterbeach Tracts*, he had, by 1920, published more than a hundred million of weekly sermons. Dr. Wilbur M. Smith estimated that the sheer bulk of Spurgeon's literary productions was equal to the twenty-seven volumes of the ninth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Most of this was sermonic material, the fifty-six volumes of the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* containing no less than 18,000,000 words.

No one has ever been able to discover the exact number of languages the sermons were printed into. Spurgeon's own collection of foreign editions which overseas publishers kindly sent him, included Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Czech, French, Maori, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Urdu, and a host of others, including Braille for the blind. It is interesting to note that besides the Pilgrim Publications reprint of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* in English, many of those same countries (including Communist ones) are reprinting Spurgeon today! Thus no factual and final set of statistics can be given, and perhaps never will be given, as to how many volumes of sermons have been published and sold.

One anonymous friend of Spurgeon distributed over a million copies of one sermon to every crowned head in Europe, all university students, Members of Parliament in Great Britain, and to every house in Ireland.

The sermon with the greatest soul-saving testimony was preached during the revival year of 1859 — “Compel them to come in.” Hundreds joined the churches as a result of that one sermon and testimonies to conversion were received from all over the world.

Perhaps the most amazing sermon ever preached by Spurgeon was one that he never consciously prepared. He went to bed one night and began talking in his sleep. Mrs. Spurgeon soon realized that he was preaching from a text and wrote it all down. The next day she showed him and he preached it from his Tabernacle pulpit.

Sir William Robertson Nicoll finding himself short of books in his first Highland parish in Scotland, discovered that a shoemaker in the village had a complete set of Spurgeon’s sermons. Nicoll set himself the task of reading them all, with the result that he became one of Spurgeon’s warmest admirers.

In Serbia the priests were not in the habit of preaching. Then the Bishop issued an order that they were to preach. The Minister of Finance made it possible for three of Spurgeon’s sermon to be translated and circulated to six hundred and fifty priests! In the same way his sermons were often issued “by authority” in Russia.

No longer, in days of inflation, are these penny pulpits, but they are as invaluable today to ministers and lay people and every effort (or sacrifice) should be made to possess a complete set that we might catch “the unabated glow.”



## CHAPTER 44 — 1897

### “DINNA FORGET SPURGEON”

A story is told of a Scottish wife who gave the following parting instruction to her husband who was going to a nearby town on business: “Dinna forget Spurgeon” (that is, “Don’t forget to buy the current copy of his weekly printed sermon”). His reply was the testimony of thousands then and since: “I cannot forget.”

There is a story, however, told by one of Spurgeon’s Tabernacle evangelists, Manton Smith, of a man who nearly did forget “Spurgeon.” The evangelist was walking twelve miles to conduct an evangelistic mission at Southend, Essex, England. It was early morning and he quickly caught up with an old man walking in the same direction. Smith discovered that the old man had a Bible, but as the print was so small, he could not read it. “But,” he said, “I’ve got three old trac’s, and they is beautiful, they is; they’s a kind o’ sort o’ sermon-tracts.”

He had got them from a village barber and they were three of Spurgeon’s sermons. “I reads one and then t’other, and then t’other, and then I begins again.” The evangelist gave him money to buy the latest sermon, entitled “There Go the Ships.” A few moments later the old man asked, “What did you say it was called?” He asked the title of the sermon several times until Manton Smith realized the old man’s memory was not too good and so he wrote the title down for him on a piece of paper, and the old man went off happily to buy another “kind o’ sort o’ sermon trac’s.”

He may have forgotten the title but it was obvious he did not forget the spiritual contents of Spurgeon’s “sermon-tracts” — doubtless because of Spurgeon’s diligent preparation of his sermons. In his *Lectures to My Students*, the chapter entitled “Sermons: Their Matter,” Spurgeon said that the word “sermon” is used to signify “a thrust,” and, therefore, in sermonizing it must be the preacher’s aim to use the subject in hand with energy and effect, and the subject must be capable of such employment. “Hence I urge you to keep to the old-fashioned gospel, and to that only, for assuredly it is the power of God unto salvation. Preach Christ, always

and evermore. He is the whole gospel. The world needs still to be told of its Savior and of the way to reach Him.”

No wonder he reached such a variety of men and women throughout the world, and in such unexpected places.

Once on a ship coasting to Oregon someone produced a volume of Spurgeon’s sermons, and asked a passenger to read it aloud. Passengers and crew members not on duty gathered round and listened intently. Some time later, in San Francisco, the reader of the sermon was approached by a man who had heard the sermon read. He said, “I never forgot that sermon; it made me feel that I was a sinner, and I have found Christ.” He “dinna forget Spurgeon!”

In a South American city an Englishman was imprisoned for life. A fellow-countryman visited him and discovered that some years previously another Englishman had visited him and left him two novels to be read. In between the leaves of one book was the sermon “Salvation to the Utternost” by Spurgeon. He read it and never forgot it. Though he never expected to be released from prison he nevertheless rejoiced in the Savior and the Deliverer from sin.

Reader: “Dinna forget Spurgeon!”

## CHAPTER 45 — 1898

### REPORTING SPURGEON

Arthur Porritt was a young reporter with the *Manchester Examiner* in 1890. His first assignment was to attend Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, and his instructions were: "If Spurgeon preaches just a gospel sermon, there is no copy in it. If he say's anything about himself that may make a good paragraph; if he says anything about current questions give us it in full."

Taking those instructions in the reverse order, Spurgeon frequently commented on current questions. Examples are: a cholera epidemic, a Sunday train disaster, financial recession, wars, earthquakes, mining disasters, and so on. Besides these (all incorporated in the 56 volumes of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*), there are many more in the monthly issues of his magazine, *The Sword and the Trowel*. We might call them, "Sermons Preached on Unusual Occasions." In 1874 he preached a sermon after a boy had fallen while rock-climbing; in 1875 a sermon was preached after attending a police court as a witness; in 1878 one following a sudden hurricane. Trade depression, the sinking of a ship, a man killed by lightning - these and other topical events of his day were the subject of Spurgeon's sermons, and doubtless the young Arthur Porritt was able to supply "in full."

Spurgeon also preached about himself on occasions, and these autobiographical passages give us the real Spurgeon (see *Searchlight on Spurgeon*, Pilgrim Publications) and not the caricature of him so often presented in other biographies, old and new.

But in the main Spurgeon preached "just a gospel sermon," and where the young Arthur Porritt and other reporters may not have taken the trouble to report them, Spurgeon's own stenographer did and so we have the complete sermons as given, and then sent to the printers. Every Monday morning Spurgeon devoted himself to correcting the proofs.

These Thursday evening, Sunday morning and evening sermons were simple explanations of the gospel, God's way of salvation, and of gospel truth.

There are in the Index of Subjects over 130 titles listed under "The Gospel," and then the reader is referred to such related subjects as "salvation," "sinner," and "grace."

The "heart" of the gospel for C. H. Spurgeon was the doctrine of Substitution. In a sermon on this subject (No. 2000, "With His stripes we are healed," Isaiah 53:5) Spurgeon urged all Christians to preach this gospel of substitution. His closing words were: "Spread this truth by all means. Never mind how simple the language. Tell it out: tell it out everywhere, and in every way. Tell it out that by the stripes of Jesus we are healed."

It is to be hoped that Arthur Porritt and many other newspaper reporters took down, and in, this simple gospel, disobeying the instructions of their editors, so becoming real "born again" believers. These gospel sermons were the ones that were all important, more than any so-called "autobiographical" sermons or those about "current events," although Spurgeon never refrained from preaching the gospel whatever his text: or topic might be.

# CHAPTER 46 — 1900

## SPURGEON'S VOICE

It is unfortunate that the phonogram (precursor of the gramophone, record-player and tape-recorder) was not invented early enough to record the voice of the Prince of Preachers. Today there are few, if any, alive who actually heard Spurgeon preach. We are thus forced to rely upon the testimony of relatives of those who “sat under” Spurgeon, or consult descriptive passages in biographies about the preacher in order to gain some insight into the, marvellous voice that God bestowed upon him.

Dr. W. Y. Fullerton described Spurgeon's voice as “the most magnificent and mellifluous voice since Chrysostom.” Sir Charles Owens described it as that “of a high and clear tenor” and compared it with the famous singing voice of Sims Reeves: “Spurgeon vocally, was the Sim Reeves of the English-speaking pulpit — a living example of perfect voice mastery.”

The Victorian era in England was very wealthy with beautiful voices. There were great singers like Adelina Patti, Madam Melba and Jenny Lind. There were orators like Gladstone and John Bright. There were other great preachers like Dr. Parker and Canon Liddon. In Christian spirit all these other “pulpit giants” declared Spurgeon's voice to be unsurpassable, being “sweet, resonant and tuneful.” One moment it could be as soft as a mother's lullaby and at another rang with all the clearness of a clarion calling cavalry troops to arms.

When preaching in the Crystal Palace to 20,000 people, Spurgeon was able to speak an instruction to the organist who appeared as a tiny dot of black at the further end of the great hall.

The only time his voice failed. (apart from when he was ill) was when he was overcome by emotion. Once Mrs. Spurgeon thought he would die as he extolled the Savior from the, text “His Name shall endure for ever.” He was only able to finish his sermon in broken and breathless accents, then he fell back speechless and exhausted into his pulpit chair.

Perhaps the most common description of his voice is that it was like “a silver bell.” The bell never went out of his voice until one year before his death in France. His pathetic plea then was: “Do hear me all you can while I am to be heard.”

A famous British public school has as its motto: “Manners maketh man.” Dr. Parker changed it to “The voice is the man” in the light of his great contemporary, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Voice is a great revealer of character. A gentle voice means a calm, tranquil nature. A shrill, strident voice reveals, a churlish nature. The key-note of Spurgeon’s voice was sincerity. He was sincere in heart and transparently honest in speech. There was nothing affected or artificial about his voice or his character.

It was a voice eminently suited for open-air preaching, and in this Spurgeon engaged a great deal, especially during his early ministry, but that must be the subject of a separate article.

# CHAPTER 47 — 1901

## SPURGEON THE OPEN AIR PREACHER

Charles Haddon Spurgeon is generally associated with such buildings as his own Metropolitan Tabernacle and other large auditoriums in London such as the Crystal Palace and the Agricultural Hall. During his earlier years, however, he engaged in much open-air preaching, possessing such a suitable voice for reaching vast crowds. In July 1864, when Spurgeon was only 30, a photograph was taken of him preaching in the open air, pointed finger directing his audience to the uplifted Christ (see jacket cover).

This kind of preaching began during his Cambridgeshire ministry at Waterbeach. Wherever he could gather a congregation on village green or in some Fenland field he would preach the gospel to a congregation that far outnumbered his chapel seating capacity. In this he went against the advice of his Waterbeach deacons who thought such open-air preaching was undignified and “imitating the Methodists!”

“The next best thing to the grace of God is oxygen,” declared Spurgeon, and he advocated outdoor preaching to all true ministers of the gospel. Very few of his open-air sermons have been recorded, except that the occasions were noted down in his “Journal of preaching exercises” dated 1851 to 53. Entries read, for example: “Preached on Teversham Green to very many;” “Preached at Ditton to a great number in the open air;” “Riverside crowd of two thousand at Waterbeach;” “Stump’s Cross — probably twelve hundred present.”

On coming to London his open-air activities did not end. In 1855 (2 June) he wrote to his wife: “Last evening; about 500 came to the field ... I am persuaded many souls were saved.” A few days later he preached to 10,000 in King Edward’s Road, Hackney, and three months later 14,000 heard him in the same place (this sermon is Nos. 39 and 40 in *The New Park Street Pulpit*, published by Pilgrim Publications).

He preached from the Grand Stand of Epsom RaceCourse in June 1858, and on several occasions in Wales, his powerful voice being clearly heard by over 10,000 people on each occasion. At Abercarne it was estimated

that 20,000 heard him and “men and women were swayed to and fro under the heavenly message as corn in waves by the summer winds.”

Perhaps the most astonishing open-air preaching occasion was on 10 July 1859 on Clapham Common. A fortnight before a man had been killed by lightning while sheltering under a tree. Ten thousand stood round the stricken tree while Spurgeon preached on the text, “Be ye therefore also ready” (Luke 12:40).

Although Spurgeon had now reached his zenith, outdoor preaching was coming to an end because of the vast crowds he was preaching to at the Metropolitan Tabernacle and because of the institutions of which he was founder and president. The end of this era, however, was marked by the pulpit stairs from the old New Park Street Chapel being removed to the garden of his residence in Nightingale Lane, Clapham. They were fixed to the trunk of a huge willow tree but were not later removed to his new home at Westood, Beulah Hill, Norwood.



# CHAPTER 48 — 1914

## PUT YOUR NAME IN!

In an issue of *The Sword and the Trowel* Spurgeon gives an engraving of the “decision card” used by his Tabernacle evangelists. It is a reproduction of John 3:16 with the word “WHOSOEVER” in large capital letters. A blank space is left in the middle of the letters with an instruction to “write in your own name” when you receive Christ as Savior. The present Writer’s copy of *The Sword and the Trowel* (a second hand copy) has the name of the volume’s owner inscribed in “WHOSOEVER”.

One of Spurgeon’s much-used evangelists, J. Manton Smith, wrote a biography of Spurgeon for children — *The Essex Lad who became England’s Greatest Preacher*. Two letters to children are incorporated in the book, both written by C. H. Spurgeon. Manton Smith has left out the name in two places with the instruction to “write your own name it’. He testifies that two of his own children were converted through reading one of these letters and inserting their name in the appropriate space.

One letter begins (after Spurgeon has noted in the top left corner of his note paper:

**“O Lord bless this letter”): —**  
**My dear.....**

I was a little while ago at a meeting for prayer where a large number of ministers were gathered together. The subject of prayer was “our children.” It soon brought tears to my eyes to hear those good fathers pleading with God for their sons and daughters. As they went on entreating the Lord to save their families, my heart seemed ready to burst with strong desire that it might even be so. Then I thought, I will write to those sons and daughters and remind them of their parents’ prayers.

Dear..... you are highly privileged in having parents who pray for you. Your name is known in the courts of heaven. Your case has been laid before the Throne of God.

... all the entreaties and wrestlings of your father will not save you if you never seek the Lord yourself! .... you cannot save yourself, but the great Lord Jesus can save you. Ask him to do it. "He that asketh receiveth." Then trust in Jesus to save you. He can do it, for he died and rose again that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

The letter ended: "Yours very lovingly,  
C. H. Spurgeon."

Have you "put your name in?" This volume of soul-saving sermons might have been given you as a girl. You might have bought it to "complete a set". Perhaps you purchased it just to have "a volume of Spurgeon on my library shelves." Whatever your reason, read these sermons and search your heart to see if you are saved or not for all eternity. Write your name in, and the date, if you receive Christ into your heart as Savior and Lord after reading the way of salvation in these precious pages. Then let the publishers know — they will be so pleased to offer you further spiritual help.

## CHAPTER 49 — 1912

### INTRODUCING TIRSHATHA

He needs introduction for usually he is known by another name. In only two Old Testament books is he mentioned at all, and then only five times (four references in the Book of Nehemiah, and one in the Book of Ezra).

“Tirshatha” was an ancient Persian term signifying “Your Reverence” or “Chief Governor.” For Mrs. Susannah Spurgeon, however, it was a delightful term of endearment, and one which she frequently used when addressing her husband, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. To her he was always “*Tirshatha*”, from the day of their wedding at New Park Street Chapel to the sad parting at Mentone thirty-six years later.

How did the nickname come into being? Was it the product of Spurgeon’s own quick wit? Was this why his deacons, elders and students referred to him as “The Gov’nor?” It was a term indicative of love, not authority.

Nehemiah, the Biblical Tirshatha, was God’s “governor” raised up to protect His people from the Chaldeans. His commission was to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Spurgeon, the nineteenth century “Tirshatha,” was raised up at a time when the wails of the earthly Jerusalem needed strengthening and rebuilding. Like Nehemiah before him Spurgeon relied on the “sword and the trowel” so that he could battle and build.

It was through his spoken and printed sermons that he rebuilt and defended “Jerusalem”. Election, predestination, total depravity, the perseverance of the saints, substitutionary atonement, justification by faith, eternal security, divine sovereignty, sanctification, the second coming of Christ — these were the doctrines of grace preached by Spurgeon for the upbuilding of God’s people.

He faced the dangers from within (apathy and indifference) and the dangers from without (false doctrines which brought about the famous Down-Grade Controversy of 1887 onwards). Knowing that “heresy in the college meant false doctrine in the church” he suggested a simple basis of Bible

truths as the remedy. It was not adopted by the Baptist Union and so Tirshatha withdrew, after a vote of censure was passed against him.

Like Nehemiah he turned his attention to measures for the public good. Spurgeon's social services were enormous (see *A History of Spurgeon's Tabernacle*, Pilgrim Publications, Part 3). He not only founded his own philanthropic institutions (an orphanage for boys and girls, over twenty mission stations, almshouses, etc) but he supported such men as Muller and Barnado in their work among children and Groom in his work among cripple girls. His classes for the illiterate in the basement halls of the Tabernacle were the forerunner of London's night-schools, polytechnics and technical institutes.

Both Tirshathas were men of prayer. Nehemiah spread all his cares, griefs and fears before God. For Spurgeon prayer was as natural as breathing. In a Surrey wood, in a mainline train, Tirshatha could kneel down and pour out his soul before the Throne of Grace.

Like the Old Testament Tirshatha Spurgeon was generous. Two substantial gifts made to him by his Tabernacle congregation he spent on others. Five pound notes were crammed in his pockets ready to be distributed to poor ministers and their widows. The Prince of Preachers was a princely philanthropist.

## CHAPTER 50 — 1904

### THE FOURTH DIMENSIONAL SPURGEON

In 1934, the centenary year of Spurgeon's birth, the Rev. A. Cunningham-Burley (a member of the Spurgeon family by marriage) drew an interesting parallel between the dimensions of Spurgeon's tomb in Norwood Cemetery, London, and the four outstanding qualities of the great preacher's life.

The tomb is a beautifully proportioned erection, with upper and lower parts complimentary in length, breadth, depth and height. In the same way Spurgeon's life was equally balanced and symmetrical.

First, Spurgeon's life was characterized by length of service. Although he died at the young age of almost 58, because he was converted at an early age he was able to spend over 40 years in proclaiming the gospel. Even before his conversion he had edited a "Children's Magazine," at twelve years of age. At fifteen he won an essay prize on the subject of "Protestantism." Converted at sixteen he at once taught in Sunday school and began preaching. For over thirty years he continued to draw large congregations to his Metropolitan Tabernacle and wherever he preached in the open air or in vast secular buildings.

Next there was a breadth of sympathy that characterized this great man. He was never just a "pulpit giant," remote in his "six feet above contradiction" as the preacher's pulpit is sometimes called. Spurgeon had a sympathetic relationship with many people. His concern for children that resulted in the founding of his Orphanage; his care for the widows in the erection of his Almshouses; his love for the ordinary man in the street that took him into the open air to preach the gospel and also caused him to begin his Colportage Association so that country folk might hear the gospel and be able to buy Bibles and other Christian literature — these show us that there was no aloofness, that he was never wrapped up in himself alone, living in the seclusion of church and home.

Third, there was depth of suffering. What a shining example C.H.S. was, and is, to those who suffer from mental and spiritual depression at times

(like the Psalmist he so loved!). Then bodily sickness resulted in a great deal of physical pain. Besides that there was the nervous and emotional strain of ministering to such vast crowds, especially when catastrophes occurred in some buildings, resulting in death and injury among the congregation. His patience and endurance, during days and nights of pain, is a marvel to read about in the various biographies. He never knew full health and strength for the greater part of his ministry, but like the apostle Paul he found that “My grace is sufficient for you.”

Ever when engaged in controversy (which he never liked) while weakened physically, and when friends forsook him, he remained cheerful in spirit and never complained. His Tabernacle congregation knew this and their Pastor’s example was perhaps the most eloquent sermon that he delivered to them.

Finally, he was characterized by height of spirituality. He has been described as “a rare and genuine mystic.” Dr. Robertson Nicoll wrote: “Read Spurgeon when he enters, the spiritual region and you feel that you are with one of the great mystics of the world.”

He was a practical mystic, however. While looking up to the God who made the hills, he also fulfilled his duties in the plain. But it was his adventures into the life of full communion with God, an exulting experience for him, that then affected and directed his practical Christian work and witness. Service was not divorced from spirituality. In this respect he resembled his Lord. Sacrificial service went hand in hand with tender sympathy.

Mr. Spurgeon's companion and secretary was Mr. J. W. Harrald and it is to Mr. Harrald that we are indebted for so much of Spurgeon's written ministry. He took down the sermons and was an invaluable asset to Spurgeon in the preparation of the messages for publication and also was Mrs. Spurgeon's assistant in putting together the Autobiography of Spurgeon's after the preacher's death. In addition to his work with Spurgeon, he was pastor of a Baptist church.

# CHAPTER 51 — 1907

## A BUNCH OF SWEET PEAS

In May, 1934, celebrations were held in England because it was the centenary year of the birth of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. One writer in *The Baptist Times*, assessing Spurgeon's ministry and lasting influence, was the then Pastor of Spurgeon's Tabernacle, H. Tydeman Chilvers. He gave what was likened to "a bunch of sweet peas" for Spurgeon, emphasizing four things about him Spurgeon the preacher, Puritan, pastor and philanthropist.

Known for many years as "the Prince of Preachers," Chilvers pointed out that therein lay the secret and power of the man. His preaching was with power, the power of the Holy Spirit. Spurgeon knew that unction from above that is coveted by every preacher of the Word.

But his preaching was also with conviction. He believed in God's absolute sovereignty; none of His purposes could miscarry ("chance" was not in Spurgeon's spiritual vocabulary).

"There was no note of hesitancy in Spurgeon's preaching. He never left his congregation in doubt about Scriptural verities and realities. It was either heaven or hell, salvation or condemnation. His messages were always a "Thus saith the Lord, "never" venture to suggest!"

It was because he was primarily a preacher that we have 63 volumes of *The New Park Street, Pulpit* and *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* sermon series.

Then he was a 19th century "Puritan." He has been called "the last of the Puritans" but thankfully today there are many more preachers proclaiming the same doctrines of grace that Spurgeon preached. He fed himself on Puritan literature when quite a boy and continued to feed on them (and feed others on Puritan works) during his long ministerial career. Of course, he "modernized" their speech, keeping to simple Anglo-Saxon that the man in the street could understand. Moulded and fashioned by those spiritual



giants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Spurgeon himself became a spiritual giant an “heir of the Puritans.”

That Spurgeon was a diligent pastor as well as a great preacher is often forgotten. He loved the people committed to his charge at Waterbeach, New Park Street Chapel and then the Metropolitan Tabernacle. “I dwell among my own people,” he said. He worked with them and through them, imparting to them his love of divine truth and his zeal for Christ’s kingdom. They “prayed together, wept and laughed together, and were soul-winners together.” He told John Fluskin that he was quite content to be pastor of “that mob down at Newington Butts!”

When ill or recuperating from illness in France, what loving letters he wrote his beloved Tabernacle congregation, urging them to greater loyalty to Christ and zeal for His Church.

Finally he was a great philanthropist. He “sat where they sat” who were in need. He provided home and shelter for fatherless boys and girls; he looked after the widows in his almshouses; he sent colporteurs into the villages, hamlets and markets to provide men and women and boys and girls with Bibles and good Christian literature. And out of his own pocket he supported ministers and their widows in their need. The palm, branches on his coffin may have withered long ago, but his choice bunch of “sweet peas” lives on.

# CHAPTER 52 — 1911

## WALKS AND TALKS WITH SPURGEON

When in the year of Spurgeon's death (1892), biographies began to appear monthly, some running into several volumes, as in paperback booklet of only twenty-three pages was printed by the American Baptist Publication Society of Philadelphia. The author was Dr. Wayland Hoyt. This is now a very rare publication in Britain (and probably in the United States of America).

Dr. Hoyt was a familiar friend of C. H. Spurgeon and they enjoyed many walks and talks together, besides frequent fellowship in Spurgeon's home.

Their walks took them into the woods of Surrey, just outside of London, and their talks were about many spiritual subjects and also the various Spurgeonian institutions besides his vast Tabernacle.

Giving us the gist of these talks Dr. Hoyt enables us to picture the Prince of Preachers as possessing three great characteristics: his "religious sanity", his childlike credulity (phrase by E. W. H.), and his "spiritual expectancy".

Religious sanity! Dr. Hoyt discovered while walking and talking with Spurgeon that he was a man "free from cant", there was a complete naturalness about him. Spurgeon never used the then common religious terms and phrases that marked a man down as being ultra pious. "Religion was never anything in the least put on." While walking in the woods it was natural for him to say to Dr. Hoyt: "Come, let us pray" — and kneeling by a log he poured out his soul in fervent and reverent prayer. He rose from his knees just as naturally and then went on his way talking of this and that as if the incident had never happened. Prayer, for Spurgeon, was a habit of the mind as breathing was natural to the body.

Childlike credulity! Spurgeon expected the Almighty, as a loving heavenly Father to meet all the necessities of His child. Telling Dr. Hoyt of all the money he needed for his various institutions he was as unconcerned as is a little child holding its mother's hand. There were no lines upon his brow, there was no shadow of anxiety upon his face, only the large, good-natured

English smile. Yet there were five hundred orphans to feed, widows to be maintained in his almshouses, professors' fees to be paid in his college, and students to house and sometimes clothe. Spurgeon's attitude was: "The Lord is a good banker, I trust Him. He has never failed me. Why should I be anxious?"

Spiritual expectancy! As an outcome of his religious sanity and his childlike credulity Spurgeon always expected spiritual results from his preaching. He expected conversions from both his spoken and printed sermons, and he chided any student of his that did not expect results every time he preached! "According to your faith it shall be done unto you" was Spurgeon's motto text. He went into the pulpit "forecasting victory, not foreboding defeat." He expected to vanquish and not to be vanquished. In the same way he summoned his great church to special prayer for those who were ill and expected that they would recover because of "the prayer of faith." Every recovery was hailed jubilantly as another evidence that God will listen to his children when they cry to him.

Dr. Wayland Hoyt sums up Spurgeon in these words: "He had a singular ability, tides of emotion, and exquisite felicity of speech, and these would have done much for him; but the chief thing was, he was a man utterly consecrated to Jesus Christ."

# CHAPTER 53 — 1899

## SPURGEON AND MONEY

In these days of inflation and devaluation, international monetary loans, with Christian publishers in particular finding it difficult to make ends meet, the Prince of Preachers' attitude to finance is worth noting.

Spurgeon lived, as we do today, in a world that thought of money, loved money, talked of money, and whose chief pursuit in life was the making of money. He lived, of course, when a pound (£) was represented by a real golden sovereign and not by a mere piece of "worthless" paper!

As the president of a college, an orphanage, almshouses, as well as being Pastor of a large church with over twenty mission outposts, Spurgeon was frequently entrusted with large sums of money. Some of it came from various sources (even anonymous), but much of it he earned himself through the publication of his books and his "outside" preaching engagements. He abolished "pew rents" in the Tabernacle, took no salary after a few years but lived on his book royalties. His ruling principle was: "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."

His financial astuteness began early! When quite a small boy, attending "a dame's school," he discovered that he had no slate pencil with which to do his sums and had no money to buy one. Rather than risk the teacher's anger (especially as he often lost his pencils!), he went into the village shop and asked for credit to the amount of one farthing (the then smallest coin in England)! His father heard about it and gave him a stern lecture on running into debt! Never again did Spurgeon incur debt. His vast Metropolitan Tabernacle was opened free from debt, as were the two later structures on the same site. Spurgeon commented: "I have hated debt as Luther hated the Pope!"

Later, when still only young, Spurgeon won sixpence from the Rev. Richard Knill on learning the hymn, "God mov's in a mysterious way."

It has been said that a whole article could be written on “The Sixpences of Spurgeon” (the sixpence he gave to one of his orphans; the sixpence he gave to a poor Italian boy when on holiday in Italy, and so on).

Spurgeon’s first literary effort as a boy of fifteen earned him a prize of one guinea (£1.1 shilling). His essay was entitled “Anti-Christ and her brood, or Popery unmasked.”

His first recorded preaching fee was at Waterbeach, Essex, when £1 was given him for conducting seven services on three consecutive Sundays. The following month he received 50 shillings for preaching five sermons.

He many times refused money to lecture, even in America, which country he never visited. He commented after one such invitation: “Nobody will know until I am dead, how little C. H. Spurgeon cared for money.” But what money he did have he carefully kept an account of as the Lord’s steward. He kept a cash book with the title: “C. H. Spurgeon’s Trusts’ Account.”

Whenever a legacy was left for his personal use he always consulted his solicitor as to whether there were any living relatives who had more need of the money. Would that such integrity and magnanimity prevailed today!

He gave away large sums of money to deserving causes and people. Every day he received begging letters for help and no worthy case was ever refused. And he always kept a packet of £5 notes in his waistcoat pocket for ready distribution to the needy, especially poor ministers of the gospel and their widows.

When he died and his will was proved he left only the value of his house and the copyright of his books. He could have been a rich man but he died poor through giving away so much while alive.

## CHAPTER 54 — 1902

### SPURGEON'S HUMOR

Dr. Gilbert Laws used to affirm that “Spurgeon brought a blood transfusion to the Victorian pulpit” and this was because he brought humor into his sermons when others were doctrinally dull and homiletically heavy. Not that Spurgeon let his humor run away with him. He kept it strictly in check and could cause his congregation to laugh one moment and be near to tears the next. He, himself, when conducting the Communion service, was frequently seen to be crying.

Because of his fearlessness in controversy and his boldness in preaching, many have misrepresented C. H. Spurgeon as a man with a cold, calculating and phlegmatic nature. On the contrary, he had what one of his contemporaries described as “an invincible smile,” and whoever heard his laugh could never forget it. His humor was sometimes dry and sly; at other times bubbling over; but whichever kind, it was always accompanied by a most winsome and engaging smile that captured young (especially his orphans) and old alike. He never laughed *at* people (except himself!), always *with* them.

There are few early portraits or photographs of Spurgeon, so we do not see his smile recorded until later in life. However, the humor that later characterized him began in his sixteenth year when he was converted. His own testimony to the great change that came over him emphasizes his new-found joy that was evident upon his face.

“I recollect the morning when I found the Savior. It was a cold, snowy day, and I remember standing before the fire, leaning on the mantle-shelf, after I got home, and soon after my mother had spoken to me, I heard her say outside the door: ‘There is a change come over Charles.’ She saw that I was not what I had been. I had been dull, melancholy, sorrowful, depressed. Now, *I had a smile* and a cheerful contented look and she could see it.”

When he came to London first this smile was noticed by the famous Dr. Stanford: “He did some very bold things, *with a smile of such cool and*

*refreshing frankness*, that some of the excellent of the earth looked at him over their spectacles, wondering, not so much at what he said, as at what he was going to say next.”

The first portrait of Spurgeon smiling was taken in 1856. Sir W. Robertson Nicoll described Spurgeon as having a heart full of joy and eyes full of light, “and his lips with laughter.” By contrast, Dr. Joseph Parker (Spurgeon’s contemporary) could be listened to fifty times, and although he could make others smile he never once smiled himself.

In later photographs the smile is still there, even when the disappointment and bitterness of losing friends through the Down-Grade Controversy showed upon his face.

The last photograph ever taken shows Spurgeon’s face “wreathed in a rapt smile” (Rev. A. Cunningham-Burley, a descendent by marriage of Spurgeon), and in death his features were “strangely sublime” — death, fixed upon his features “a serene and heavenly smile.” Naturally, for he was eager to see the Savior he had extolled for so many years as he preached Christ and Him crucified.

# CHAPTER 55 — 1905

## SPURGEON'S HANDWRITING

A great deal of modern crime detection is based upon the findings of handwriting experts. Anonymous letters do not remain anonymous for long and those used in the cause of blackmail often lead the police to the blackmailer.

For a long while handwriting has been considered a key to character. Flamboyant characters are said to write with embellished capitals. The person with an inferiority complex is said 'to use very simple, plain, and often small initial letters. Such study has always held particular fascination for certain people and they have often been able to "read between the lines" and forecast modesty, conceit, strength or weakness.

In 1924 a handwriting expert spent much time and trouble analyzing Spurgeon's handwriting. Those with original letters or sermon notes (or even lithographed copies) will be familiar with the distinctive writing and signature of Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

For instance, it is considered that a study of Spurgeon's handwriting would have caused some to think again who labelled Spurgeon as an "ignorant and unlearned man." The experts believe that Spurgeon's writing was that of a truly educated person. We know that Spurgeon's early education was largely self-taught as he often outran his teachers! At an early age he could read Latin, Greek and Hebrew and was well steeped in the secular and religious "classics." 'r

Spurgeon's handwriting is unmistakable says the expert. There is a blending of firmness and freedom. It is easily identifiable by anyone who has seen it once. His final "n's" and initial "c's" are unmistakable. Many a second-hand book lover has purchased a book without Spurgeon's name at the front, but obvious notes in the margin written by him. His handwriting has been described as that of "an uncompromising leader." No wonder he was called "the Gov'nor!"



His handwriting was also unalterable. There was a consistency about it all through his ministerial life, especially after he had finally settled upon his signature, changing from the full use of his Christian names (which took, he said, too long to write on cheques) to the large “C” with the “H” tucked away within it. Apart from that his writing continued to remain the same, as did the unchanging truth of God that he declared by tongue and pen. His entries in the minute book of 1853 at Waterbeach Baptist Chapel compare with his final pastoral letters from the Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1892.

The final estimate of the expert is that Spurgeon’s handwriting was inimitable, that is “defying imitation” (*Oxford Dictionary*). Spurgeon himself knew this, for he said in a sermon: “Someone may imitate my handwriting for a long time, but at last he does not copy some peculiar dash or stroke or mark which is characteristic of my style and those who know, say: ‘That is not Mr. Spurgeon’s writing, it is a forgery.’”

And we know that as some preachers who imitated Spurgeon’s style in preaching, there were people who tried to imitate his handwriting. As one would expect, the only writing that appeared in any way very similar was the writing of his son Thomas.

## CHAPTER 56 — 1910

### SPURGEON AS POET AND HYMN-WRITER

Immediately after Spurgeon's death in 1892 biographies began to appear, written by those who knew him well, and continued for several years.

Although about twenty such volumes appeared within a few years, only one has a chapter on "Mr. Spurgeon as a Hymn-Writer," that by R. Shindler called "The Authorized Edition" and entitled *From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit*. It was printed in 1892 by Spurgeon's printers of his sermons, Passmore and Alabaster.

Also in 1892 appeared the biography *The Prince of Preachers* by James Douglas. In a single paragraph he refers to somelines written in a friend's album and signed by C. H. Spurgeon, July 1889. The verse begins and ends thus:

***"When broken, tuneless, still, O Lord,  
This voice shall yet Thy blood record,  
I'll chant the praise of Him who died  
To all the blood-washed throng."***

Usually Spurgeon wrote in autograph albums the famous lines by William Cowper: "E'er since by faith I saw the stream..."

In 1903 a more 'modern' biography of Spurgeon was written by Charles Ray. He wrote: "A passing reference must be made to Charles Haddon Spurgeon as a hymn-writer." More than a "passing reference" is needed for this is a much-neglected aspect of Spurgeon's genius and some aspiring student seeking a doctoral thesis subject might well study the hymns and poems of the Prince of Preachers.

It appears from what R. Shindler has written that Spurgeon first began writing poetry at the age of eighteen — a six-stanza hymn with the title "Immanuel." Later on poems and hymns were written and published in his monthly magazine, *The Sword and the Trowel*.

Since, as Charles Ray points out, “no book of songs for public worship could be found that exactly suited the needs of the Tabernacle congregation, the Pastor decided to compile a volume of hymns specially for the use of his people.” In 1866 he published “A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for Public, Social, and Private Worship,” which became known as *Our Own Hymn-Book* (re-printed by Pilgrim Publications of Pasadena, Texas, USA). In the Preface he wrote: “The editor has inserted, with great diffidence, a very few of his own composition.”“ He actually included 28, including paraphrases of various Psalms.

The hymn’s, naturally, were composed around the doctrines of grace that he preached and appear in the hymn-book under such sections as “The Holy Spirit,” “Conflict and Encouragement,” “Choosing a Minister,” “Election of deacons and elders,” “Baptism,” “The Lord’s Supper,” “Prayer Meetings,” “Opening Places of Worship,” and finally some choice “graces” or “Thanks and Blessings” before and after meals.

Today most Baptist hymn-books only include his *Hymn for an Early Morning Prayer Meeting* — “Sweetly the holy hymn breaks on the morning air...”What a pity some of his communion hymns are not also included, the Lord’s Supper would be greatly enriched if we sang them today.

His last hymn, “The Fountain of Praise” (beginning “All my soul was dry and dead — Till I learned that Jesus bled”) was sung by 500 ministers and students at the annual college conference in 1890. They sat to begin the hymn but were soon all standing as the time quickened to the cornet accompaniment of Spurgeon’s evangelist, Manton Smith.

## CHAPTER 57 — 1916

### SPURGEON'S WORKING WEEK

It was not for nothing that a Victorian, laboring man referred to C. H. Spurgeon as “a true example of a working man.” How different from today's view that the Pastor has “a one-day-a-week job!”

Spurgeon was a prodigious worker. He urged his students: “Have regular hours for study. You will find that whatever hours you choose you will have most visitors then — the devil will see to that”! He himself had to fight off the devil in this matter for he was more at risk to strain and stress than many other preachers.

Every Sunday, besides the two main services at the Tabernacle, he presided at the Lord's Table for the Communion Service. He put his whole soul into the conduct of this service and frequently gave a very choice address suitable to the occasion.

After the Sunday services he often remained at the Tabernacle for another hour while he interviewed enquirers and saw visitors from all parts of the world.

He began in the study on Monday mornings, sometimes as early as half-past four and remained there for five hours solid work. It was on Monday that he corrected the proofs of his sermon to be printed for that week. In the afternoon he would spend several hours with the students of his college. Then, from seven until half-past eight at night he would be interviewing enquirers prior to the Monday evening prayer meeting at the Tabernacle. Talking with enquirers he called “glorious work”.

On Tuesdays he was either at the Tabernacle again for many hours or else he would be on an engagement to preach, in some other part of the country.

Believing that ministers should observe the law of the day's rest in seven he kept, when possible, Wednesday as his day of rest. Referring to his horses as Jews he gave them Saturday as their Sabbath!

Besides this work connected with his Tabernacle and wider ministry he also had his institutions to visit and oversee, his magazine, *The Sword and the Trowel* to edit, and innumerable letters to answer.

Even on holiday he worked. He never ceased to be preacher and correspondent and commentator even while recuperating at Mentone in the south of France. In 1881 he went through the Letter to the Romans in preparation for several sermons on the book upon returning to London. Another time at Mentone he expounded the whole of the gospel of John at family prayers. So much for those critics who said that he went into the pulpit unprepared, often not knowing what text he would preach upon!

Wherever he was he thought of his castle, the pulpit. A mild spring wind causing the leaves of a mulberry tree to tremble gave him a great sermon on "The sound of a-going in the tops of the mulberry trees." That sermon resulted in a man's conversation who later became one of his most loyal deacons.

The unprepared sermon was the exception. He told his students: "I think I am bound to give myself to reading, and not grieve the Spirit by unthought-of effusions." All his everyday living was preparation for the time he would spend in the pulpit preaching the gospel to the crowds who wanted to hear him. Once, passing an old junk yard with a friend he commented: "Look at those two worn-out old traction engines. There are two portraits of what we shall soon be; all the steam gone out of us, our faculties used up, the potent fires of our being spent." He was far from well, then, and knew it. Soon he was "burned out", having "spent and been spent" like the apostle Paul. But until then he had "redeemed the time" and "bought up every opportunity", working "while it was day, knowing that the night come when no man can work."

## CHAPTER 58 — 1903

### SPURGEON THE CHILDREN'S FRIEND

It has been well said that “every great man has the heart of a little child.” Certainly this was true of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Fearless and eloquent in the pulpit; outspoken in controversy; and yet a delightful companion and playmate of little children. He used to say that there should be something in every service “and indeed in every sermon” for the children. Many a child owed his conversion to the simple preaching (although dealing with profound doctrines) of C. H. Spurgeon.

“Is he a children’s man?” used to be asked of all congregations when a deacons’ court or selection committee placed a prospective minister’s name and qualifications before the church for consideration for the pastorate. In latter years, with the decline, of Sunday school and children attending morning worship with their parents, the children’s address has fallen out of vogue and preachers are no longer expected to be “a children’s man.”

Spurgeon was, however, a children’s man. He could see things. (especially divine truth) through a child’s eyes, for as a child he himself had studied much Scripture and theology. He also knew that if he could interest the children (especially those in his boys’ and girls’ orphanage) in his sermons then he would have the attention of the adults as well.

Soon after his conversion Spurgeon began Sunday school teaching. He was “bright, animated, sympathetic and winsome.” The children were drawn to him as he was to them, for during the week he would call on them in their own homes. From a small class in one corner of the chapel Sunday school hall, Spurgeon was soon promoted to the platform where a larger class could be accommodated. Parents soon joined the children—the former soon numbering as many as the latter!

A former member of Spurgeon’s Sunday school class said in later life: “He was so original in all that he undertook, that much that he said and did, keeps quite fresh in my memory.”

One Thursday evening Spurgeon told his New Park Street Chapel congregation: “As I rode here this evening, I saw a boy sitting down upon the pavement (sidewalk), crying with all his might about something he had broken. I felt inclined if I had not been a hurry to come here, to stop and ask him what he was crying for, as I cannot bear to see a little boy weeping”

Mr. “Great-heart” had the Savior’s compassion and pity for little children. No wonder he was inspired to start an orphanage for them. These orphanage children were the only choir that Spurgeon’s Metropolitan Tabernacle had, and he would constantly look at their happy faces in the gallery as they sang the Savior’s praises.

One of Spurgeon’s contemporaries used to say that he liked to make children happy when he was preaching for he knew how miserable they would be when they grew up! Spurgeon was the same.

The writer’s grandfather used to be superintendent of the Orphanage Sunday school for 54 years. Each Sunday afternoon he would take a huge bag of sweets along. The writer and his brother would not be allowed one — they were for the orphans! The custom was caught from Spurgeon. He kept sweets, sixpences and shillings for little children. No wonder his visits to the orphanage were eagerly looked forward to and he would be “corn passed about as by bees.” It has been estimated that Spurgeon gave away as many pennies as there were children in the orphanage on each visit, and that when he died every boy who had passed through the orphanage had shaken hands with the Founder. When illness kept him away from the orphanage, then he always wrote the children a letter, especially at Christmas, when they were ill, or when there was bereavement. Spurgeon’s finest prayer is said to be the one he prayed with an orphanage boy who was dying.

## CHAPTER 59 — 1908

### SPURGEON THE COUNTRYMAN

Born in the county of Essex, England, in the village of Kelvedon, Spurgeon retained a love for the countryside and country people. He himself, however, was no “country bumpkin” as his later administration of a large church and its several institutions proves.

It has been said that his “great soul was housed in a rural type of body.” In the pulpit he would often, like his Master, draw illustrations from farming (note his book of *Harvest Sermons*). In private he would often entertain friends and visitors with rustic humor as he spoke of country ways and country flowers, trees and birds. Not for nothing did he term himself “John Ploughman.”

In early life he studied much *The Nature History of Selborne* by Gilbert White (one of the first of England’s true naturalists) — the book was a prize awarded him at school. As a schoolboy he went ploughing with Will Richardson, the Stambourne laborer, and later attended, for a short while, the Agricultural College at Maidstone.

The first sermon he ever had printed was entitled, “is it not wheat-harvest today?” Others soon followed: “The Apple-tree in the Wood,” perhaps, being the best example of all, for Spurgeon describes himself wandering in the New Forest in solitude preparing the sermon.

One Easter morning he preached on the crown of thorns and spoke of a bird making its nest in the heart of a blackthorn bush for protection and shelter from harm.

Springtime was especially loved by Spurgeon. He began a sermon with these words: “We are coming to the most beautiful season, of the year — the Spring, when everything around us is shaking off the chill graveclothes of Winter and putting on the beautiful array of a new life.”

In another sermon he extolled the beauties of the month of May, especially the old practice of country-folk bathing their faces in the dew on May Day,



thinking it made them “fresh and fair.” So, he said, we should bathe our faces in the dew of heaven.

The starry sky also served as a source of illustration for sermons. He said: “The promises of God are like stars, there is not one of them but has in its turn guided tempest-tossed souls to their desired haven.” So he compared Scripture texts to the Great Bear, the Southern Cross, the Pole Star and other “constellations of Divine love, Pleiades of mercy.”

Since Spurgeon ministered at a time when many people left the country to “make their fortune” in London, believing its streets were paved with gold, he appealed to these fortune hunters who had left the poor and humble rural areas. Through nature he presented the fundamental doctrines of grace in a simple and homely manner that all could understand. Many exiles from the green and pleasant lands of their childhood and youth found comfort, and the Savior, from listening to this “countryman in town” as Spurgeon has been described.

No wonder that he urged his students in his *Lectures to my Students* to make use of nature in their sermons as did the Savior. “Let us imitate Him,” said Spurgeon. “Opening our eyes we shall discover abundant imagery all around.” In the lecture “Where can we find anecdotes and illustrations?” he referred to history first, and then natural history, referring to such books as a *Tour Round My Garden*. Science, too, was recommended as suitable for sermon illustrations, astronomy being “one of the many fields of illustrations that the Lord has provided for us.” “Sun, clouds, stars, planets, moon — all provided wonderful illustration for the preacher who wanted to “let the light into” his sermons.

How Spurgeon would have made use of television, supersonic flight, and all the findings of moon walks and planet probes of this twentieth century in the service of the gospel.

## CHAPTER 60 — 1906

### SPURGEON AND THE RAILWAY

Britain's railway system has fallen on hard times during this second half of the twentieth century. Some trains may move faster, but there are fewer of them moving! At one time it was said that nobody lived further than fifteen miles from a railway track.

In past decades the British railway system has well served the gospel of Jesus Christ. Dr. F. E. Meyer is supposed to have known the railway timetable as well as he knew his Bible. And certainly C. H. Spurgeon made great use of them in his wide ministry.

Spurgeon was born when railways were in their infancy and so he grew up with them, their influence growing side by side with his.

As a boy preacher in Cambridgeshire he came to London by train. He was soon caricatured in the national press as "Spurgeon on the locomotive" because of his speedy rise to fame. He was depicted sitting on a train called "The Spurgeon" and such cartoons only served to bring him more notice and popularity. The more he was laughed at the more he was listened to by the man in the street.

Whenever Spurgeon journeyed by train he always made a point of getting on familiar relationships with his fellow-travelers, some of them testifying to the spiritual help (and even conversion received). On his first journey to Scotland in 1855 he went and talked with the guard, remarking: "I enjoyed some conversation with him, which I hope God will bless; to his good."

By contrast he hated the hurry and bustle of foreign stations and the reek of smoke in the carriages.

On one of his preaching tours through Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Spurgeon put down his newspapers and said to his companion: "Let us pray." They knelt down in the carriage and "had one of the sweetest prayer meetings ever remembered."

One carriage was left very quickly when traveling with his son Charles because of an obscene word on the window. He did not want the susceptible mind of a growing boy contaminated.

He lost his railway ticket on one occasion, and searching through his pockets discovered that he had also left money and watch at home. He explained his predicament to a stranger in the compartment and when the ticket collector came round the man said, "It's all right, William," and no ticket was asked for. Spurgeon's companion had recognized him, and the man was the general manager of the line upon which Spurgeon was traveling! Spurgeon had been talking about Divine Providence and how God looks after His children!

Railways often served as illustrations in his sermons, throwing light upon God's way of salvation, belief, God's provision for His children, and a warning against spiritual lukewarmness and backsliding.

It was in a railway train that Spurgeon's mortal remains were brought back to England from France after his death on January 31, 1892. A French train took him from Mentone to Dieppe (via Paris), then his body was shipped across the Channel, and finally a British train took the coffin to London via Lewes from Newhaven. In a magnificent sermon on Job 16:22 ("Our last journey") Spurgeon preached about the Christian's final Home-going and illustrated it by referring to a railway journey between the Borough Road station and that at the Elephant and Castle (only a matter of a few minutes). So the Christian passes immediately into the presence of His Lord at death.

## CHAPTER 61 — 1909

### A PRIME MINISTER SPEAKS ABOUT SPURGEON

In 1923 the Right Honorable David Lloyd George, at a luncheon given by Sir Clifford J. Cory at the Hotel Cecil, Strand, London, gave a lecture on “Spurgeon and his work.” The lecture was privately printed and copies are now rare.

Beginning by saying that he was “one of the many millions of Spurgeon’s admirers in every land throughout the world” and that he had, regrettably, only heard him preach three times, he nevertheless wished the number could have been multiplied thirty-fold.

As a Welshman Lloyd George was fond of “great triads” and so he spoke of Spurgeon’s simplicity, lucidity and sagacity.

Under the heading of simplicity the Prime Minister spoke of Spurgeon’s power as a preacher, emphasizing that his sermons had been translated into every civilized tongue in the world. “As the years roll by Spurgeon is still Spurgeon... a giant, a great orator.” His elocution was perfect and his voice a marvel. But his immense power of appeal was his simplicity. He was able to make things which he had studied all his life clear to men who had not studied for an hour.

Next he was characterized by lucidity or clearness of expression. That did not mean that he was superficial but rather that he had a great sense of style. Traveling by train one day Lloyd George handed Spurgeon’s sermon “Supposing Him to be the gardener” to a High Church of England clergyman, asking him to read it without taking note of the name on the front cover. The comment of the reader to Lloyd George was: “What style! This is literature of the highest order.”

Spurgeon had style, but he did not think so much about style that he forgot the message. It was his reliance upon similes, metaphors, descriptions and illustrations that made him so lucid to his hearers, and now to his readers. Lloyd George instanced “There go the ships” as well as “Supposing Him to be the gardener” as being two sermons that best illustrate his lucidity, for

both are the working out of a simile. The real secret of his lucidity, however, was that he spoke from the heart and not just from the mind. He agreed with Spurgeon that to be a great soul-winner a man needs a great heart.

Finally, Lloyd George praised Spurgeon's sagacity or common-sense. He had deep insight into character and his sermons are full of "little cameos, little photographs, of men and women we know, and perhaps of ourselves."

It was this dovvn-to-earth common sense that caused Spurgeon to found a college for training preachers and pastors. His Lectures to his students gave him further opportunity to exercise his sagacity and pass on his shrewdness, his knowledge of human nature, his ideas on mannerisms and gestures to men who felt called to the ministry. Lloyd George emphasized the important points that Spurgeon made in these Lectures on preaching: never preach above the heads of the congregation; avoid being too flowery or poetic in language; and stop speaking when you have really finished what you have to say!

The Prime Minister ended with these words: "My suggestion to every young man, especially, is this — to put Spurgeon on the list of his friends. He can do it through what has been published... you will get advice from him in those great volumes that will serve your purpose. I ask you to see that his name, which will live in literature, shall live in this part of his work (the colliege), to which he gave much of his heart, much of his labor, which shortened his life."

# CHAPTER 62 — 1915

## THE ARCHITECT OF THE TABERNACLES

Willmet Willmer Pocock, FRIBA (1813 to 1899) was the architect of Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle. Many designs were offered in a competition for architects, but Pocock's was the one to be chosen.

In some manuscript reminiscences William Pocock throws some interesting light on Spurgeon and the Tabernacle.

Pocock wanted to study at Cambridge but his father insisted that he attended King's College, London university. He became one of the earliest holders of the Bachelor of Arts degree of the university of London. As a young man he saw Westminster Abbey on fire and with his father designed several well-known London buildings. Then he heard from Mr. Higgs, the builder-deacon of Spurgeon's church, that Spurgeon wanted a Tabernacle designed. One morning in bed he had a 'vision' of what was wanted and simply sat down and drew the initial sketches.

A short while later he met Spurgeon and his building committee. He stated that his commission would be 5 per cent of the outlay and was told that others had offered to do the job for 2 1/2! He was adamant in keeping to his 5 per cent.

Spurgeon invited Pocock to dinner and entertained the architect with many "racy anecdotes." The great preacher also recounted how as a boy he dare not differ from his father's opinions, and when he once did was knocked off his seat at the table! He also agreed to a commission on the final amount of £16,000 although Spurgeon felt he was being underpaid.

Pocock insisted on appointing his own Clerk of Works and chose a "good old Methodist preacher". Discovering this, Spurgeon commented: "I don't know how it is, I have always been preaching against Arminians and here I have an Arminian Architect and thought that was enough. Now I must have an Arminian Clerk of Works always on my premises!" Pocock comments that Spurgeon thought this "a rebuke to his Calvinism and a check to Calvinistic bigotry".

While the Tabernacle was being built Pocock's Wesleyan Chapel was being erected in the grounds of Richmond College. This chapel turned out to be a failure accoustically. He determined not to make the same mistake with Spurgeon's Tabernacle. The Tabernacle proved to be a splendid success from that point of view. He suggested to the building committee that the Tabernacle's under-surfaces of the galleries should be cut to form "sound traps", so that waves of sound entering these cavities would be destroyed. The committee objected but Spurgeon over-ruled them, saying: "We none of us know anything about it, but if we let the architect have his own way, we shall have the comfort of having someone to blame if it fails, which it most likely will!" It didn't, and so the combination of the architect's skill and the "silver-bell-like voice" of Spurgeon resulted in the gospel being heard throughout the building with the greatest clarity.

Now, "he being dead yet speaks" through the printed sermons, these volumes which neither the architect nor the preacher could have envisaged when the Tabernacle was erected in 1861.

# CHAPTER 63 — 1913

## THE SMALL CLASPED BOOK

Living links with C. H. Spurgeon are becoming fewer and fewer. Each year the number of people who knew the prince of Preachers personally grows less and less. Gaps in Spurgeon's life and work must now be filled from untapped source material of an autobiographical nature such as *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, *The Sword and the Trowel*, and personal correspondence which often lies buried in some out of the way place.

There is, however, another source which has not come to light over the years. A preacher once asked: "What happened to Paul's letters to Damascus?" Their fate is an interesting and intriguing conjecture. In the same way, Dr. R. E. Day, the American author of *The Shadow of the Broad Brim*, reminds us of a "small clasped book" which he would "give a king's ransom to touch and to read."

This small clasped book was a secret diary given to Mrs. Spurgeon by her husband on the day of their wedding. It was a record of his life and thoughts during the formative period of 1850. Susannah Spurgeon understood, and did not break its seals until four years after his death. In that tiny book must be the answer to many puzzling questions.

What would he have done in wartime as a minister of religion? Would he have remained in his "reserved occupation" or would he have put on uniform and fought for king or queen and country? Patriotic he undoubtedly was, but some passages in his sermons describe a streak of pacificism. Would the small clasped book have been more specific on the subject of war and peace?

Would a college education have altered Spurgeon the man or his pulpit delivery? He once said, "I was for three years a Cambridge man, though I never entered the University." His father wished him to apply to Stepney (now Regents Park College, Oxford) College for theological training. The story is well-known how Spurgeon sat in one room and the college Principal, Dr. Angus, in another, through a servant's stupid blunder. What would have been the outcome if Spurgeon had been accepted for



ministerial training? One biographer states: “With a college education his sermonic literature would not have lost its fire, but would have found the literary immortality which it just missed.” That writer has been proved wrong, for Spurgeon’s sermons have probably been re-printed more than any other preacher’s. Would the small clasped book reveal any disappointment at the lack of a college training, for after all, regret does sometimes steal into his speech on occasions, especially when he refers to D. D.s as “doubly destitute!” All we know is that he founded a college to make sure that others had the opportunities that he missed.

In one sermon Spurgeon describes himself after death as standing on some lonely planet proclaiming the glories of the gospel to the universe! One cannot imagine the Prince of Preachers remaining silent throughout all eternity, but we shall not know the answer to such conjecture from the small clasped book, only “the fair schoolroom of the sky” will supply the answer to that question and many others answered in the diary that is lost to posterity.

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