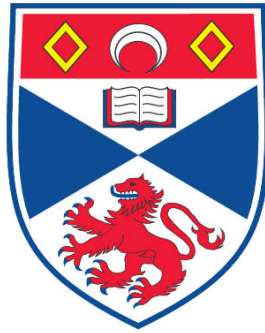


**JESUS CHRIST, THE 'PRINCE OF PILGRIMS': A CRITICAL ANALYSIS
OF THE ONTOLOGICAL, FUNCTIONAL, AND EXEGETICAL
CHRISTOLOGIES IN THE SERMONS, WRITINGS, AND LECTURES OF
CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON (1834-1892)**

Christian T. George

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



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OF CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON
(1834-1892)

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Divinity
of the
University of St. Andrews

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Christian T. George

August 2011

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I, Christian T. George, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 80,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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I am grateful to Mark Eliot, Ian Randall, and N. T. Wright for serving on my *viva voce* committee; to David Bebbington, who with unwavering encouragement helped me navigate the deep waters of nineteenth-century research; to Timothy Larsen, Mark Hopkins, John Briggs, and Michael Haykin, whose manifold correspondences served as timely spring-boards to my thoughts; and to Peter Morden—a fellow Spurgeonite—whose perceptive feedback has been professionally and personally invaluable.

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ABBREVIATIONS

MTP	<i>Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit</i>
NPSP	<i>New Park Street Pulpit</i>
Commenting	<i>Commenting and Commentaries</i>
Lectures	<i>Lectures to My Students</i>
ST	<i>The Sword and the Trowel</i>
ME	<i>Morning & Evening</i>

ABSTRACT

This thesis centers on the doctrine of Christ in the theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon through the lens of Spurgeon's highly developed metaphor, that of Jesus Christ, the "Prince of pilgrims." That no scholarly work has thus analyzed or surveyed Spurgeon's ontological, functional, and exegetical Christologies warrants continued contribution to the field of scholarship. Though not a systematician, Spurgeon stood in direct theological continuity with his Nonconformist Puritan predecessors and transmitted a highly developed Christology that was Chalcedonian in creed and Alexandrian in style. This thesis positions Spurgeon's Christology against the backdrop of a complex Victorian religious context that, through the use of scientific enquiry, sought to recover the full humanity of Christ. Though reacting against modern conclusions concerning the person, natures, and work of Christ, Spurgeon also sought to recover Christ's humanity, though his theological presuppositions stood in marked contradistinction to the spirit of the age. Particular attention is given to Spurgeon's utilization of an allegorical hermeneutic to the end that his vernacular, at times, potentially deviates from traditional, orthodox Christological teachings. The scope of this research is a survey of Spurgeon's Christology by way of his sermons, published writings, lectures, and letters. The purpose of this study is to analyze Spurgeon's doctrine of Christ in the context of the wider theological tradition through an investigation of his allegorical and innovative rhetoric.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

If nineteenth-century Britain was indeed an “ocean of retreating horizons,”¹ Lytton Strachey is correct in his observation that the task of the Victorian historian is to “row out over that great ocean of material, and lower down into it, here and there, a little bucket which will bring up to the light of day some characteristic specimen . . . to be examined with a careful curiosity.”² To such an end, this present writer seeks to resurrect the most popular preacher in the nineteenth-century,³ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the “Prince of Preachers.”⁴

1. Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church: An Ecclesiastical History of England*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 1.

2. Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians: Cardinal Manning-Florence Nightingale-Dr. Arnold-General Gordon* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1918), vii.

3. David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 145. Bebbington suggests that Spurgeon was the “most popular preacher of the day.” Furthermore, Robert Shindler suggests, “No man ever wielded so wide and mighty an influence in his own day by means of the pulpit and the press,” Robert Shindler, *From the Usher’s Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit: The Life and Labors of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1892), 239, and Archdeacon Sinclair labelled Spurgeon as the “greatest living preacher,” Robert H. Ellison, “Orality-Literacy Theory and the Victorian Sermon” (PhD diss, University of North Texas, 1995), 89. See also William Mathews, *Hours with Men and Books* (Chicago: S. C. Griggs and Company, 1895), 81 and 89.

4. The most recent popular use of the phrase “Prince of Preachers” is found in the title of Lewis Drummond’s biography of Spurgeon. See Lewis Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1992), an imitation of James Douglas’s 1892 biography of Spurgeon, *The Prince of Preachers* (James Douglas, *The Prince of Preachers: A Sketch; a Portraiture; and a Tribute* [London: Morgan and Scott, 1900]). Larry Michael argues that the phrase “Prince of Preachers” was coined by Archibald G. Brown in 1892 at Spurgeon’s funeral (Michael, *Effects of Controversy*, 1, 1n). In the same year, J. Manton Smith also used “Prince of Preachers” in his biography (see J. Manton Smith, *The Essex Lad Who Became the Greatest Preacher: The Life of Charles Spurgeon for Young People* [New York: American Tract Society, 1892], 100). Timothy Larsen records that “Prince of Preachers” has appeared in nine other titles, and “virtually all of the numerous books about Spurgeon employ the phrase somewhere,” Jeffrey P. Greenman, Timothy Larsen, and Stephen R. Spencer, eds., *The Sermon on the Mount through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 181.

That biographers, historians, and theologians frequently succumb to the hagiographic temptation to present Spurgeon as seemingly divine—a demiurge, incapable of weakness—is understandable given his celebrity-like reputation, uncanny oratorical abilities, and worldwide influence. Though Spurgeon often refuted the term “Spurgeonism,”⁵ such apotheosis is to be expected about one who pastored the “largest church in Christendom;”⁶ whose voice could be heard in a crowd of three thousand⁷ or twenty three thousand people;⁸ who offered more literary material to the world than “any other Christian author, living or dead;”⁹ and who, before his death in 1892, published a staggering eighteen million words,¹⁰ more than is found in the famed 1875-89 ninth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.¹¹ A “wunderkind of

5. In the *New York Independent*, M. Coit Tyler accused Spurgeon of starting a sect, not dissimilar to that of John Wesley. Spurgeon responded to this accusation with the following words: “There is no word in the world so hateful to our heart as that word Spurgeonism, and no thought further from our soul than that of forming a new sect,” C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon’s Works as Published in His Monthly Magazine The Sword and the Trowel*, 8 vols. (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1975-2006), 1:199. Hereafter, this work will be referenced as *ST*. See also “Spurgeonism Again” in *ST* 1:214-17.

6. Eric Hayden, *Highlights in the Life of C. H. Spurgeon* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1990), 17.

7. *Ibid.*, 40.

8. On 7 October 1857, Queen Victoria sanctioned a national “day of prayer and intercession for our suffering countrymen” in India on which occasion Spurgeon preached to 23,654 people (Arthur Christopher Benson and Viscount Esher, eds., *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty’s Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861 Published by Authority of His Majesty the King*, vol. 3, 1854-1861 (London: John Murray, 1908; repr., The Echo Library, 2010), 227.

9. Lewis A. Drummond, “The Secrets of Spurgeon’s Preaching: Why Would Thousands Come to Hear Him?” *Christian History & Biography*, Issue 29, 1 January 1991; repr., www.christianitytoday.com/ch/1991/issue29/2914.html (accessed 27 February 2011).

10. Hayden, *Highlights*, 75.

11. Eric W. Hayden, “Did You Know?” *Christian History* Issue 29, 10, no. 1: 2. In his *Christian History* article, Eric Hayden notes the total number of volumes in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. In actuality, the ninth edition contains twenty-four volumes with the additional index volume, not twenty-seven volumes as indicated in Hayden’s research and John Piper’s article “Preaching Through Adversity,” John Piper, “Preaching Through Adversity,” *Founder’s Journal*, 23 (Winter 1996). For more information, see, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/186618/Encyclopaedia-Britannica/2107/Ninth-edition (accessed 15 January 2011).

mid-Victorian Nonconformity,”¹² Spurgeon preached up to thirteen times per week and sold approximately 56,025,000 sermons throughout his ministry.¹³ Not only were his sermons translated into nearly forty languages including German, Gaelic, Swedish, Welsh, and Portuguese,¹⁴ but at any given time they could be found in the hands of Christians in China, bandsmen in India, Mediterranean fishermen, coffee farmers in Sri Lanka, sailors in San Francisco, preachers in Tennessee, Catholics on pilgrimage, a murderer in Brazil, and a prisoner awaiting execution in Jamaica.¹⁵ On 1 February 1892, *The Daily Telegraph* recorded, “There is no exaggeration in the statement that Charles Haddon Spurgeon was in touch with every part of the world where the English language is spoken.” Additionally, he was quite possibly the most popular preacher in Orthodox Russia.¹⁶ His oratorical abilities were compared to that

12. “wonder child”; Chris Brooks and Andrew Saint, eds., *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1995), 89.

13. C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography: Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by His Wife, and His Private Secretary* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897-99), 2:81. Hereafter, this work will be referenced as *Autobiography*; Robert H. Ellison, *The Victorian Pulpit: Spoken and Written Sermons in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Associated University Press, 1998), 47.

14. *Autobiography* 4:291; *Die Wunder unfres Herrn und Heilandes in 52 Predigten von C. H. Spurgeon* (Hamburg: Verlagsbuchhandlung von J. B. Oncken Machfolger, 1897); *ST* 4:194; *Waldas Predifningar af C. H. Spurgeon, Brebifant mib Metropolitan Tabernacle i London* (Stockholm: B. Balmqmifts Förlag, 1867); *The Dundee Weekly News*, 6 February 1892 and *Pulpito Metropolitan Do Revdo Carlos Haddon Spurgeon* (Spurgeon Scrapbooks, comp. by Susannah Spurgeon, Heritage Room, Spurgeon’s College, London). Throughout this thesis, all references to late nineteenth-century newspaper citations refer to clippings contained in the Spurgeon Scrapbooks in the Heritage Room, Spurgeon’s College, London.

15. *ST* 7:325; *ST* 5:514; *The Hackney Mercury*, 13 February 1892; *ST* 7:325; *Autobiography* 3:332; *ibid.*, 334; C. H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit: Containing Sermons Preached and Revised by the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, Minister of the Chapel*, vols. 1-8 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 2006), 4:preface. Hereafter, this work will be referenced as *NPSP*; *Autobiography* 2:161; *ST* 7:18. A man waiting to be lynched in Jamaica is quoted as benefiting from a tract entitled “Christ the food of the soul” that contained an excerpt of Spurgeon’s sermon. “It had been a great blessing to him in his terrible condition.”

16. Mark Hopkins, *Nonconformity’s Romantic Generation: Evangelical and Liberal Theologies in Victorian England* in *Studies in Evangelical History and Thought* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2004), 155.

Henry Ward Beecher,¹⁷ and his sermons were frequently smuggled by telegraph across the Atlantic to Boston, Chicago, and other cities without his knowledge or consent.¹⁸ When a schoolchild in America was asked, “Who is the Prime Minister of England?” he replied, “Charles H. Spurgeon.”¹⁹

Spurgeon’s fame in Britain mirrored his reputation abroad.²⁰ Spurgeon possessed no formal theological training when he accepted the pastorate at New Park Street Chapel in London in 1854, and when the crowds became too numerous, he moved his congregation into the Metropolitan Tabernacle, where he preached weekly for thirty-eight years to over five thousand people. One of the “lions of London,”²¹ Spurgeon attracted not only the prime minister, William Gladstone, but, according to legend, Queen Victoria also heard Spurgeon preach by attending the Royal Surrey Gardens Music Hall disguised in pedestrian garb.²² Spurgeon’s own attempt to emulate her stealth succeeded not even a little when he attended the public entry of Princess Alexandra of Denmark on 7 March 1863. The crowd accosted Spurgeon’s

17. *The Cumberland Advertiser*, 2 February 1892. “Mr. Spurgeon was to the English Nonconformists even more than Henry Ward Beecher was to their brethren in the United States.” Also, “With all honor to the height of Henry Ward Beecher’s ability, Spurgeon was the greater preacher of the two,” *The True American*, Trenton, New Jersey, 12 February 1892.

18. *Autobiography* 4:110.

19. C. H. Spurgeon, *Mr. Spurgeon’s Jubilee: Report of the Proceedings at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on Wednesday and Thursday Evenings, June 18th and 19th 1884* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, n.d.), 34, in C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle: Its History and Work, Mr. Spurgeon’s Jubilee Sermons, A Memorial Volume* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1990).

20. When Spurgeon first arrived in London, though, he was not met with popularity in the media. See *Autobiography* 2:33-61.

21. *The Daily Telegraph*, 1 February 1892.

22. *Autobiography* 4:183; This action would not have been out of character for Queen Victoria. On 2 November 1873, she attended a Presbyterian service in the little church at Crathie, Scotland. Unnoticed, she participated in the communion ceremony and “stepped quietly among the communicants. Some of the congregation did not observe her, so humbly and unobtrusively was it done,” Chadwick, 2:320-21.

covered carriage to the degree that they awarded “the preacher such an ovation as even the Princess might have envied.”²³

No less envious were the Anglicans who, in the summer of 1855,²⁴ found relief when the Earl of Shaftesbury passed a bill through Parliament enabling clergymen to “imitate Spurgeon”²⁵ in the Established Church by holding outdoor services. Since it was no longer illegal for Anglicans to congregate outdoors, W. Carus Wilson and Bishop Villiers of Carlisle took full advantage of Shaftesbury’s new bill,²⁶ soon discovering that no one could produce the numeric results that Spurgeon easily generated. In a city that contained a large number of preachers, though, many tried.²⁷ Even Vincent van Gogh, before becoming an impressionist painter, found inspiration from Spurgeon’s sermons and sought to become an evangelical preacher.²⁸ According to Russell Conwell, who at times extends overly-sympathetic gestures toward Spurgeon, Spurgeon’s “startling success awakened most bitter jealousies, and aroused a spirit of persecution which in the Middle Ages would have burned him at the stake.”²⁹ Spurgeon himself even once admitted to his brother, “I believe I could secure a crowded audience at dead of night in a deep snow.”³⁰

23. Charles Ray, *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon: With an Introduction by Pastor Thomas Spurgeon* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1903), 298.

24. G. Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England* (London: Routledge, 1962; repr., 1994), 187.

25. Chadwick, 1:525.

26. Ibid.

27. Ellison, *Victorian Pulpit*, 48.

28. “Letter from M. J. Brusse to Nieuwe Rottetdamse Courant, *Rotterdam*, 26 May 1914,” *Van Gogh’s Letters: Unabridged and Annotated*, www.webexhibits.org/vangogh/letter/5/etc-94a.htm (accessed 14 January 2011). See also Kathleen Powers Erickson, *At Eternity’s Gate: The Spiritual Vision of Vincent van Gogh* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 38.

29. Russell Conwell, *Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon: The World’s Greatest Preacher*

Furthermore, Spurgeon's vast correspondences reveal his immense reputation.

A. A. Hodge, Ira Sankey, O. P. Gifford, and David Livingstone were among his admirers; J. Hudson Taylor, George Müller, John Ruskin, and D. L. Moody were among his close friends.³¹ In a series of letters from 1874 to 1875, Moody expressed esteem for Spurgeon, writing, "I have for years thought more of you than of any other man preaching the gospel on this earth,"³² and "I should consider it an honour to black your boots."³³ For this reason, Robert Shindler's comment that "No man ever wielded so wide and mighty an influence in his own day by means of the pulpit and

(Philadelphia: A. T. Hubbard, 1892), 155.

30. In a letter to his brother James on 23 March 1855, *Autobiography* 2:99.

31. Letter from A. A. Hodge to Charles Spurgeon, 1 July 1879, *Autobiography* 4:299; Letter from Ira Sankey to Charles Spurgeon, 8 November 1886, *Autobiography* 4:170. Though Spurgeon did not allow Sankey to sing with musical accompaniment in the Tabernacle, (Michael, *Spurgeon on Leadership*, 140), Ira held Spurgeon in high regard and sang at his funeral; Spurgeon, *Mr. Spurgeon's Jubilee*, 34, and C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Sermons Preached and Revised by C. H. Spurgeon*, vols. 9-62 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1970-2006), 7:481-88. Hereafter, this work will be referenced as *MTP*. In his final journey to Africa, Livingstone brought with him one of Spurgeon's sermons, "Accidents Not Punishments." His daughter, Mrs. Bruce, found the beleaguered sermon after his death and recorded that it contained across the top, "*Very good. D. L.*," Sarah Knowles Bolton, *Famous Leaders among Men* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company Publishers, 1892), 354; italics in the original. Currently, this is housed in the Heritage Room Archives of Spurgeon's College in London, B1.9; *ST* 5:311, 7:77, and 324. Hudson Taylor often visited the Tabernacle so that Spurgeon could pray for missionary work in China; *ST* 5: 442-34. Müller visited Spurgeon in Mentone in 1878. Thomas records how Müller lifted Spurgeon's much depressed spirit. See *Autobiography* 4:13 and *MTP* 25:222; *Autobiography* 2:289. Before Ruskin abandoned his evangelical faith, he enjoyed a close friendship with Spurgeon, often attending the Royal Surrey Gardens Music Hall to hear Spurgeon preach. In 1858, when Spurgeon fell into great illness, Ruskin brought two artistic engravings and a few bottles of wine to Spurgeon's house and sat with him in sympathy. Susannah Spurgeon's records that "[Ruskin's] sorrow and sympathy were most touching and comforting;" *ST* 7:383. Spurgeon and Moody enjoyed a long and intimate friendship. Moody was frequently invited to preach at the Metropolitan Tabernacle (*Autobiography* 4:169), though he admitted that Spurgeon was the better preacher (letter from Moody to Spurgeon, 11 October 1881 in *Autobiography* 4:170). Spurgeon's affection for Moody was equally evident. Once, Spurgeon commented that he had never known any except Moody to be able to reduce the word "'Mesopotamia' to two syllables," Tim Curnow, et al., *A Marvelous Ministry: How the All-round Ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon Speaks to Us Today* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1993), 62.

32. Letter from D. L. Moody to Charles Spurgeon. 8 May 1875, *Autobiography* 4:170.

33. A letter from D. L. Moody to Charles Spurgeon, 17 March 1874, *Autobiography* 4:169.

the press”³⁴ is understandable, as is Carl F. H. Henry’s description of Spurgeon as “one of evangelical Christianity’s immortals.”³⁵

That Spurgeon re-animated classical Reformed theology in an earthy, colloquial vernacular speaks not only of his theological acumen, homiletical genius, and mastery of the English language, but it also reveals his lifelong passion to convert and catechize non-believers. His conviction to “preach Christ, simply, boldly,”³⁶ combined with his passion to reach the marginalized of society,³⁷ resulted in what Helmut Thielicke described as the combustion of “oxygen and grace,”³⁸ a juxtaposition of orthodoxy and orthopraxy, explosive in presentation and effective in results. Spurgeon’s front against opium in the East, slavery in the West, anti-Semitism in the North, and poverty in the South exemplified his concern for the disenfranchised³⁹ and caught the attention of Frederick Douglass, Florence

34. Shindler, 239.

35. Carl. F. H. Henry in foreword of Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 11.

36. C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon’s Prayers: With an Introduction by Dinsdale T. Young* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publication, 1990), 94.

37. *MTP* 32:572. Spurgeon said, “I think nothing greater than to win the hearts of the lowly.”

38. Helmut Thielicke, *Encounter with Spurgeon*, trans. John W. Doberstein (Stuttgart, Germany: Quell-Verlag, 1961), 19.

39. H. L. Wayland, *Charles H. Spurgeon: His Faith and Works* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1982), 39. According to Wayland, Spurgeon encouraged his congregation to sign petitions at the Metropolitan Tabernacle against the opium trade in India and China. See also Basil Wilberforce’s letter inviting Spurgeon to attend the anti-opium rally at Exeter Hall on 2 May 1883 in *Autobiography* 4:155; Charles Ray, *A Marvellous Ministry: The Story of C. H. Spurgeon’s Sermons 1855-1905* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1985), 21. Spurgeon’s stance against slavery eventually devastated the circulation of his sermons in the United States. Half a million sermons were destroyed within a few years. Spurgeon did much to challenge slavery. He was in communication with abolitionist Frederick Douglass (*Autobiography* 4:176), and often preached against the horrors of slavery. In one instance, Spurgeon defended his sermons being circulated to those who were enslaved. “Yes, my preaching was just the sort of stuff for niggers. The gentleman did not dream what sincere pleasure he caused me; for if I am understood by poor people, by servant-girls, by children, I am sure I can be understood by others. I am ambitious of preaching for niggers, if by these you mean the lowest, the rag-tag and bob-tail,” *MTP* 32:572; *Autobiography* 4:128. Spurgeon’s opposition to the persecution of Russian Jews is seen in his letter read by the Lord Mayor of London at a meeting on 1 February 1882. “As a Christian, I feel that the name of our Redeemer is dishonored by such conduct on the part

Nightingale, and William Gladstone,⁴⁰ who each labored for social justice in their own ways. An “episcopos”⁴¹ for the English-speaking world, Spurgeon preached to princes and proletariat alike, a trait that James A. Garfield, who would become the twentieth president of the United States of America, observed in 1867 when he attended the Metropolitan Tabernacle. He recorded in his diary, “I felt that Spurgeon had opened an asylum where the great untitled, the poor and destitute of this great city, could come and find their sorrows met with sympathy. . . . God bless Spurgeon!”⁴²

While Spurgeon’s “God-like” status is well documented, a recent interest in his humanity is currently being explored within the ranks of Spurgeon scholarship. In contradistinction to a comment published on 4 February 1892 in *The Christian London* in the year of Spurgeon’s death—“That he had no faults is not for us to say”—Mark Hopkins and Peter Morden have each accomplished a great service in presenting critically realistic perspectives on Spurgeon that speak not only to his

of His professed followers. As a Nonconformist and a Liberal, believing in the equal rights of all men to live in freedom and safety, I must protest against a state of things in which the Jew is made art outlaw”; *ST* 6:565. Spurgeon financially supported African missionaries such as Mr. Bates in Port Elizabeth, South Africa (*ST* 6:139), Mr. A. Billington in the Congo, (*ST* 7:50), Mr. Hamilton in Cape Town, South Africa (*ST* 6:14), and Messrs. Johnson and Richardson, who, amid much tribal warfare, labored “teaching and building” in Ethiopia (*ST* 5:511, and 364). Furthermore, Spurgeon encouraged students of his Pastors’ College to serve in Africa, saying, “Our brethren in the College are thinking upon Africa, and from all we can see there will be no lack of *men* for missionaries,” *ST* 5:364; italics in the original. Spurgeon paid the traveling costs of one such student, Henry T. Peach, who left his pastorate in Rugby, Warwickshire, to become a pastor in Pietermaritzburg, Natal (*ST* 7:279).

40. *Autobiography* 4:176. On 6 July 1887, Frederick Douglas wrote a letter to Spurgeon, saying, “Through the kindness of a friend, I had the privilege of listening to you a few Sundays ago. It was the realization of an ardent desire born of reading some of your sermons in America, and of what was said to me of you by my friend, Dr. H. L. Wayland, a gentleman to whom I have been much indebted for friendly sympathy and advice while battling with slavery and prejudice in America. Very truly yours, Frederick Douglass”; Letter from Florence Nightingale to Charles Spurgeon on 30 June 1876, *Autobiography* 4:178; *Autobiography* 4:183-84.

41. Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 187.

42. Wayland, 58. General Garfield became president fourteen years after his visit to the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

accomplishments and successes, but also to his faults, weaknesses, and theological shortcomings.⁴³ Since such analyses are as few in number as they are valuable in presenting Spurgeon as a three-dimensional character, this present writer attempts to contribute a critical, analytical presentation of Spurgeon by examining both the strengths of his deeply appropriated Christological convictions, and also the occasional weaknesses inherent to his experimental rhetoric.

Overview of the Intended Theological Survey

Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

Andrew Murray is correct in that for Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the “keynote of all his preaching”⁴⁴ involved Jesus Christ. A complete analysis of Spurgeon’s theology, or even his doctrine of God, is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, that no scholarly work has analyzed or surveyed Spurgeon’s ontological, functional, and exegetical Christologies warrants such contribution. Since Peter Spangenberg and Zachary Eswine have treated, respectively, Spurgeon’s Paterology and Pneumatology,⁴⁵ and since it is the interest of the present writer for a completed analysis of Spurgeon’s doctrine of God to exist, the focus of this thesis will be an in-depth investigation into Spurgeon’s doctrine of Jesus Christ.

43. *Nonconformity’s Romantic Generation; Communion with Christ.*

44. Andrew Murray, quoted in Ernest W. Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans* (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1967), 77.

45. Peter Spangenberg, *Theologie und Glaube bei Spurgeon* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlaghaus Gerd Mohn, 1969), 76-106; Zachary W. Eswine, “The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Preaching Theory and Practice of Charles Haddon Spurgeon” (PhD diss., Regent University, 2003).

Spurgeon's highly developed metaphor—Jesus Christ, the “Prince of pilgrims”⁴⁶—serves as a doцент for the discussion, revealing how the theme of pilgrimage became a driving mechanism behind Spurgeon's Christology. In his sermon “The Singing Pilgrim,” which is the clearest presentation of his use of the theme of pilgrimage, Spurgeon provided a definition of *pilgrim*: “A pilgrim is a person who is traveling through one country to another.”⁴⁷ While Spurgeon's use of this metaphor is treated more exhaustively in a later section, sermons such as “The Pilgrim's Longings,” “The Holy Road,” “Crossing the Jordan,” “The Valley of the Shadow of Death,” “Entangled in the Land,” “Singing in the Ways of the Lord,” “Choice Food for Pilgrims to Canaan,” and “The Pilgrim's Grateful Recollections,”⁴⁸ among many others,⁴⁹ shed needed light on Spurgeon's use of pilgrimage imagery in direct regards to the life and work of Jesus Christ.

That Spurgeon was not a systematician is certain. Therefore, the question is raised, How did Spurgeon transmit his Christology? The answer to this question necessarily involves the examination of his rhetoric. For this reason, particular attention is given to Spurgeon's colorful vernacular and allegorical hermeneutic. Furthermore, while previous studies have positioned Spurgeon's theology and rhetoric as indebted to Puritanism and the Reformed tradition,⁵⁰ this thesis, though

46. As far as can be detected, John Bunyan coined the phrase, “The Prince of Pilgrims” in his *Pilgrim's Progress*. See Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress and Other Works of John Bunyan* (Glasgow: William Mackenzie, 1861), 413. Spurgeon quoted Bunyan's phrase (*MTP* 31:369) and used it in his sermons (*MTP* 28:191).

47. *MTP* 28:182.

48. *MTP* 18:25-36; *MTP* 32:409-20; *MTP* 34:457-68; *MTP* 27:229-40; *MTP* 37:73-84; *MTP* 27:473-84; *ibid.*, 85-96; *MTP* 16:373-84.

49. For a list of sermons representative of Spurgeon's ontological, functional, and exegetical Christological uses of the theme of pilgrimage, see the Appendix.

50. See Bacon.

certainly recognizing such studies, showcases Spurgeon in light of broader Christological traditions such as the Chalcedonian and Alexandrian traditions with the aim of revealing the underlying tension that emerges between Spurgeon's Alexandrian rhetoric and his Chalcedonian theology.

Chalcedonian in creed, Alexandrian in style, Spurgeon's Christology developed within the milieu of a complex Victorian religious context. Careful steps have been taken to avoid portraying Spurgeon hagiographically, as well to avoid engaging in the uncritical demonization of his theological opponents. Therefore, this critical, analytical investigation of Spurgeon's theological and Christological contributions takes into consideration not only the outcome of the higher critical movement and other movements which Spurgeon resisted, but also the intentions of such scholarship, in order for the strengths and weaknesses of Spurgeon's Christology to find fuller expression.

Sources

Since Charles Spurgeon was not a systematician, any attempt at systemizing his doctrines must draw from a kaleidoscopic array of information, ranging from his sermons and books to his lectures and letters. A critical analysis of his Christology would be truncated if the majority of his literary corpus were not consulted. For this reason, this thesis benefits from its writer's navigation of the corpus of Spurgeon's primary works in hopes of constructing an accurate presentation of the material. Secondary works have also been studied so as to allow for interaction with the theses and other scholarly works on Spurgeon.

Primary works consulted include Spurgeon's 3,563 published sermons as recorded in the sixty-three volumes of the *New Park Street* and *Metropolitan*

Tabernacle Pulpits,⁵¹ his seven volume commentary on the Psalms in the *Treasury of David*, his four volume *Autobiography*, his monthly magazine entries in *The Sword and the Trowel*, and the weekly lectures at the Pastors' College that were published in a four volume set as *Lectures to My Students*. In addition to Spurgeon's sermons, autobiography, commentary, and monthly magazine, his extra-sermonic publications have also been consulted for this thesis. Albert R. Meredith and Peter Morden, in their doctoral theses, have each provided lengthy discussions of Spurgeon's primary works.⁵²

Unpublished primary works such as sermon outline notebooks, letters to and from Spurgeon, and newspaper clippings and other sources archived in the Heritage Room at Spurgeon's College in London also contributed to this study. At the time of writing, Spurgeon's sermons and sermon outlines from his preaching ministry prior to his post at New Park Street Chapel (1850-1854) have not been published. Given that these resources are crucial to understanding Spurgeon's early Christology, this writer has endeavored, with the permission of Spurgeon's College, to begin the process of transcribing nine volumes of unpublished sermon notebooks with the aim of their eventual publication. These sources, it is hoped, provide additional insight into Spurgeon's theology, thinking, and rhetoric not only for this thesis, but also for future studies of Spurgeon as a homiletician and theologian.

51. Peter J. Morden, "Communion with Christ and His People:" *The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon, Spurgeon*, vol. 5 of Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2010), 8, 54n. As Morden explains, this number must take into account the two-part published sermons that contained supplemental or non-sermonic literature.

52. Albert R. Meredith, "The Social and Political Views of Charles Haddon Spurgeon 1834-1892" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1973), 244-52, and Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 8-13.

Spurgeon's letters, sermon outlines, and annotations that are archived in the Special Collections of the John T. Christian Library at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in New Orleans, Louisiana, have also been utilized in the research of this thesis. Additionally, Spurgeon's handwritten sermons and revised galley proofs that are archived in the Special Collections of the Davis Library of Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, have been consulted. The three boxes of material in the latter comprise fifty handwritten sermons dating from 29 June 1879 to 22 February 1891, in addition to sixty printed galleys bearing Spurgeon's handwritten editorial changes. Before submitting his sermons for publication, Spurgeon revised his weekly sermons, often multiple times. These sources were of significant benefit to this writer since the majority concerned the doctrine of Jesus Christ. The deletions, additions, and rephrasings of his orally transmitted theology assisted this researcher in the construction of Spurgeon's Christology.

This writer also consulted secondary sources including doctoral and master's theses and dissertations, popular and academic books, monographs, essays, and journal articles about Spurgeon's life, theology, and Christology. Some of these sources receive analysis in the subsequent section, "Scholarship to Date," while others are referenced throughout the thesis. These sources, as well, have been of great assistance in the construction of Spurgeon's Christology.

Finally, this thesis benefited from the bio-bibliography of Eileen Hennen, a catalogue of Spurgeon's works that includes every known edition of Spurgeon's vast publications.⁵³ It is believed that no other academic work on Charles Spurgeon has utilized her helpful research. So as to avoid overlap with Hennen's research, this

53. Eileen E. Hennen, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 1834-1892: A Bio-Bibliography" (master's thesis, University of Minnesota, 1967).

thesis defers to Henchen's exhaustive catalogue of publications both by and about Charles Spurgeon.

Scope and Delimitations

This thesis has as its primary focus the doctrines of Christ's being, work, and life as presented in Spurgeon's sermons, writings, lectures, and letters. To avoid misrepresenting Spurgeon's thought in any way, each of Spurgeon's quotations has been examined against his other similar statements. Furthermore, in order for Spurgeon's Christology to be contextualized properly within the wider theological context, the scope of this thesis includes interaction with the Chalcedonian, Alexandrian, Reformed, Puritan, and Baptist traditions. While numerous biographies offer redundant accounts of the well-known events of Spurgeon's life, and, as G. Holden Pike notes, the facts of Spurgeon's life are "of everybody's property,"⁵⁴ this thesis foregoes an organized introductory biography of Spurgeon in favor of incorporating the events and influences of his life within its subsequent chapters.

In this introduction, the life and theology of Charles Spurgeon are contextualized. This is accomplished through a study of his worldwide popularity, through a discussion of recent scholarship that has influenced the research and writing of this thesis, and through an examination of Spurgeon as theologian and his rhetoric. This chapter concludes with the study of the centrality of Spurgeon's Christology in his theology.

In chapter 2, Spurgeon's ontological Christology is analyzed through a *diachronic* examination of the historical Christological developments that influenced

54. G. Holden Pike, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Preacher, Author, Philanthropist* (London: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1892), 4.

the compilation, formation, and articulation of Spurgeon's doctrine of Christ.

Following this historical contextualization, Spurgeon's doctrine of Christ's divinity and his views on the teachings of Arius, who rejected Christ's divinity, are examined.

Then, a study Spurgeon's doctrine of the humanity of Christ and his treatment of *logos sarx egeneto* and the hypostatic union culminates with a comparison of his Christology to those of Martin Luther and John Calvin.

Spurgeon's use of language is central to an understanding of his Christology. Though never seeking to depart from reformational teachings, at times Spurgeon's experimental vernacular became theologically unstable, so much so that, if taken too literally, his rhetoric could potentially result in the conclusion that he deviated from classical Trinitarian theology. Therefore, his rhetoric is examined in the attempt to make sense of his Christological colloquialisms.

While the beginning of chapter 2 positions Charles Spurgeon in doctrinal alignment with Chalcedonian Christology, the end of this chapter reveals his Alexandrian and Puritan tendencies to spiritualize, typologify, and allegorize the Scriptures. Though recognizing the dangers inherent to Alexandrian hermeneutics, Spurgeon criticized Origen and other Church Fathers who, he believed, over-spiritualized the Scriptures. Therefore, an analysis of his sermonic approach reveals that, in practice, Spurgeon occasionally contradicted his own instructions given to the students of the Pastors' College concerning legitimate methods of biblical interpretation. The conclusion of Spurgeon's ontological Christology resolves in the investigation and wide-reaching implications of Spurgeon's allegorical representation of Jesus Christ as a pilgrim.

Chapter 2 answers the question, Who is Jesus Christ? while chapter 3 highlights the query, What does Christ do? In chapter 3, Spurgeon's functional Christology is brought to light, in particular the three-fold office of Jesus Christ as prophet, priest, and king. Beginning with an exploration into the formulation and organization of the three-fold office of Christ in the works of the Church Fathers, in the writings of the Protestant Reformers, and in the creeds of the Puritan, Separatist, and Baptist traditions, this chapter uncovers a major turning point in the use of the doctrine of the three-fold office of Christ. While the *munus triplex* received mention and analysis prior to 1644, in the writing of the *1644 London Baptist Confession of Faith*, this doctrine was not presented merely as a subcategory of Christology, but rather as a prism through which every major category of theology could be viewed. In this chapter, this writer argues that, in keeping with this tradition, Charles Spurgeon interpreted the *munus triplex* not only as an *organized* doctrine, but also as an *organizing* principle through which all theology can be structured and perceived. Furthermore, in that Spurgeon transmitted reformational theology in the language of the masses, and by doing so emphasized personal applications of Christ's tri-fold operation, Spurgeon's rhetoric is again analyzed. Not only did Spurgeon offer a dynamic Christology in keeping with reformational impulses, but he also posited an *ultra*-dynamic Christology in his experimental and highly personal vernacular.

This chapter also offers an analysis of Spurgeon's doctrine of Christ as prophet. Special emphasis is given to the pre-incarnational election of the Son by the Father, the anointing of the Son by the Father at his baptism, and also Spurgeon's definition and treatment of the term "prophetic" in light of Christ's teaching and preaching ministry. This is followed by an examination of Spurgeon's doctrine of

Christ as priest. Spurgeon showed Christ as the one who intercedes on behalf of his elect not only by suffering with them, but also by suffering for them. Analysis of Spurgeon's doctrines of the atonement and the priesthood of believers sheds light on his vitriolic reaction to Roman Catholic and Anglican priestly practices. Finally, analysis is given of Spurgeon's doctrine of Jesus Christ, the king. Spurgeon revealed a Christ who reigns supremely over his enemies; sovereignly governs his creation; and effectively attracts, tames, and sustains the hearts of his elect. Nineteenth-century sentiments concerning the evangelical doctrine of the Day of Judgment are relevant to this discussion in light of Spurgeon's robust adherence to the belief in Christ as judge. Since Martin Luther favored the priestly office of Christ, and John Calvin, the kingly office, this chapter concludes by answering the question, Which office of Jesus Christ did Spurgeon favor the most in his writings?

Chapter 4 contains the results of an investigation into Spurgeon's exegetical Christology, or the life of Christ as Spurgeon preached it from Scripture. In this chapter, a *synchronic* examination of Spurgeon's doctrine is conducted in the belief that his engagement with or avoidance of nineteenth-century influences, pressures, and movements sheds light on the underlying structure of his Christology. Since Spurgeon believed that four events in Christ's life "shine out brightly"⁵⁵ among the rest, this chapter gives particular attention to Christ's birth, death, resurrection, and ascension. These primary events are analyzed along with Spurgeon's treatment of Christ's eternal election, Christophanies, the virgin birth, Christ's baptism, miracles, and transfiguration. Since nineteenth-century higher critical scholars challenged the credibility of such doctrines, particular attention is given to Spurgeon's embattled

55. *MTP* 31:13.

posture against such theologies. A brief discussion of Spurgeon's reaction to *Essays and Reviews* and David Friedrich Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* aids in determining the extent to which Spurgeon engaged the theological milieu of his day. In contradistinction to the spirit of his times, Spurgeon's Christological convictions were revealed through his doctrine of the miracles of Christ. Furthermore, in this chapter Spurgeon's literal, historical interpretation of the Scripture is nuanced through an investigation into his Christological typological hermeneutic, followed by a scrutiny of the consistency and variation of Spurgeon's Christology throughout his ministry. In chapter 5, the conclusion of this thesis, Spurgeon's use of the pilgrim motif is analyzed. Spurgeon's theological contribution to nineteenth-century scholarship, and in particular his doctrine of the humanity of Jesus Christ, is brought into focus.

Scholarship to Date

From 1892 to 1894, a new biography of Charles Haddon Spurgeon surfaced every month.⁵⁶ Many of these biographies were largely hagiographic, such as those written by G. Holden Pike, J. Manton Smith, Russell Conwell, Henry Davenport Northrop, Thomas Handford, George C. Needham, H. L. Wayland, James J. Ellis, and Robert Shindler.⁵⁷ Subsequent biographical treatments, including those by Sarah

56. Arnold Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985; repr., 1999), ix.

57. Pike, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon*; Smith, *The Essex Lad*; Conwell, *Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*; Henry Davenport Northrop, *Life and Works of Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon . . .* (n.p: Memorial Publishing Company, 1892); Thomas W. Handford, *Spurgeon: Episodes and Anecdotes of His Busy Life with Personal Reminiscences* (Chicago: Morrill, Higgins & Co., 1892); George Needham, *Charles H. Spurgeon: His Life and Labors* (Boston: Bradley and Woodruff, 1892); Wayland, *Charles Spurgeon: His Faith and Works*; James J. Ellis, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.); Shindler, *From The Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit*.

Knowles Bolton, William Mathews, and Charles Ray, were no more critical.⁵⁸

Zachary Eswine has presented an exhaustive literature review of these biographies,⁵⁹ many of which were consulted in the writing of this thesis due to their value in having been written with Spurgeon's life, teaching, and ministry in recent memory.

Numerous works have been of great assistance in the writing of this thesis, and many receive analysis below. Iain H. Murray has offered two helpful investigations into Spurgeon's theology. In his *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching*, Murray addresses Spurgeon's resistance to hyper-Calvinism and higher criticism, along with controversies surrounding baptismal regeneration and Arminianism. In large part, Murray's research is a continuation of the subject matter presented in his *Forgotten Spurgeon*;⁶⁰ however, Murray's investigations often result in exegesis that is more eisegetical than exegetical, and his polemical rhetoric often impedes his critical analysis of Spurgeon.⁶¹

Larry Michael offers a more comprehensive approach to Spurgeon's controversies in "The Effects of Controversy on the Evangelistic Ministry of C. H. Spurgeon," supporting his arguments with robust historical research. His subsequent publication, *Spurgeon on Leadership*, is weaker in its scholarly treatment;⁶² however,

58. Bolton, *Famous Leaders*; Mathews, *Hours with Men*; Ray, *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*.

59. Eswine, 3-21.

60. Iain H. Murray, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995); Iain H. Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1966).

61. Mark Hopkins and Peter Morden also observe this point in Murray's research. Mark Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation: Evangelical and Liberal Theologies in Victorian England*, 10, and Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 7.

62. Larry Michael, "The Effects of Controversy on the Evangelistic Ministry of C. H. Spurgeon" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988); Larry J. Michael, *Spurgeon on*

both works reveal thoughtful analysis of Spurgeon's ministry, the latter containing original insights into the relevance of Spurgeon's leadership abilities for the contemporary church. In the same strain of popular works, Arnold Dallimore's *Spurgeon: A New Biography* is a concise exploration of Spurgeon's theology and preaching with depth uncommon in others.

Warren Bullock, in "The Influence of Puritanism on the Life and Preaching of Charles Haddon Spurgeon," addresses Spurgeon's indebtedness to the Puritan tradition in his weaving of the theme of Puritanism throughout a survey of discourses on the life and theology of Spurgeon. Ernest Bacon provides even greater service in his *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans* by evidencing superior familiarity with the Puritan tradition.⁶³ While these two works benefit the discussion of Spurgeon's linkage to Puritanism, a more comprehensive analysis of Spurgeon's familiarity with and use of Puritan works, particularly in relationship to his *Treasury of David*, is still wanting.

In 1955, Wilbur Smith wrote of Charles Spurgeon, "I have come to the strong conclusion that the Christian church has not yet seen a fully adequate and definitive life of this great preacher of the grace of God."⁶⁴ In 1992, the opportunity for a definitive biography of Spurgeon seemed possible in the work of Lewis A.

Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers*.⁶⁵ The monumental scope of Drummond's work includes original letters, telegrams, diary entrees, and newspaper

Leadership: Key Insights for Christian Leaders from the Prince of Preachers (Kaduna, Nigeria: Evangel Publishers, Ltd., 2003).

63. Warren Dale Bullock, "The Influence of Puritanism on the Life and Preaching of Charles Haddon Spurgeon" (master's thesis, Seattle Pacific College, 1969); Bacon, introduction. Bacon reports that forty years of research on the Puritans went into his book.

64. Wilbur Smith, quoted in Dalimore, iv.

65. Drummond, *Spurgeon*.

reviews,⁶⁶ totalling 1,300 pages on Spurgeon's life, ministry, theology, and influence. A foreword by theologian Carl F. H. Henry further buttresses Drummond's work. However, while Drummond's work is considered definitive by some,⁶⁷ this writer sides with Morden's demonstration that Drummond's work is peppered with problems, not least of which are historical inaccuracies.⁶⁸ Furthermore, that Drummond's work incorporates unacknowledged sections of Timothy Albert McCoy's thesis, "The Evangelistic Ministry of C. H. Spurgeon: Implications for a Contemporary Model for Pastoral Evangelism," is troubling.⁶⁹ For these reasons, on the rare occasion that Drummond's research is cited in this thesis, his quotations, claims, and arguments are cross-checked against sources that are more reliable.

In the same year of Drummond's biography, Michael Nicholls published *C. H. Spurgeon: The Pastor Evangelist* (1992).⁷⁰ His keen insights into Spurgeon's theological acumen included such paragraphs as the following:

The key to understanding both the selectivity of Spurgeon's reading and the gulf separating his theology from those of most leaders of thought in his generation lies not so much in his lack of a formal theological education as in the nature of the authority structure underlying his theology.⁷¹

66. Ibid., 155; *ibid.*, 137-51, 424, and 426; *ibid.*, 137-51; *ibid.*, 320-21.

67. See Austin B. Tucker, *The Preacher as Storyteller: The Power of Narrative in the Pulpit* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2008), 176.

68. Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 5.

69. Timothy Albert McCoy, "The Evangelistic Ministry of C. H. Spurgeon: Implications for a Contemporary Model for Pastoral Evangelism" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989). Compare McCoy's work on Spurgeon's "Sources of Authority" (119-30) with Drummond's point-by-point identical outline (615-27).

70. Michael Nicholls, *C. H. Spurgeon: The Pastor Evangelist* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1992).

71. *Ibid.*, 147.

While the above statement, and many others, influenced the research and writing of this thesis, further exploration into Nicholls's work revealed surprising disappointments in that multiple sets of identical phrases, sentences, and paragraphs were also found in Mark Hopkins's 1988 doctoral thesis, "Baptists, Congregationalists, and Theological Change: Some Late Nineteenth-century Leaders and Controversies."⁷² In the publication of his revised thesis, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation: Evangelical and Liberal Theologies in Victorian England*, Hopkins notes, "To head off possible misunderstanding, it should be noted that the surprising similarity at a number of points between Nicholls's language and my own . . . holds good for my 1988 Oxford DPhil dissertation."⁷³ In the cases of Drummond and Nicholls's works, this thesis respectfully and regretfully defers to Spurgeon's own comment concerning a similar matter. "*Bush* has in the most barefaced manner taken copious verbatim extracts from *Andrew Fuller*, without acknowledgment, and he has also plagiarized *Lawson* on *Joseph* by wholesale, without even mentioning his name. For such a scholar to be guilty of wholesale plunder is inexcusable."⁷⁴

The contributions of Hopkins to Spurgeon scholarship cannot be overstated. His succinct and academic analysis of Spurgeon's theology includes a helpful discussion on whether Spurgeon merely inherited his Calvinism or consciously

72. See Mark Thomas Eugene Hopkins, "Baptists, Congregationalists, and Theological Change: Some Late Nineteenth-century Leaders and Controversies" (DPhil diss., University of Oxford, 1988). Compare Nicholls, 147-48, with the aforementioned work.

73. Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, 127, 5n.

74. C. H. Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries: Two Lectures Addressed to the Students of the Pastors' College, Metropolitan Tabernacle, Together with a Catalogue of Biblical Commentaries and Expositions* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 49; italics in the original. Hereafter, this work will be referenced as *Commenting*.

adopted it.⁷⁵ While Hopkins surely is correct in that Spurgeon's Calvinism was adopted,⁷⁶ Morden's critique is also felt in that Hopkins "underplays the influence of his family background in the adoption of this Calvinism."⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Hopkins's explanation of Spurgeon's lack of theological contribution is worthy of note: Spurgeon's intellectual and educational background did not prevent him from engaging higher criticism, but instead, the "nature of the authority structure underlying his theology"⁷⁸ prevented his theological contributions from manifesting. This topic is further analyzed in the conclusion of this thesis; however, with Hopkins, it is agreed that Spurgeon was not interested primarily in combating science, higher criticism, and other hostilities that threatened mid-nineteenth-century evangelicalism.

An additional strength of Hopkins's work is his perusal of documents related to the Downgrade Controversy that are housed in the Heritage Room at Spurgeon's College. Such original research sets him apart from other scholars in that, as Geoffrey Rowell observes, it equipped him to "give the fullest account to date of one of the most significant theological controversies in Baptist History."⁷⁹ While this thesis stands behind Rowell's comment, one cannot say that Hopkins's work is without weakness. One particular weakness manifests in his comment that at the end of Spurgeon's ministry, his Calvinism "was of a lower variety than in his earliest preaching."⁸⁰ Such positions were common in Spurgeon's day and have been

75. Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, 125-166 and 93-248; *ibid.*, 132.

76. *Ibid.*, 132-33.

77. Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 44, 173n.

78. Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, 134.

79. Geoffrey Rowell in Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, forward, xi.

80. Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, 140.

articulated by F. B. Meyer and others;⁸¹ however, a claim of this nature might have required further expansion in Hopkins's chapter on Spurgeon's theology than what he provided in a substantive footnote.⁸² Perhaps the greatest shortcoming of Hopkins's work is its brevity; however, given that his research extended beyond that of Spurgeon's theology to include those of James Baldwin Brown, Robert William Dale, and John Clifford, he cannot not faulted too heavily.

Spurgeon's life, ministry, and theology have been investigated with a certain degree of reliability by a number of late twentieth-century scholars including Kim-Hong Hazra who, in "Suffering and Character Formation in the Life and Sermons of Charles Haddon Spurgeon 1834-1892," offers a fascinating study of Spurgeon's theology of suffering by showing his indebtedness not only to his own physical ailments, but also to Puritan doctrines of theodicy.⁸³ David W. Bebbington's *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* is exceedingly helpful in positioning Spurgeon against the backdrop of the nineteenth-century evangelical tradition while also speaking to its origins in eighteenth-century revivalism.⁸⁴ Furthermore, numerous other scholars have studied Spurgeon extensively. His preaching has received treatment by John David Talbert, Theodore Franklin Nelson, Paul Charles Klose, and Robert L. Duncan; his innovative rhetoric,

81. Meyer, in *The Daily Chronicle*, 12 February 1892. Meyer writes, "It cannot be denied that this [Spurgeon's] Calvinistic theology has for some time been on the wane, and that the leading Nonconformist bodies, as well as the Anglican Church, are in the main looking for their inspiration to ether sources than that of Geneva, or perhaps it would be more correct to say of the great Augustine, from whom the theology of Calvin was largely derived."

82. Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, 40, 69n.

83. Kim-Hong Hazra, *Suffering and Character Formation in the Life and Sermons of Charles Haddon Spurgeon 1834-1892* (PhD diss., Regent College, 1986).

84. David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

oratorical abilities, and sense appeal have been studied by Robert H. Ellison and Jay E. Adams; his eschatology has been examined by Gregory A. Wills and Dennis Michael Swanson; his doctrine of Scripture has been addressed by Timothy Larson; his political and philanthropic efforts have been studied by Albert Meredith; and his evangelism has been scrutinized by Timothy Albert McCoy and Douglas Rodney Earls.⁸⁵

Spurgeon's doctrine of God similarly has received treatment, as already mentioned, by Spangenberg in *Theologie und Glaube bei Spurgeon*. While Jeremy Thornton is correct in that Spangenberg's work is intended merely to introduce Spurgeon's doctrines to German readership, Spangenberg's work on Spurgeon's Paterology is more exhaustive, including original and insightful examination of the nature of God in his section "*Die Unvergleichlichkeit Gottes in Sein, Attributen, Werken und Wort.*"⁸⁶ Eswine has examined Spurgeon's Pneumatology in "The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Preaching Theory and Practice of Charles Haddon Spurgeon," showing how Spurgeon's theology and "eloquence of the Spirit"⁸⁷

85. John David Talbert, "Spurgeon's Christological Homiletic" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989); Theodore Franklin Nelson, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon's Theory and Practice of Preaching" (PhD diss., State University of Iowa, 1944); Paul Charles Klose, "The Preaching of Charles Haddon Spurgeon" (PhD diss., Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1956); Robert L. Duncan, "An Investigation of the Preaching Style of Charles Haddon Spurgeon and Its Relevance to Contemporary Preaching" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1979); Ellison, "Orality-Literacy Theory," 83-109 and 158-185; Adams, *Sense Appeal in the Sermons of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, vol. 1 of *Studies in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1975); Wills, "The Ecclesiology of Charles H. Spurgeon"; Dennis Michael Swanson, "Charles H. Spurgeon and Eschatology: Did He Have a Discernable Millennial Position?" <http://www.spurgeon.org/eschat.htm#intro>, (accessed 17 November 2010); Larsen and Spencer, 194-98; Meredith, *Social and Political Views*; McCoy, *The Evangelistic Ministry of C. H. Spurgeon*; Douglas Rodney Earls, "The Evangelistic Strategy of Charles Haddon Spurgeon for the Multiplication of Church and Implications for Modern Church Extension Theory" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989).

86. Jeremy F. Thornton, "The Soteriology of C. H. Spurgeon: Its Biblical and Historical Roots and Its Place in His Preaching" (PhD diss., Selwyn College, University of Cambridge, 1974), 2; "The Incomparability of God in his Being, Attributes, Work, and Word," Spangenberg, 78.

87. Eswine, 137.

assisted his homiletic endeavors. In addition, Talbert has offered a study of Spurgeon's Christological preaching in his "Charles Haddon Spurgeon's Christological Homiletics: A Critical Evaluation of Selected Sermons from Old Testament Texts," a work that is strong in its exploration of Spurgeon's rhetoric and allegorical interpretation⁸⁸ but does not provide adequate research on Spurgeon's doctrine of Christ in its ontological or functional dimensions.

One thesis that requires qualification is Patricia Stallings Kruppa's "Charles Haddon Spurgeon: A Preacher's Progress."⁸⁹ Hopkins correctly critiques Kruppa's research in that she contradicts herself by presenting Spurgeon as being held entirely captive to both the past and the present;⁹⁰ however, Hopkins fails to mention her attestation to Spurgeon's simultaneous roles as both an original and unoriginal thinker. On the one hand, Kruppa writes, "It is unfair to judge him as a theologian or an original thinker, for he did not seek these roles."⁹¹ However, on the other hand, she considers Spurgeon an "innovator in the pulpit, a man whose original and pithy sermons offered the comforts of a common-sense gospel to the thousands."⁹² Hopkins's assessment of Kruppa's contradictions holds true in this instance as well: "She cannot have it both ways."⁹³

88. See Talbert, 63-110.

89. Patricia Stallings Kruppa, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon: A Preacher's Progress" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1968).

90. Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, 11.

91. Kruppa, 416.

92. *Ibid.*

93. Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, 11.

A newspaper article from *The Morning Post* published on 1 February 1892 records, “The celebrated Dr. Campbell wrote of him [Spurgeon] that he was in all respects original, and that his originality in the pulpit was the chief secret of his success as a preacher.”⁹⁴ While this thesis acknowledges that Spurgeon cannot be called an originator of doctrine, Henry Franklin Colquitt correctly claims that Spurgeon’s “productive imagination and his keen power of observation enable[d] him to present old truths with a freshness rarely excelled.”⁹⁵ In this sense, Spurgeon rightfully is seen as an original thinker and communicator.

Spurgeon’s Calvinism has been explored by many, not least of whom Robert Oliver in his *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists, 1771-1892: From John Gill to C. H. Spurgeon*.⁹⁶ Oliver delivers a well-researched account of Spurgeon’s Calvinistic convictions, Puritan theology, and resistance to hyper-Calvinism. Although he succeeds in presenting accurate and interesting biographical and historical summaries, his original analysis falls short of that provided by, for instance, James Leo Garrett, Jr., in his chapter, “Down Grade Controversy: Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) and John Clifford (1836-1923),” in *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study*, in which he positions Spurgeon’s Calvinism against the backdrop of his Christology, soteriology, Pneumatology, and ecclesiology, among others.⁹⁷

With varying degrees of success, scholars have sought to investigate Spurgeon’s soteriology. John B. Hall, in his “The Application of the Doctrine of

94. *The Morning Post*, London, 1 February 1892.

95. Henry Franklin Colquitt, “The Soteriology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon Revealed in His Sermons and Controversial Writings” (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1951), 28.

96. Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists, 1771-1892: From John Gill to C. H. Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2006), 337-56.

97. James Leo Garrett, Jr., *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 264-78, and 266-67.

Grace in the Life and Ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon,”⁹⁸ succeeds in presenting Spurgeon’s doctrine of salvation in relationship to the theological climate of his day; however, the perspective of the writer becomes so entangled with his subject that his biases may disqualify him from academic objectivity.⁹⁹ Colquitt’s “The Soteriology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon Revealed in His Sermons and Controversial Writings” is stronger in that he presents Spurgeon’s doctrines of grace with greater coherency and objectivity; however, not only does Colquitt fail to position Spurgeon in continuity with any theological tradition,¹⁰⁰ he also, in his attempt to treat systematically so expansive a topic, sacrifices depth for breadth. In addition to a biographic sketch of Spurgeon and a discussion of his controversies, Colquitt endeavors to analyze thematically Spurgeon’s doctrines of God, man, sin, atonement, election, grace, faith, repentance forgiveness, regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, perfectionism, assurance, the Second Coming, final judgment, eternal punishment, and others still. He acknowledges that his thesis “does not propose to be exhaustive;”¹⁰¹ however, a particular weakness of his survey is the lack of analysis given to Spurgeon’s Pneumatology, which, according to Colquitt’s own claims, is the primary reason for Spurgeon’s homiletical success.¹⁰²

98. John B. Hall, “The Application of the Doctrine of Grace in the Life and Ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon” (master’s thesis, Covenant Theological Seminary, 1982).

99. *Ibid.*, 14, 16, 41, 42, and 47.

100. Thornton makes this point also. See Thornton, 2.

101. Colquitt, 11.

102. *Ibid.*, 23. Colquitt writes, “Four factors, three of which may be considered of equal significance, account for the successful ministry of Spurgeon. The first factor, which overrides the other three, is the Holy Spirit.”

The role of the Holy Spirit in Spurgeon's understanding of salvation cannot be overstated. Spurgeon explained, "It is the Holy Spirit who imparts the first germ of life, convincing us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come."¹⁰³ Both in drawing believers to salvation and in assisting in their sanctification, the Holy Spirit is indispensable. "And isn't it the Holy Spirit," Spurgeon preached, "who, after that flame is kindled, still fans it with the breath of his mouth and keeps it alive?"¹⁰⁴ Additional justification for including Spurgeon's Pneumatology in connection with soteriology is not difficult to find.¹⁰⁵

Thus far, the best treatment of Spurgeon's soteriology has been conducted by Thornton in "The Soteriology of C. H. Spurgeon: Its Biblical and Historical Roots and Its Place in His Preaching." While Thornton's research admittedly overlaps that of Colquitt's, particularly concerning the doctrines of man, sanctification, regeneration, and atonement,¹⁰⁶ Thornton successfully positions Spurgeon in continuity with his Puritan roots and offers a more nuanced perspective of Spurgeon's doctrine of perfectionism and other under-studied doctrines.

Two works, separated by the duration of twenty years, stand out in the treatment of Spurgeon's theology of prayer, namely John D. Mashek's "Charles H. Spurgeon: A Study of His Theology and Practice of Prayer" and Kevin W. Regal's

103. *NPSP* 1:28.

104. *NPSP* 1:28.

105. Sermon Outline Notebook, 11 vols., Heritage Room, Spurgeon's College, London, 3:174. The handwritten phrase "Holy Spirit, blow through me!" is found twice underscored at the end of Spurgeon's sermon outline for "No Condemnation for Christians." Additionally, on the introductory page of his first sermon outlines in 1851, Spurgeon wrote, "Skeletons . . . and only skeletons without the Holy Ghost" (*Ibid.*, vol. 1, introductory page).

106. Thornton, 2.

“Charles H. Spurgeon’s Theology of Prayer.”¹⁰⁷ Even though Mashek attempts to “show the various influences which were instrumental in developing Spurgeon’s early attitude toward prayer,”¹⁰⁸ his work is less comprehensive than Regal’s and would have benefited from a comparison of Spurgeon’s theology of prayer with Reformed, Puritan, and Baptist practices and doctrine. Additionally, Mashek’s heavy reliance on hagiographic sources has rendered his work less credible.

Regal, on the other hand, offers a much more robust investigation into Spurgeon’s theology of prayer, revealing the underlying theology behind Spurgeon’s practice of, objections to, effects on, and biblical allusions to the doctrine. His comparison of Spurgeon’s theology to Spurgeon’s broader theological beliefs is also helpful in that it uncovers the inherent tension in Spurgeon’s theology between, for instance, the persuasiveness of prayer and the immutability of God.¹⁰⁹ While Regal offers a more sophisticated investigation, his research nevertheless fails to position Spurgeon in continuity with Puritan theologies of prayer, and for this reason leaves much to be desired. Peter Morden is correct—“Prayer is an aspect of Spurgeon’s life and ministry that has rarely been examined or given its due weight.”¹¹⁰ For this reason, a comprehensive study of Spurgeon’s theology of prayer is still needed.

The published version of Morden’s thesis, “*Communion with Christ and His People*”: *The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon*, is a tremendous contribution to

107. John D. Mashek, “Charles H. Spurgeon: A Study of His Theology and Practice of Prayer” (master’s thesis, Concordia Theological Seminary, 1980); Kevin W. Regal, “Charles H. Spurgeon’s Theology of Prayer” (master’s thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000).

108. Mashek, abstract.

109. Regal, 93-95.

110. Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 137.

Spurgeon scholarship. Through critical analysis of variegated elements of Spurgeon's spirituality, such as his theologies of prayer, communion, conversion, baptism, Scripture, suffering, holiness, and activism, Morden uncovers the complexities of a man whose spirituality, theology, and piety were paradoxically shaped by success and failure, trial and triumph, loss and gain.

The strength of Morden's thesis lies in the concomitant depth and breadth achieved in the study. Utilizing David Bebbington's widely regarded foci of evangelicalism¹¹¹—conversionism, Biblicism, crucicentrism, and activism—,¹¹² Morden gives special attention to the inseparability of Spurgeon's life and theology and rightly underscores Spurgeon's emphasis on communion with God and his people. However, Morden qualifies Bebbington's position that Spurgeon is to be understood as a product of the Enlightenment and Hopkins's belief that romanticism is at the root of Spurgeon's theology by neutralizing the apparent mutual exclusivity of these two positions.¹¹³ He instead offers a middle ground by writing,

Attempts to interpret Spurgeon as an Enlightenment figure standing against Romantic trends in nineteenth-century religious life are, on their own, inadequate, but neither is it right to describe him, without severe qualification, as "Romantic." There is important truth in these and other pictures, but, by themselves, they do not capture the angularity, complexity, and richness of Spurgeon.¹¹⁴

Additionally, Morden explores Spurgeon's spiritual, typological, and allegorical hermeneutics by revealing Spurgeon's indebtedness to John Bunyan and the allegorical Puritan tradition.¹¹⁵ Such studies are not new to Spurgeon

111. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 3.

112. Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 47-76, 106-35, 258-84, 190-221.

113. *Ibid.*, 6, 42n; 113 and 274.

114. Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 13-14.

scholarship;¹¹⁶ however, Morden reveals a helpful insight into Spurgeon's apparent hypocrisy in teaching his students legitimate methods of interpretation while committing the hermeneutical errors he told them to avoid.¹¹⁷ While Morden allocates no more than four pages to this discussion, citing only briefly Spurgeon's familiarity with Origen and wider Christological traditions,¹¹⁸ he successfully initiates a conversation that this thesis intends to continue.

Morden's work reflects an intimate knowledge of the primary documents housed in the Heritage Room of Spurgeon's College. Since much of this material is unpublished, such research is fundamental to an in-depth analysis of Spurgeon's thinking. Though Nicholls, Ian Randall, and Kruppa also made use of these archives,¹¹⁹ Morden, who at the time of writing serves as tutor in Church History and Spirituality at Spurgeon's College, incorporates such sources into his thesis not merely to illustrate or supplement his other research, but rather as foundational sources that shape the very structure and conclusions of his thesis.¹²⁰ Speaking to his research in London, Oxford, and Rushden,¹²¹ Morden admits, "I work in the main from primary data."¹²² While his work benefits from such original sources, a

115. *Ibid.*, 6 and 13.

116. See Talbert.

117. Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 123. Morden notes, "One is tempted to conclude that he overstepped the bounds he set for his own students on a number of occasions."

118. See Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 121-24, especially 123.

119. Nicholls, *C. H. Spurgeon: The Pastor Evangelist*; Ian Randall, *A School of the Prophets: 150 Years of Spurgeon's College* (London: Spurgeon's College, 2005); Kruppa, 419.

120. Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 13.

121. Spurgeon's College is located in South Norwood, London, England.; the Angus Library is located in Regent's Park College, Oxford, England.

122. Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 8.

weakness in his very excellent research is that a large number of primary documents that are scattered throughout the United States, including handwritten sermon notes, revised print galleys, and Spurgeon's personal library, were not consulted.

Nevertheless, this oversight should in no way diminish the excellence of Morden's examination of Charles Spurgeon's spirituality.

Perhaps the most surprising account of Spurgeon's life, preaching, and theology is offered by German theologian Helmut Thielicke in his *Vom Geistlichen Reden: Begegnung Mit Spurgeon*.¹²³ Interestingly titled, Thielicke's "encounter" with Spurgeon is in actuality only a forty-five-page introduction to selections from Spurgeon's *Lectures to My Students*; however, in this book Thielicke offers a unique evaluation from an unlikely source. In the translator's preface to Thielicke's work, John W. Doberstein considers, "How piquant, how wonderful, how 'ecumenical' that Helmut Thielicke, the highly educated German university professor and Lutheran theologian, should find such deep and warm kinship with Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the self-educated Victorian Baptist preacher."¹²⁴ That Thielicke engaged Spurgeon's theology at all shows that even German scholarship, against which Spurgeon stood adamantly,¹²⁵ was not immune to the widespread influence of the "Prince of Preachers." While much of Thielicke's analysis deals with Spurgeon's homiletic, he does offer a chastisement of Spurgeon as being an "amateur of theology"¹²⁶ to the end that "the dogmatician, the exegete, and also the professor of practical theology may

123. Thielicke, *Encounter with Spurgeon*.

124. John W. Doberstein, quoted in Thielicke, preface.

125. C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 4 vols. (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1990), 4:19. Hereafter, this source will be referenced as *Lectures*.

126. Thielicke, 3.

often be impelled to wield their blue pencils.”¹²⁷ However, such statements must be balanced with Thielicke’s elevation of Spurgeon above exegetes such as Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, Johann Tobias Beck, and Ludwig Hofacker.¹²⁸ As Thielicke evidences, much attention has been given to Spurgeon as a homiletician, and cursory attempts have been made to address his theology. In the following chapter, the results of a more detailed investigation into Spurgeon’s theological background, abilities, and emphases are presented.

Spurgeon as Theologian

Charles Haddon Spurgeon has been understood as a homiletician, orator, a pastor, evangelist, social worker, philanthropist, abolitionist, and college president.¹²⁹ While “we still await an adequate record and assessment of the man,”¹³⁰ a recent interest in his theological contribution has produced a need for Spurgeon to be analyzed for his theological merit. While the temptation to over-exaggerate Spurgeon’s theological contribution must not be entertained, this thesis offers a more critical approach to his theology than what has previously been presented.

No novelty exists in the claim that Spurgeon rarely has been recognized as a theologian.¹³¹ While several reasons have been given in explaining this claim,

127. *Ibid.*, 40.

128. *Ibid.*, 3.

129. *The Southport Guardian*, 3 February 1892; *The Referee*, London, 7 February 1892; Henry Woodcock, *Pastor Spurgeon: His Conversion, Labour, and Success* (London: F. H. Hurd, n.d.); Nicholls; *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 February 1892; Thomas Lewis Johnson, *Twenty-eight Years a Slave, or the Story of My Life in Three Continents* (Bournemouth: W. Mate & Sons, Limited, 1909); Pike, 257.

130. W. Charles Johnson, *Encounter in London: The Story of the London Baptist Association, 1865-1965* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press), 1965.

131. An exception is found in that Nicholls calls him “a forthright theologian,” 147.

including Jeremy Thornton’s interesting observation that Spurgeon’s stance against the Baptist Union during the Downgrade Controversy prevented future historians from viewing him as a theologian,¹³² it is the belief of the present writer that Spurgeon’s role “first of all, and most of all”¹³³ as a preacher constitutes the chief reason for excluding him from such categorization. The majority of his time, interests, and energies involved pulpit activities—be they preaching in London or abroad, editing weekly sermons, or preparing homiletic lectures for the Pastors’ College. Spurgeon’s widely translated sermons brought him international exposure not as a historian or theologian, but as a preacher in the main.¹³⁴ It is somewhat ironic that Spurgeon, who disapproved of modern college curricula,¹³⁵ would establish an academic institution in 1857, though J. J. Brown’s comment concerning the Pastors’ College at that time may be correct in that “the academic standard may not have been very high.”¹³⁶ Nevertheless, Spurgeon “recognized the value of a good education”¹³⁷ and believed that his duty involved turning out “preachers rather than scholars,”¹³⁸ for

132. Thornton, 2.

133. Pike, 315.

134. For a list of Spurgeon’s internationally-translated sermons, see Bolton, *Famous Leaders*, 353.

135. Lewis O. Brastow, *Representative Modern Preachers* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1904), 388. Brastow notes that Spurgeon “undervalued the college curriculum” because it was “affiliated with the movements of modern thought and life which might undermine the faith once delivered to the Puritan saints.”

136. J. J. Brown, a student of Spurgeon’s College and chairman of its committee and secretary of the College, in an interview with Ken Connolly, *Charles Spurgeon the Prince of Preachers*, video (London: Biblical Collection Heritage Archive, n.d.), 31 minutes, 33 seconds into film.

137. *Ibid.*

138. Pike, 175.

in his thinking, if students “become so bookish that they cannot speak except in a pedantic latinised language, their education has failed.”¹³⁹

While Spurgeon was first and foremost a preacher, he also recognized that the task of preaching necessarily involves the discipline of theology. To the students of his Pastors’ College, he exhorted,

Be well instructed in theology, and do not regard the sneers of those who rail at it because they are ignorant of it. Many preachers are not theologians, and hence the mistakes which they make. It cannot do any hurt to the most lively evangelist to be also a sound theologian, and it may often be the means of saving him from gross blunders.¹⁴⁰

Statements such as these are rarely cited in the discussion of Spurgeon’s theological credibility, and must be set against the Dean of Ripon’s comment that Spurgeon “is to be pitied, because his entire want of acquaintance with theological literature leaves him utterly unfit for the determination of such a question, which is a question, not of mere doctrine, but of what may be called historical theology.”¹⁴¹ It is not accurate to say that Spurgeon had no familiarity with historic theology or that he was not producing theology. Despite Hopkins’s analysis that “Spurgeon’s greatest achievements were as a preacher and mystic, rather than as a theologian,”¹⁴² W. Robertson Nicholl shows that Spurgeon’s sermons do contain immense theological value, and their acquisition results in the possession of “a very good theological library.”¹⁴³ A similar comment appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* on 1 February 1892.

139. *ST* 3:266.

140. *Lectures* 3:24.

141. Wayland, 212.

142. Hopkins, *Nonconformity’s Romantic Generation*, 151. See also Greenman, Larsen, and Spencer, 194-98.

143. W. Robertson Nicoll, quoted in Ray, *Marvelous Ministry*, fourth page of introduction.

“More theological and instructive books have been written by Mr. Spurgeon than by any other contemporary minister of the Gospel.”

With regard to Spurgeon’s theological capabilities, it is important to note briefly his linguistic and intellectual competencies. When the allegation that he could not “read forty languages” was “flung in [his] teeth,” Spurgeon responded, “Every word of it is true, and a great deal more.”¹⁴⁴ Russell Conwell is correct in that Spurgeon never became “an expert scholar in the ancient languages”¹⁴⁵ as had John Gill, for instance; however, Spurgeon’s mastery of Greek and Hebrew—the two “sacred languages”¹⁴⁶—, his adequate proficiencies in Latin and French, and also his limited but attempted understanding of German highlight a linguistic competency that allowed him to engage primary theological sources without being tethered to secondary or translated editions.¹⁴⁷

144. *MTP* 7:373. He added, “What have your college men done that is comparable to this work? What have the wisest and most instructed of modern ministers done in the conversion of souls compared with the work of the unlettered boy?”

145. Conwell, 60.

146. *Autobiography* 2:327.

147. Throughout his pastorates at Waterbeach Chapel, New Park Street Chapel, and the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Spurgeon found great benefit in reading the Scripture in Greek, often quoting it in his sermons. See *NPSP* 3:61, 3:454, 3:257, 5:287, and 5:486; and *MTP* 8:399, 10:492, 11:184, 18:79, 20:209, 20:237, 20:441, 20:500, 20:663, 24:219, 25:115, 25:309, 25:350, 25:627, 30:58, 30:93, 30:514, 32:1, 32:46, 32:145-175, 33:184, 36:95, 36:206, 36:407, 41:182, 53:324, 56:11, 56:405, 58:26, and 59:442; Spurgeon’s knowledge of Hebrew surfaces throughout his sermons (*NPSP* 1:224, 2:93, and 2:266; *MTP*, 21:425, 21:709, 17:377, 23:31, 23:74, 23:266, 23:303, 23:511, 23:689, 20:199, 20:260-61, 28:400, 32:160, 32:350, 32:705, 34:10, 34:78, 34:107, 34:234, 38:407, 38:470, 56:366, and 56:598), lectures, and commentary notes (*Lectures* 3:2.; C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Containing an Original Exposition of the Book of Psalms . . .*, 7 vols. [Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1983], 1:3, 1:19, 1:33-34, 4:265, 4:296, 4:311, and 4:321. Hereafter, this work will be referenced as *Treasury*;) and suggests that he had achieved adequate proficiency in Hebrew vocabulary, grammar, and syntax at least by the time he took the pastorate of New Park Street Chapel; *Lectures* 1:160. Spurgeon wrote, “I know of no better exercise than to translate with as much rapidity as possible a portion of Virgil or Tacitus, and then with deliberation to amend one’s mistakes.” Though he did not acquire the fluency in Latin that he had obtained in Greek, he did understand enough to be able to read Jerome’s *Vulgate*, “a most wonderful translation of Holy Scripture” (*ST* 2:120). For Spurgeon’s use of the Vulgate, see *Treasury* 1:3 and 4:217; *NPSP* 5:410; and *MTP* 13:283, 21:85, 32:673, 36:258, 48:409, and 57:76). Spurgeon often quoted Augustine in the Latin (“Augustine once cried out, ‘*Beata culpa*,’” [*MTP* 25:134]; “Remember what Augustine said: he declared that he loved

While Charles Spurgeon possessed the needed skills and abilities that benefit the task of theology, he never wrote a systematic theology, as Timothy Albert McCoy notes.¹⁴⁸ Far from the organizational coherency of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* or Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* is Spurgeon's theology found. Interestingly, in the preface to his dissertation on Spurgeon's soteriology, Thornton comments that "Spurgeon was not *primarily* a systematic theologian."¹⁴⁹ Thornton's use of "primary" is interesting in that it implies that Spurgeon was producing theology, to some degree, in a systematic way. This assessment is only partially true, though, for it was in the midst of his weekly ministries that Spurgeon's theology materialized.

every man that had 'aliquid Christi,'" [MTP 28:415]; "concerning the thief on the cross, Augustine called him, 'Latro laudabilis et mirabilis' [MTP 35:190]; "St. Augustine desired to be always found *aut precantem, aut predicantem*; that is, either praying or preaching" [MTP 37:87]; and "The voice which cried to Augustine, 'Tolle: lege,' was no sound of folly" [C. H. Spurgeon, *The Clue of the Maze*, 3rd ed. [[London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1892]], 53). Additionally, Spurgeon referenced Latin texts and authors throughout his sermons (NPSP 5:776 and 6:187; MTP, 10:386, 15:690, 17:666, 18:554, 20:209, 20:603; 26:28, 26:335, 26:609, 27:294, 28:200, 28:560; 30:541, 30:607, 32:4, 32:670; 33:194, 33:591, 34:51, 34:368, 34:702, 36:385, 39:141, 39:269, 39:482, 40:268, 41:582, 43:102, 44:73, 44:246, 44:337, 50:285, 53:370, 53:529, 57:167, 58:26, and 58:298), lectures (*Lectures* 1:75, 2:30, and 2:77), and commentaries (*ST* 1:246; and 6:175); Having learned French as a schoolchild (see Spurgeon Sermon Outline Notebooks), and having recognized the importance of speaking French while in France (MTP 41:353), in 1880, the *ST* recorded that Spurgeon daily was speaking French (*ST* 6:39) on his trip to Mentone, France. Additionally, Spurgeon occasionally quoted French in his sermons and addresses (*Autobiography* 1:207, C. H. Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry: Addresses to Ministers And Students* [Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1983], 353, and MTP 28:613 and 41:301); Unlike Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and French, Spurgeon did not study German formally. This was not uncommon, even for Oxford and Cambridge dons (Timothy Larson, *Contested Christianity: The Political and Social Contexts of Victorian Theology* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004], 44), and it is perhaps for this reason that German was not taught to the students at the Pastors' College. In fact, what little German Spurgeon acquired in his lifetime was largely credited to his correspondence with German Baptist leaders such as J. G. Oncken (*ST* 1:337), missionaries H. Windolf and C. A. Kemnitz (letter written in Hamburg, 15 November 1861, from H. Windolf to Charles Spurgeon, *ST* 1:75-76), and his travels throughout Germany and Switzerland (*ST* 1:70 and 335-38). Though Spurgeon attempted to read the language, and even achieved minimal success (MTP 55:164), he demonstrated a lack of confidence in speaking German on the island of Heligoland when he commented that the landlord of a hotel, who once lived in America, could understand enough English even when one could "say no more German than 'yah, yah,'" *ST* 1:350.

148. McCoy, 109.

149. Thornton, introduction, 4; emphasis added.

B. H. Carroll would qualify Thornton's assertion in that Spurgeon may be seen as a systematician only when his sermons are arranged topically,¹⁵⁰ as in the case of such publications as *Christ's Incarnation*, *Farm Sermons*, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, and *Christ in the Old Testament*.¹⁵¹ Though Carroll's perspective of Spurgeon as a systematician is anachronistic, the successful attempts at systematizing Spurgeon's theology are of some benefit. For this reason, the Marshall Brothers are to be commended for publishing thematic arrangements of Spurgeon's doctrinal sermons concerning the ascension, incarnation, birth, miracles, transfiguration, passion, substitution, and resurrection, in addition to other key matters of doctrine.¹⁵² In the same vein, Charles T. Cook also offers twenty volumes of Spurgeon's sermons that are topically categorized by such themes as the Second Coming of Christ, the blood and cross of Christ, Christ's names and titles, and Christ's miracles.¹⁵³ While the aforementioned titles demonstrate a desire to arrange Spurgeon's theology in a systematic way, they do not contain the entire corpus of Spurgeon's work; any attempt at reconstructing Spurgeon's doctrines must take into account a

150. B. H. Carroll, *Genesis an Interpretation of the English Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Bookhouse, 1948) section 1, "Introduction to the Interpretation of the English Bible: Further Developments of the Idea." Carroll notes, "By topical arrangement of another set you may obtain a complete body of systematic theology."

151. C. H. Spurgeon, *Christ's Incarnation* (Rio, WI: Ages Library, 2006); C. H. Spurgeon, *Farm Sermons* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1989); C. H. Spurgeon, *Sermons on Our Lord's Miracles: Delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle and New Park Street Chapel*, vol. 1 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1895); *Christ in the Old Testament: Sermons on the Foreshadowings of Our Lord in Old Testament History, Ceremony and Prophecy* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1899).

152. See C. H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopaedia: Arranged for Reference According to Subjects*, 40 vols. (London: Marshall Brothers, LTD, n.d.). In 1984, Baker Books released a fifteen-volume set of Spurgeon's sermons arranged topically. See C. H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopaedia: Sermons by Charles H. Spurgeon Classified and Arranged for Ready Reference* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984).

153. Charles T. Cook, ed., *C. H. Spurgeon's Sermons on the Miracles*, Kelvedon ed. (London: Marshall, Morgan & Stott, 1958). See also vol. 1-20.

chronological, not chairotical,¹⁵⁴ arrangement of his theology as published in the *New Park Street Pulpit* and *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* series.

When examining Spurgeon's auto-theological awareness, a particular statement stands out. To his students at the Pastors' College, Spurgeon said, "Brethren if you are not theologians you are in your pastorates just nothing at all. You may be fine rhetoricians, and be rich in polished sentences, but without knowledge of the gospel, and aptness to teach it, you are but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal."¹⁵⁵ In this way, Spurgeon recognized that not only was he himself a theologian in his knowledge of the gospel, but that his students must be also if they were to conduct effective ministry. Spurgeon's definition of "theologian," however, did not include the systematic sort, for in Spurgeon's assessment, systematic theology often becomes a "preacher's idol."¹⁵⁶ Since "the Book of God, like the works of God, is not systematically arranged,"¹⁵⁷ Spurgeon did not believe in arranging his theology systematically.

Paradoxically, some occasions in Spurgeon's ministry reveal strong recommendations for systematic theology, such as his delight in A. A. Hodges's *Outlines of Theology*;¹⁵⁸ his use of systematic theology in the Pastors' College;¹⁵⁹ and his commendation of John Gill, whose "exactness of systematic theology . . .

154. Greek, *kairos*, "the right or opportune moment"

155. *Lectures* 1:74.

156. *ST* 2:226.

157. *MTP* 8:86.

158. *Autobiography* 4:299.

159. *ST* 2:238.

maintained the doctrines of grace against the innovations of Arminian teachers.”¹⁶⁰

Given that Spurgeon championed Reformed, Puritan theology, it may be observed that insofar as such theologies were systematized in order to prevent or protect against heresy, Spurgeon deemed them legitimate. However, Spurgeon considered his primary task not to be resisting or combating heresy, as this present writer suggests; rather, by avoiding these heresies in large part, Spurgeon gave himself wholly to the preaching the gospel, for “if we want souls saved we must equally avoid the modern intellectual system in all its phases.”¹⁶¹

How, then, is Spurgeon’s theology—and more precisely, Spurgeon as theologian—best understood? While Spurgeon did not desire or receive the theological credentials that might have assisted future theologians and historians in remembering him as a theologian, he nevertheless produced theology in an organic, albeit unorganized, way. It is the opinion of the present writer to conclude that Dennis R. Janz’s critique of Martin Luther’s theology may be applied to that of Charles Haddon Spurgeon as well:

Some have concluded that his [Martin Luther’s] theology is not “systematic.” If one means by this that he did not write a single, unified, and all-embracing theological tome as did Thomas Aquinas or John Calvin or Karl Barth, then this is correct. But if by “systematic theology” we mean a coherent and internally consistent set of theological ideas that are all related to and governed by a single central theme, then Luther the theologian was supremely “systematic.”¹⁶²

160. *NPSP* 5:347.

161. *MTP* 22:143.

162. Dennis R. Janz, ed., *A Reformation Reader: Primary Texts with Introductions*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 77.

Theological Rhetoric

If Spurgeon is to be understood as a theologian, a closer investigation into the transmission of his theology gives greater perspective on his theological contribution. Not with polished pageantry or embellished phraseology did Spurgeon arrest the attention of mid-nineteenth-century London. Rather, it was through a colloquial rhetoric that utilized experimental nineteenth-century vernacular, illustrations, allegory, and humor that he drew and kept the crowds. In the following paragraph, Spurgeon's reason for preaching in this way is observed. He preached,

The preacher must also mind that he preaches Christ *very simply*. He must break up his big words and long sentences, and pray against the temptation to use them. It is usually the short, dagger-like sentence that does the work best. A true servant of Christ must never try to let the people see how well he can preach; he must never go out of his way to drag a pretty piece of poetry in his sermon, nor to introduce some fine quotations from the classics. He must employ a simple, homely style, or such a style as God has given him; and he must preach Christ so plainly that his hearers can not only understand him, but that they cannot misunderstand him even if they try to do so.¹⁶³

It is no surprise, then, that “the scholarly will drop in to hear Dr. Vaughn or Dr. Dykes; the intellectual gather about the pulpits of Liddon or Stanley; the lovers of oratory follow Punshon; but the crowd goes to the Tabernacle,”¹⁶⁴ for Spurgeon reacted against the kind of intellectual preaching that “requires a dictionary rather than a Bible to explain it.”¹⁶⁵ “Not the most learned,” he preached, “but the most plain, is the best.”¹⁶⁶ In 1857, shortly after he accepted the pastorate of New Park Street, Spurgeon delivered a public insult to his friend, a Mr. Cloudyton, “who always preaches in such a style that if you should try to dissect the sermon for a week

163. *MTP* 56:489; italics in the original.

164. An unnamed critic, quoted in Ellison, *Victorian Pulpit*, 62.

165. *MTP* 56:482.

166. *MTP* 32:416.

afterwards, you could by no possibility tell what he meant.”¹⁶⁷ At times, Spurgeon’s criticisms became exceedingly harsh. “If my friend over yonder talks in a Latinized style to a company of costermongers,” he asserted, “I will warrant you the Holy Ghost has nothing to do with him.”¹⁶⁸ Additionally, Spurgeon disapproved of ministers who “have not learned to talk English, they speak a kind of French-Latin-English: it is not the Saxon English which the people know.”¹⁶⁹

Such vitriol must be seen in light of what Spurgeon deemed to be at stake, that is, the salvation and damnation of souls. He believed that to exchange clear communicative preaching for esoteric Latinized verbiage was to risk something far greater than homiletical coherency; it was to jeopardize eternal destinies. If a preacher’s desire to appear poetic or intelligent muddled the simple narrative of Christ’s atoning accomplishment, Spurgeon concluded that his ministry was ineffective. For this reason, he refused to parrot sophisticated preachers for fear that a “poor woman in the aisle would not understand me.”¹⁷⁰ Additionally, he added, “I must not point out that recondite difficulty, for yonder trembling soul might be staggered by it, and might not be relieved by my explanation.”¹⁷¹ In the following statement, Spurgeon’s partiality to Saxon English is observed: “The Latin, the Greek, the German, the French, and other tongues have all given us words which convey to the learned shades of meaning which the less plastic Saxon cannot compass; but to the

167. *NPSP* 3:60.

168. *MTP* 27:527.

169. *Ibid.*, 400.

170. Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, 353.

171. *Ibid.*

mass of the people such speech is to all intents and purposes a foreign language.¹⁷²

This statement requires further analysis in that Spurgeon did not endorse the polished, Latinized Anglo-Saxon of other contemporary preachers, for he believed that such language hid “plain things in dark sentences.”¹⁷³ Is Spurgeon’s assessment fair? One answer to this question is found in a survey conducted in 1884 by the editors of *Contemporary Pulpit* in which they resolved to determine who was the “greatest living English-speaking Protestant Preacher.”¹⁷⁴ The three hundred fifty ballots indicated that Charles Spurgeon qualified as the runner up to Henry Parry Liddon, canon of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, who took the first position. While unknown factors such as the class of the people balloted and their geographical locations would have played significant roles in the outcome, this survey does show that there were others, like Liddon, who possessed a more sophisticated rhetoric than that of Spurgeon and who succeeded in gaining the popularity of the masses in the late nineteenth century.

For Spurgeon, however, there could be no substitute for plain Anglo-Saxon English that appealed to the masses, and for this reason, he believed that Anglo-Saxon was “before every language in the world.”¹⁷⁵ He upheld his belief in vivid, picturesque language, saying, “When every other has died out for want of power, Saxon will live, and triumph with its iron tongue, and its voice of steel,”¹⁷⁶ for “homely, plain, bold, nervous, forcible, [Anglo Saxon speech] never fails to move the

172. *ST* 3:218.

173. Spurgeon, *All-Round Ministry*, 353.

174. Ellison, *Victorian Pulpit*, 44.

175. *NPSP* 3:261.

176. *Ibid.*

English ear.”¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, he pleaded, “Give me plain expressive Saxon,”¹⁷⁸ and “if you will preach Christ out and out simply, in plain Saxon, as Paul would have him preached, not with wisdom of words, you shall find the people will come together.”¹⁷⁹ It is worth clarifying the obvious, namely that Spurgeon did not believe the apostle Paul spoke English. However, Spurgeon said, had Jesus Christ himself “been an Englishman, I am sure that he would have drawn his language from the pure well of English undefiled, sparkling with Saxon idiom, dear to the people.”¹⁸⁰ Spurgeon believed that “superlative nonsense”¹⁸¹ could be avoided by appealing to ancient languages,¹⁸² but mere English translations, though not inspired, could also be useful. “You have not to go to school to learn the Greek, or Hebrew, or Latin language, in order that you may read about the way of salvation,” he preached. “It is sent to you in your homely Saxon mother-tongue.”¹⁸³

Centrality of Christology

On a Sunday evening in 1851, Charles Spurgeon preached an impromptu sermon in a cottage in Tevershem, near Cambridge. Due to the spontaneity of the occasion, no records exist concerning his actual words or sermon outline. However, in his autobiography, Spurgeon recollected the text chosen for his first sermon, 1 Pet.

177. *ST* 3:43.

178. *MTP* 30:338.

179. *MTP* 59:319-20.

180. *ST* 6:247.

181. *Commenting*, 25.

182. *Ibid.*

183. *MTP* 53:112.

2:7, “Unto you therefore who believe, he is precious.”¹⁸⁴ Believing that he could “tell a few poor cottagers of the sweetness and love of Jesus,”¹⁸⁵ Spurgeon proceeded to preach a sermon on Jesus Christ. Later, he recounted, “This was the theme of the first sermon I ever preached, I hope it is my theme now, and ever shall be living, dying and glorified.”¹⁸⁶ From the beginning of his ministry to its conclusion, Spurgeon preached Christ frequently and thoroughly.¹⁸⁷

However, not only did Spurgeon’s homiletic center on the person and work of Jesus Christ, but his theology followed suit, for, according to Spurgeon, Jesus Christ “is in himself all theology.”¹⁸⁸ All theology, he added, “should be framed upon the fact that he [Christ] is the centre and head of all.”¹⁸⁹ Though not seeking to depart from Chalcedonian Christology, as is investigated in the next chapter, Spurgeon rendered theology in a language that slum dwellers, chimney-sweepers, and “fallen”¹⁹⁰ women could easily understand. “We preach Christ to the prostitutes on the street,” he said, “and oh, how joyfully have many of them received Christ.”¹⁹¹

Where did Spurgeon’s Christocentric focus originate? While Hayden notes that Spurgeon modernized Puritan teachings, “keeping to simple Anglo-Saxon that the

184. *Autobiography* 1:201.

185. *Ibid.*

186. Spurgeon Sermon Outline Notebook 4:311.

187. Bacon, 29.

188. *MTP* 7:169.

189. *MTP* 23:865.

190. J. H. Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth-Century*, vol. 3 (Didcot: The Baptist Historical Society, 1994), 323. In the nineteenth century, “fallen women” were prostitutes.

191. *MTP* 56:487.

man in the street could understand,”¹⁹² Talbert shows the origin of such interest. He posits that the “appreciation Spurgeon acquired as a youth for Puritans laid the foundation for his ‘christocentric’ focus in theology.”¹⁹³ Talbert’s claim parallels Spurgeon’s own reflections on the Puritan tradition. “There were never better men in the world than the Puritans,”¹⁹⁴ Spurgeon preached. “The doctrine which I preach is that of the Puritans.”¹⁹⁵ This was also true of the Pastors’ College, for Spurgeon wrote, “We wish to be known and read of all men, we say distinctly that the theology of the Pastors’ College is Puritanic.”¹⁹⁶ Additionally, Spurgeon’s assistance to the Edinburgh publisher, James Nichols, in his reprint of his *Series of Standard Divines*, further attests to his love for Puritan literature. He explained, “It would do all our country brethren good to have more Puritan theology.”¹⁹⁷

While Spurgeon never sought departure from English Puritan theology as championed by John Owen, Richard Baxter, John Flavel, and others, his Christocentric theology must be understood as more than mere regurgitated Puritan dogma. Though certainly an heir of the Puritans and, as some have argued, the *Ultimus Puritanorum*,¹⁹⁸ Spurgeon was not a ventriloquist, merely parroting Puritan Divines. Spurgeon frequently expressed his indebtedness to the Puritans¹⁹⁹ but never

192. Hayden, *Highlights*, 104-5.

193. Talbert, 31-32.

194. *NPSP* 2:134.

195. *Autobiography* 2:87.

196. *Autobiography* 3:149.

197. Bob L. Ross, *A Biography Pictorial of C. H. Spurgeon* (Albany, OR: Ages Library, 1998), 29.

198. “last of the Puritans;” *Autobiography* 4:296.

199. *Autobiography* 1:87, *NPSP* 1:148, *MTP* 13:352, and *MTP* 26:189.

tethered himself strictly to their styles. He was a Calvinist; however, he transmitted his Calvinism in an unique, original, and innovated way, re-animating classical, Augustinian, orthodox theology in a language that appealed to working class, mid-nineteenth-century Victorians.

Spurgeon's prerogative to preach Christ "in simple language, in plain speech such as the common people can understand"²⁰⁰ can be seen throughout his works, including in the preface to his *John Ploughman's Pictures or Plain Talk for Plain People* in which he wrote, "I have continued to use the simplest form of our mother tongue, so that if any readers must need have refined language they had better leave these pages before they are quite disgusted."²⁰¹ Such statements reveal a deeply appropriated Christology expressed in practical ministerial praxis. For this reason, Spurgeon believed that theology could not be separated from ministry; orthodoxy and orthopraxy belong together. A cerebral, academic knowledge of Christ was not enough for Spurgeon, as this thesis will show; instead, only a dynamic, personal relationship with Christ could result in holiness.²⁰² In this way, a correct theology of the natures, person, and mission of Christ, coupled with an active spiritual life that was grounded in truth, became the impetus for Spurgeon's evangelical action. Consequentially, in all his evangelistic endeavors—from his weekly lectures, sermons, and itinerate revivals to numerous personal correspondences—Spurgeon's single-minded evangelical focus compelled his Christocentric sermons.

200. *MTP* 56:482.

201. C. H. Spurgeon, *John Ploughman's Pictures or Plain Talk for Plain People* (Albany, OR: Ages Library, 1998), 3.

202. *NPSP* 1:337.

Spurgeon located Jesus Christ on every page of Scripture, whether literally, figuratively, allegorically, or typologically. “The sermon which does not lead to Christ,” he preached, “is the sort of sermon that makes devils in hell laugh, and angels in heaven weep.”²⁰³ Spurgeon added,

But what is the Scripture’s great theme? Is it not, first and foremost, concerning Christ Jesus? Take thou this Book, and distill it into one word, and that one word will be Jesus. The Book itself is but the body of Christ, and we may look upon all its pages as the swaddling bands of the infant Saviour; for if we unroll the Scripture, we come upon Jesus Christ himself.²⁰⁴

Subsequently, Spurgeon’s “bee-line to the cross,”²⁰⁵ and his belief that “we much more often err in not seeing Christ in the Old Testament than in seeing him there,”²⁰⁶ has engendered significant hermeneutical criticism from recent scholars such as Sidney Greidanus, who in his *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method*, writes that Spurgeon’s

single-minded concern to preach Jesus Christ often leads him to reading Christ back into the Old Testament text. He generally uses the life of Jesus as a grid for interpreting the Old Testament. In other words, he frequently fails to do justice to the literal sense and the historical context of the Old Testament passages.²⁰⁷

While this criticism is correct in that Spurgeon did possess a “single-minded concern to preach Jesus Christ,” Greidanus fails to take into consideration Spurgeon’s frequent provision for historic contexts, such as can be found in his sermons “The Blood of Abel and the Blood of Jesus,” “Mercy’s Master Motive,” “The Overflowing Cup,”

203. *MTP* 25:634.

204. *MTP* 57:496.

205. Charles Spurgeon, quoted in Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 223.

206. *MTP* 56:479.

207. Sidney Gredeinus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 160.

“The Plague of the Heart,” “Incense and Light,” “Taking Possession of Our Inheritance,” and “Kept from Iniquity,”²⁰⁸ among numerous others.

According to Spurgeon, Jesus Christ is the “sum and substance of the gospel.”²⁰⁹ Furthermore, he added, “Christ is the center of the entire system of the gospel, and all will be seen to move with regularity when you perceive that he is the chief fixed point; you cannot be right in the rest unless you think rightly of him.”²¹⁰ For Spurgeon, Christ is the theme of Scripture, the locus of history, the axis of pastoral enterprise, and also the only mediator through whom reconciliation with God occurs. As is demonstrated in chapter 3 of this thesis, Jesus Christ is the Great High Priest who intercedes on behalf of humanity by atoning for its sin, who occupies the role of the prophet who is simultaneously the Word of God, and who fulfills his kingship by reigning supremely over both his creation and the hearts of his elect. Even if Spurgeon’s preaching did not result in conversion, he posited to his students at the Pastors’ College that his words would not have been uttered in vain. “The grand object of the Christian ministry is the glory of God. Whether souls are converted or not, if Jesus Christ be faithfully preached, the minister has not labored in vain.”²¹¹ However, he maintained that, as a rule, “God has sent us to preach in order that through the gospel of Jesus Christ the sons of men may be reconciled to him.”²¹²

208. *MTP* 12:481-82; *MTP* 18:157-58; *MTP* 21:145-46; *MTP* 25:467; *MTP* 29:145; *MTP* 35:277-78; *MTP* 41:457-58.

209. *NPSP* 5:140.

210. *MTP* 17:634.

211. *Lectures* 3:179.

212. *Ibid.*

Spurgeon's robust Christological convictions come into focus all the more when viewed against the background of the Downgrade Controversy of 1887-1889. When the Baptist Assembly met in April 1888 at the City Temple in London to pass "a Declaratory Statement of facts and principles commonly believed by churches in the Union,"²¹³ there existed no resolve on the substitutionary atonement of Christ, his virgin birth, or his Trinitarian association. "Believers in Christ's atonement are now in declared union with those who make light of it,"²¹⁴ Spurgeon lamented. In a letter written to Samuel Harris Booth in October 1887, Spurgeon wrote, "I beg to intimate to you, Secretary of the Baptist Union, that I must withdraw from that Society. I do this with the utmost regret, but I have no choice."²¹⁵ On 15 January 1888, the Baptist Union Council resolved to accept Spurgeon's resignation. This controversy reflects the seriousness of Spurgeon's Christological convictions, for by abandoning a union that had become progressively lax on what Spurgeon deemed fundamental to Christian principles, Spurgeon evidenced a theology built upon the centrality, supremacy, and indispensability of Jesus Christ. To this end, Earl Shaftesbury's comment to Spurgeon, that "such a preaching of Christ has been your main strength,"²¹⁶ is realized.

To conclude, this chapter has contextualized the life and theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon first by revealing the worldwide popularity of his sermons; second, by interacting with the recent scholarship that has influenced the research and writing of this thesis; and third, through investigating Spurgeon's role as a theologian and his

213. Bacon, 139.

214. C. H. Spurgeon, *The Down Grade Controversy* (Albany, OR: Ages Library, 1998), 44.

215. Bacon, 134.

216. Letter from Earl Shaftesbury to Charles Spurgeon, *Autobiography* 4:179.

colloquial rhetoric. Furthermore, the centrality of Spurgeon's Christocentric theology has revealed the importance of conducting an in-depth study into an area of Spurgeon scholarship that has not yet been explored critically. To the end that "learning Christ means *knowing his nature*,"²¹⁷ Spurgeon's ontological Christology is presented in the next chapter through an analysis of his doctrine of the humanity and divinity of Christ, the hypostatic union, and the unique Christological rhetoric Spurgeon utilized in his sermons and writings.

217. *MTP* 47:136; italics in the original.

CHAPTER 2

THE BEING OF CHRIST: ONTOLOGICAL CHRISTOLOGY

The Person of Jesus Christ

Charles Spurgeon inherited an ontological Christology that was developed by the Church Fathers, advanced by the Protestant Reformation, reanimated by the English Puritans, and delivered to him by the Baptist tradition. Spurgeon's unique Christological contribution is most clearly felt in his ability to communicate Christ in a colorful vernacular that his audiences could best understand and with which they could best identify. Through the use of figures of speech, Spurgeon reanimated the evangelical theology that he inherited and adopted.

Since historical Christological developments played a significant role in the compilation, formation, and articulation of Spurgeon's doctrine of Christ, a *diachronic* examination is first conducted in this section in order to contextualize Spurgeon's Christology with wider Christological traditions. Following an analysis of Spurgeon's doctrine of Christ's divinity, humanity, and hypostatic union, a discussion of Spurgeon's alignment with and continuation of Alexandrian hermeneutics will conclude with a summary of Spurgeon's ontological Christology as depicted in his allegorical treatment of Christ as pilgrim.

After the dismissal of the heresy of Arius at the Council of Nicaea in 325, the heresies of Apollinarius and Pneumatomachi at the Council of Constantinople in 381,

and the heresy of Nestorius in 431 at the Council of Ephesus,¹ Emperor Marcian convened the Chalcedon Council in 451 to add further clarification about Christ's incarnation, natures, and person. The Chalcedonian Creed, which resulted from this council, affirmed the language of the Nicene Creed and offered its own definition for the divine and human natures of Christ. It was not the bishops' intention to create a new Christology at Chalcedon, but rather to explain with more precision what the church had believed thus far.² The Creed states,

Following, then, the holy fathers, we unite in teaching all men to confess the one and only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This selfsame one is perfect [*teleion*] both in deity [*theotēti*] and also in human-ness [*anthrōpotēti*]; this selfsame one is also actually [*alēthōs*] God and actually man, with a rational soul [*psychēs logikēs*] and a body. He is of the same reality as God [*homoousion tō patri*] as far as his deity is concerned and of the same reality as we are ourselves [*homoousion hēmin*] as far as his human-ness is concerned; thus like us in all respects, sin only excepted. Before time began [*pro aiōnōn*] he was begotten of the Father, in respect of his deity, and now in these "last days," for us and on behalf of our salvation, this selfsame one was born of Mary the virgin, who is God-bearer [*theotokos*] in respect of his human-ness [*anthrōpotēta*].

[We also teach] that we apprehend [*gnōridzomenon*] this one and only Christ—Son, Lord, only-begotten—in two natures [*duo physēs*]; [and we do this] without confusing the two natures [*asunkutōs*], without transmuting one nature into the other [*atreptōs*], without dividing them into two separate categories [*adiaretōs*], without contrasting them according to area or function [*achōristōs*]. The distinctiveness of each nature is not nullified by the union. Instead, the "properties" [*idiotētos*] of each nature are conserved and both

1. Arius maintained that Jesus Christ, though the first creation of God, was not fully and equally God; Harry R. Boer, *A Short History of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 167. Apollinarius believed in a tri-part Christology in which Christ possessed a body, soul, and spirit and the logos took the place of his spirit when Christ became human; Saint Basil, *Saint Basil's Letters*, vol. 2, Sister Agnes Clare Way, trans., *Saint Basil's Letters*, vol. 2 of *The Fathers of the Church* (n.p.: The Catholic University of American Press, 1955; repr., 2008), 240. In AD 360, Athanasius gave this anti-Nicene Creed sect their name, Pneumatomachi, meaning "adversaries against the spirit." Also known as Macedonians, this sect denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit; John Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, vol. 2 of *The Formation of Christian Theology* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 371. The Council of Constantinople convened on more than the Apollinarian heresy. The regulation of bishop activities and also the reception of heretics into the church were also settled; Nestorianism, a form of dyophysitism, maintained that Christ possessed two separate natures that were not completely united.

2. Bernard L. Ramm, *An Evangelical Christology: Ecumenic and Historic* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1993), 33.

natures concur [*suntrechousēs*] in one “person” [*prosōpon*] and in one *hypostasis*. They are not divided or cut into two *prosōpa*, but are together the one and only and only-begotten Logos of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus have the prophets of old testified; thus the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us; thus the Symbol of the Fathers [N] has handed down [*paradedōke*] to us.³

Sixteenth-century Reformers reapplied Chalcedonian teaching and its emphasis on the intactness of Christ’s humanity and divinity. However, in the Reformers’ quest to recover a Christ who is present personally in the life of the believer and the church, they realized that a more *dynamic* Christology was needed to replace the somewhat static confessions about the nature and persons of Christ. Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and other Reformers did not have to battle against Arianism or Nestorianism. Rather, the Reformers reckoned with a millennium of underdeveloped medieval theology that skewed the grace-based understanding of Christ’s atoning work as found in the Scriptures in favor of a works-based righteousness that resulted in a biblically illiterate, ecclesially controlled, penance driven populace. For them, only a dynamic theology of grace, realized in the living and active presence of Christ, could repair a misled, disillusioned church and restore a biblical understanding of salvation as unmerited.

Spurgeon continued the momentum of the Reformed tradition by likewise stressing a dynamic, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. A combination of factors contributed to Spurgeon’s emphasis on individual salvation. Victorian romanticism, as Hopkins argues,⁴ created within him a profound sense of emotion that allowed him to say that the intimate relationship between an individual and Christ “is the nearest,

3. John H. Leith, ed., *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1982), 35-36; punctuation in the original.

4. Hopkins, *Nonconformity’s Romantic Generation*, 125-66.

dearest, closest, most intense, and most enduring relationship that can be imagined.”⁵ Individualism, which had come to define European society since the sixteenth century,⁶ and which Spurgeon encountered in books such as *The Object and Acts of Justifying Faith* by Thomas Goodwin,⁷ grounded his religious doctrine in experience so that when a believer “puts on” Jesus Christ,⁸ God is “specially adapted to each individual believer.”⁹ Furthermore, the evangelical revivalism movement at play in Nonconformist circles furthered Spurgeon’s urgent appeal for the salvation of individuals. All of these factors contributed to Spurgeon’s ability to preach the sermon “Your Personal Salvation” in 1880 in which he implored his listeners to pray, “O Lord, I feel that nobody in all this world needs thy mercy more than I do: let my need plead with thee; give me thy salvation.”¹⁰

Spurgeon’s Christology aligns with that of Chalcedon in that Jesus Christ is *sui generis*, the *logos* that existed eternally as the second person of the Trinity, who is united to the Father in nature.¹¹ Immutable and everlasting,¹² he is “from the beginning. In his glory he was ‘with God.’ In his nature he ‘was God.’”¹³ However,

5. *MTP* 20:42.

6. John W. Berry, Marshall H. Segall, Cigdem Kagitçibasi, eds., *Social Behavior and Applications*, vol. 3 of *Handbook of Cross-cultural Psychology*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 4.

7. Bacon, 10. Bacon notes that this title “planted in him the deep desire for a first-hand knowledge of the truth of the Gospel in personal experience.”

8. Rom. 13:14.

9. *MTP* 36:125.

10. *MTP* 26:130.

11. “of its own kind”; *MTP* 25:44; *MTP* 54:329.

12. “Jesus Christ Immutable,” *MTP* 15:1-12; *NPSP* 1:2.

13. *MTP* 38:273.

not only is Christ united to the Father in nature, Spurgeon believed that he is also distinct from the Father in person. This distinction maintained the integrity, role, and functions of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Spurgeon wrote that Christ

existed before he was born into this world; for God “sent” his Son. He was already in being or he could not have been “sent.” And while he is one with the Father, yet he must be distinct from the Father and have a personality separate from that of the Father, otherwise it could not be said that God sent his Son. . . . We know and are assured that Christ is one with the Father, yet is his distinctness of personality most clearly to be observed.¹⁴

In full submission to the wishes of the Father, the submissive Son gave himself to the rescue of his people,¹⁵ for Spurgeon maintained that only as a human being could Christ save humanity. When these two aspects of Christ’s nature, that is, his divinity and his humanity, are examined further, Spurgeon’s ontological Christology begins to take shape.

The Divinity of Christ

Spurgeon upheld the full divinity of Jesus. “We can never forget,” he reminded his congregation, “that Jesus Christ is God.” He added, “The church has given forth many a valiant confession to his deity; and woe be to her should she ever hesitate on that glorious truth!”¹⁶ Unwilling to hesitate on this doctrine, Spurgeon quoted Athanasius, who believed that Christ’s divinity, intrinsically linked to his pre-existent status, reveals that Jesus did not “become God, for he was so even before.”¹⁷ Hopkins notes the importance of this point, stating that Spurgeon spoke to the

14. *MTP* 30:689.

15. *MTP* 36:267.

16. *MTP* 26:161.

17. *Treasury* 2:367.

prologue of John's Gospel's Word "being *united* to flesh rather than *becoming* flesh."¹⁸ No modalism may be found in Spurgeon, no reduction of the Father to the Son at the moment of incarnation. The distinction between these two persons of the Trinity ensured that before the foundation of the world, Jesus Christ enjoyed perfect communion with the Father and the Spirit in an intra-Trinitarian environment. In this way, Christ's divinity *preceded* the incarnation. "Therefore besides and afore that human nature," explained Spurgeon, "there was a divine person that existed, that was not of this world."¹⁹ For Spurgeon, this ontological reality had far reaching soteriological implications. The salvation of God's elect, who were chosen before the foundation of the world, demanded a divine Christ, for only divinity could rescue humanity. "A Saviour who is not divine," Spurgeon argued, "can be no Saviour for us."²⁰

However, Spurgeon's language is far from being theologically air-tight. He preached, "When Christ in past years did gird himself with mortal clay the essence of his divinity was not changed."²¹ If this statement is viewed in isolation from his other claims, one might assume that it Christ assumed flesh only "in past years." Here is an episode in which Spurgeon's rhetoric could allow for interpretive maneuverability. Did Christ, upon his ascension, ungird himself of mortal flesh? A collective survey of Spurgeon's statements on Christ's assumption reveals that Spurgeon never condoned

18. Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, 145; italics in the original.

19. *Treasury* 4:440.

20. *MTP* 12:14.

21. *NPSP* 1:2.

an unincarnate Christ.²² Once he became flesh for his people, Spurgeon believed, Christ retained his flesh for all eternity. So great was Christ's love for his people, so committed was he to enter into covenant with them, that Spurgeon believed God *became* one of them, once and for all. "Though manifestly divine, yet Jesus is none the less human; though truly man, he is none the less divine,"²³ he preached. That the post-resurrected Christ still bore the nail prints demonstrated for Spurgeon an intimate connection to humanity, and also spoke to the fulfillment of the Christ's mission of redemption. Further evidence for Spurgeon's belief in Christ's retained flesh is realized in the following statement. "Ask me who shall come to judge the earth in righteousness, and I say a man. A real, veritable man is to hold the scales of judgment, and to call all nations around him."²⁴

Concerning the incarnation of the Son of God, Spurgeon believed in the immutability of Christ the Son. However, the question arises, If God became incarnate, does this not mean that he underwent change? In one sense, Spurgeon responded to this question in the affirmative. Jesus Christ embraced the totality of what it means to be human by becoming flesh, bone, and blood and thus changed in his *condition* by submitting to humiliation.²⁵ In this way, God understood hunger, thirst, pain, and suffering by becoming human. Additionally, Christ underwent change in his *occupation*, for in the thirty-three years of his ministry on earth, he sought to

22. *MTP* 9:701, *MTP* 32:447, *MTP* 33:221.

23. *MTP* 29:267.

24. *NPSP* 1:80.

25. *MTP* 15:8.

“seek and save that which was lost.”²⁶ However, Spurgeon noted that when Christ returns, he will “scatter his enemies and break them as with a rod of iron.”²⁷ In these two senses, Spurgeon believed that Jesus Christ is not immutable in his condition or occupation, yet he in another sense Jesus Christ experienced no change at all. In the substance of his being, that is, in his divine position as the second person of the Trinity, Christ remained fundamentally unaltered and unchanged. Spurgeon reminded his congregation of Heb.13:8, saying, “Jesus Christ *himself* yesterday, and to-day, and forever. The anointed Saviour is always himself.”²⁸ For this reason, Spurgeon could not approve of a Christ who in his personhood could change, and in this way Spurgeon’s Christology aligned with that of Chalcedon.

For Spurgeon, to curtail Christ’s status as fully God not only fell within the parameters of Socinianism, which will be discussed shortly, but it also neglected Christ’s own words concerning his divine authority. So obvious to him was the divine nature of Christ that the failure to observe it in Scripture further evidenced the depravity and skepticism of humanity. In contrast to the other Gospels, Spurgeon recognized the apostle John’s emphasis on the divinity of Christ. He preached,

The gospel of John is peculiarly the history of Jesus, the Son of God. Matthew deals with Jesus as the Prince of the house of David; Mark treats of him as the Servant of servants; and Luke views him as the Son of Man; but John, with eagle eye, looks beyond all the clouds of his humanity, and seeing the clear shining of his divinity, writes of him especially as the Son of God, the Word, that in the beginning was with God and was God.²⁹

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.; italics in the original.

29. *NPSP* 5:177.

Furthermore, in his exposition of John 8:58, Spurgeon demonstrated his belief that the Gospels displayed Christ's divinity. "Here he [Jesus] claims his Deity to the fullest extent," maintained Spurgeon, "and those who can read the New Testament, and profess to believe it, and yet not see Christ as a claimant of Deity, must be sinfully blind."³⁰ Not only so, Spurgeon argued that the preservation of Christ's divine attributes could also be seen in the Gospel narratives. He added,

Tell me one attribute of God that you say is not manifest in Jesus; and your ignorance shall be to me the reason why you have not seen it to be so. The whole of God is glorified in Christ; and though some part of the name of God is written in the material universe, it is best read in Him who was the Son of man, and also the Son of God.³¹

In this statement, Spurgeon's concern with the preservation of Christ's unity with the Father is seen. The Father and the Son must be united together, he believed, or else the Son, who claimed to be God, becomes a liar and the Father, who sent his Son, becomes a failure. Spurgeon understood that Jesus Christ possessed all the privileges associated with being fully God, thus allowing him to perform miracles and other supernatural feats.

In his first sermon in the New Park Street Chapel, Spurgeon spoke to the immutability of Christ in a language reminiscent of that of Chalcedon. He preached, God "never has been changed in his essence, not even by his incarnation—he remains everlastingly, eternally, the one unchanging God, the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither the shadow of a change."³² That Spurgeon disclosed the nature of God with the term *essence* reveals his congruency with his orthodox

30. *MTP* 60:215.

31. Spurgeon, *Christ's Incarnation*, 5.

32. *NPSP* 1:2.

predecessors. Furthermore, Spurgeon noted that Christ was “very God, without the diminution of his essence or attributes.”³³ Taking this thought to its logical conclusion in that the incarnate Christ not only retained his divine attributes but acquired new ones as well, Spurgeon preached that Christ “has a double set of attributes, seeing that there are two natures joined in glorious union in one person. He has the attributes of very God, and he has the attributes of perfect man.”³⁴

In another instance, Spurgeon explicitly connected the divine nature of Christ to the identity of the Son. “We know how he who died, when but a little more than thirty years of age, was verily the Father of the everlasting ages, having neither beginning of days nor end of years.”³⁵ In this way, he believed that the same Christ who entered into human flesh and lived for thirty-three years on earth was the same God who created the cosmos, who separated light from darkness, and who parted land from sea. Moreover, the same Christ who walked with his disciples through Galilee had also walked with Adam in the cool of the day;³⁶ the God who was born in a Bethlehem manger had never before experienced birth.

How naïve was Spurgeon about the anti-Trinitarian movements at play within his theological milieu? While his sermons and writings suggest that he was familiar with Catholic, Anglican, and Unitarian opponents, at times it becomes questionable whether or not he correctly labeled their theologies. On the one hand, Spurgeon dismissed Arians as being extinct:

33. *NPSP* 1:77.

34. *NPSP* 2:393.

35. *MTP* 7:77.

36. Gen. 3:8.

But Arianism, where is it now? The pure faith of God has flung it off like drops of rain that are cast off from the housetops, and remain not. There may be some sleeping in the dens and corners of the earth, to hide their ignoble heads, but the heresy is dead for any power that it has in the Christian church.³⁷

However, on the other hand, Spurgeon reminisced about modern resurgence of Arianism in the Presbyterian congregations of Exeter.³⁸ In one of Spurgeon's earliest preached sermons in 1851, he warned his listeners against the dangers of Arianism, asking, "Now are we Arians denying his divinity?"³⁹ Later in his ministry, when he synonymized the terms Arianism, Socinianism, and Unitarianism, one begins to wonder if Spurgeon only possessed a cursory understanding of these theological traditions. At times, it appears as if Spurgeon identified anyone who challenged the divinity of Christ as being Arian.⁴⁰

A discussion of Spurgeon's interpretation of Arius assists the understanding of this claim. Believing that Arius reduced Christ to nothing more than a good man, Spurgeon preached, "There was Arius, he would receive Christ as a good man, but not as God."⁴¹ Far from his Calvinistic sentiment was this presupposition, for "the central truth of Calvinism, as of the Gospel, is the person and work and offices of the Lord

37. *MTP* 59:319.

38. Spurgeon, *Down Grade Controversy*, 11. Spurgeon wrote, "Those who were really orthodox in their sentiments were too often lax and unfaithful as to the introduction of heretical ministers into their pulpits, either as assistants or occasional preachers. In this way the Arian and Socinian heresies were introduced into the Presbyterian congregations in the city of Exeter. The Rev. Stephen Towgood and Mr. Walrond, the ministers, were both reputed as orthodox, but the Rev. Micaiah Towgood, an avowed Arian, was chosen their assistant. The old ministers preached evangelical doctrine, but they complied all too readily with the wishes of their new colleague, and ceased to require a declaration of faith in the divinity of Christ in those who sought admission to the Lord's table."

39. Spurgeon Sermon Outline Notebook 1:71.

40. Spurgeon, *Down Grade Controversy*, 10. In one instance, Spurgeon synonymized Arminianism with Arianism.

41. *MTP* 41:161.

Jesus Christ.”⁴² Elsewhere, Spurgeon continued, “We have almost forgotten the life of Arius and scarcely ever think of those men who aided and abetted him in his folly. Bad men die out quickly, for the world feels it is a good thing to be rid of them; they are not worth remembering.”⁴³ That Spurgeon would be cautious of “bad men” who “sought to rob Christ of his true glory, and reduce him to the level of a mere man”⁴⁴ is understandable given the resurgence of Unitarianism and Socinianism within his context.⁴⁵ However, the question is raised, To what extent did Spurgeon understand Arius?

According to George D. Dragas, while Arius did not believe that Jesus was God in the same way Athanasius did, Arius did allow Jesus to hold his title of God. “The Son may be called Logos, Wisdom, Power of God and even God, not because he is such by nature, i.e. in his own existence, but only because he participates in God’s grace.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, R. P. C. Hanson suggests that Arius’s concern that the Son not be seen as a “portion” of the Father led him to the belief that “the Son derives from non-existence.”⁴⁷ Therefore, it was not Arius’s intent to rob Christ of his glory, as

42. Spurgeon, *Down Grade Controversy*, 10.

43. *NPSP* 4:287.

44. *MTP* 46:159.

45. Socinianism was an anti-Trinitarian intellectual movement that has its origins in the sixteenth-century Italian Reformers Lelio Sozzini and his nephew Fausto Socinus. Socinians refuted the idea that Christ could simultaneously possess two substances while dwelling in one person. There are similarities between Arianism and Socinianism, one being the rejection of Christ’s pre-existent status, but there are also substantial differences. Spurgeon encountered Unitarians and Socinians in his departure from the Baptist Union and might not have had opportunity to differentiate between each tradition’s nuances.

46. George D. Dragas, quoted. in T. F. Torrance, ed., *The Incarnation: Ecumenical Studies in the Nicene-Constantinople Creed A.D. 381* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press Ltd., 1981), 27.

47. Arius, quoted. in R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark 1988), 7.

Spurgeon indicated, but rather to separate Christ from the Father in reaction to the modalistic teaching of Bishop Alexander who too tightly merged the Father and the Son. In this way, Arius sought to prevent Christ from being a “broken-off bit of God.”⁴⁸

Spurgeon’s riposte is predictable in that Christ’s participation in God’s grace alone is not enough to justify his sharing of God’s name. If this were the condition for Godhood, believed Spurgeon, every believer in Christ could claim divinity, for humans also participate in the initiated grace that God offers. Spurgeon believed that Jesus Christ had to be fully divine, and any title that truncated such divinity could not be embraced. His emphases on the person, work, and offices of Christ help explain Spurgeon’s statements concerning Arius’s robbery of Christ’s glory, for according to Spurgeon, the glory of Christy was intricately linked to his power to display such glory. In this way, Spurgeon’s greatest concern was the preservation of Christ’s deity and glory. If the divinity of Christ was threatened, it followed that Christ’s power to redeem his church also came under attack. In Spurgeon’s opinion, this line of thinking was more heretical than the most extreme interpretations of John Calvin, for Spurgeon would have rather embraced hyper-Calvinism “in its most rigorous form, than fall into the anything-arianism of modern thought.”⁴⁹ Although fatalistic, unevangelistic, and far too deterministic for Spurgeon, at least hyper-Calvinism preserved Christ’s divinity, his sovereign capabilities, and his commitment to redeem a people for himself. Even in its mildest form, Arianism could not commit to so competent a Christ.

48. *Ibid.*, 8.

49. *NPSP* 4:28.

Rowan Williams, whose book on Arius prevents Arius from being perceived solely through the eyes of his enemies,⁵⁰ would challenge Spurgeon's belief that Arians believed Christ "was a great man, a good man, perhaps the best of men, but they said that he was nothing more"⁵¹ by gleaning insights from Robert Gregg and Dennis Groh. In their book *Early Arianism*, they speak to the Christ who "undergoes moral advancement (prokopē) by the betterment in his will"⁵² to the end that humans can obtain spiritual progression through an encounter with him. When Christ is seen through this lens, he transcends the status of mere man, and though he possesses a separate and inferior hypostasis from the Father, he offers a mediatory reconciliation with God and humans that culminates in human moral excellence. In this way, Christ is more than a man, for in his flesh he achieves *supra*-human status. Williams would accuse Spurgeon of the same demonization that Arius experienced in his lifetime, a branding that did not fully recognize his theological and spiritual contributions. Williams writes, "The possibility that Arius was religiously serious, that he was genuinely concerned with salvation as well as with philosophy or cosmology, is, as we have seen, ignored by most earlier writers."⁵³ Spurgeon may be culpable of such accusations; however, any reduction of Christ's status as fully God, no matter how

50. Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987), 12-13. Williams writes, "Once we have stopped looking at him [Arius] from Athanasius's perspective, we shall have a fairer picture of his strength."

51. *MTP* 59:318.

52. Williams, *Arius*, 19.

53. *Ibid.*, 17.

insignificant, would overshadow any interest Spurgeon might have possessed in recognizing Arius's piety.⁵⁴

For Spurgeon, salvation must include a Christ who is identified consubstantially with the Father. "As is the Father," he preached, "so is the Son."⁵⁵ On this same point, elsewhere Spurgeon became most blunt. "There is no folly in the world that has in it so much as a do it of madness, compared with the folly of denying the divinity of Christ."⁵⁶ According to Spurgeon, those who challenged Christ's divinity were guilty of crucifying him all over again.⁵⁷

John Briggs's observation that "nineteenth-century Baptists could never wholly forget the story of Arian and Socinian decline in the eighteenth century, and that memory served to foster a suspicion of the intellectual world"⁵⁸ helps to explain Spurgeon's resistance to these movements. His stance against the Downgrade Controversy at the close of the nineteenth century manifested in his submission of seven theological questions to the London Baptist Association. His second question, preceded only by a primary concern for the infallibility and sufficiency of Holy Scripture, stated, "Do you believe in the deity as well as divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, i.e., that he is himself God?" adding the disclaimer, "Note that a man may acknowledge Christ to be divine, as he might acknowledge the Bible to be divine,

54. For a discussion on moral excellence and spiritual pietism in Arius's theology, see Williams, *Arius*, 18-22.

55. *MTP* 7:153.

56. *NPS* 5:269.

57. *MTP* 33:139.

58. Briggs, 74.

without admitting that he is God.”⁵⁹ Since no sufficient answer was given to his inquiry, Spurgeon withdrew the Metropolitan Tabernacle from the Baptist Union, an action that evidenced his concern for preserving the divinity of Christ. Spurgeon’s Christological convictions proved robust. He wrote, “Yes, we preach Christ as God—not a man made into God, nor God degraded to the level of a man, nor something in between a man and God; but ‘the Absolute God of Heaven and Earth.’ . . . If we err concerning the Deity of Christ, then we err everywhere.”⁶⁰

Not wanting to err anywhere, Spurgeon aligned himself with Athanasius, who championed Christ’s pre-existent status. Christ was not a “man made into God” as an adoptionist might claim.⁶¹ Yet, the extent to which Spurgeon understood Athanasius’s role in the Arian controversy is just as questionable as his knowledge of Arius’s Christology. Though he often cited Athanasius’s defense of the divinity of Christ against the claims of Arius at the Council of Nicaea in 325, a closer analysis of Spurgeon’s language evidences that he possessed only a tangential familiarity with Athanasius’s involvement at Nicaea.

The Humanity of Christ

Spurgeon’s resolved belief in the divinity of Christ corresponded to his dogged adherence to Christ’s humanity in that he maintained that Jesus Christ, though fully God, was also fully man. Spurgeon claimed, “We tenaciously hold to the truth of

59. Spurgeon, *Down Grade Controversy*, 98.

60. *MTP* 56:482.

61. Robert McQueen Grant, *Heresy and Criticism: The Search for Authenticity in Early Christian Literature* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 72. Codex Bezae reveals that Adoptionists believed that Jesus Christ’s divinity was adopted at the moment of his baptism when the dove descended upon him (Mark 1:10). The claims that Jesus did not perform miracles until after this event further supported this belief.

the true and proper manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁶² Additionally, he preached, “Let us never lose the firm conviction he is most certainly and truly a man.”⁶³

According to Spurgeon, from the foundation of the world Jesus Christ intended to assume human flesh in order to redeem it from the consequences of sin. Moreover, he preached, “Remember that the creature whose nature Christ took was a being who had sinned against Him.”⁶⁴ In this way, the degree to which God sought redemption for his people required Christ’s total embrace of incarnation, humiliation and crucifixion.

Spurgeon never gave himself to a scientific study of Christ’s humanity, as had Ernest Renan in *Vie de Jésus* and J. R. Seeley in *Ecce Homo*.⁶⁵ For Spurgeon, a Christ who demanded scientific proof was not worthy of the faith required of those who must encounter him in their hearts. Proving Christ was of no interest to the Prince of Preachers,⁶⁶ instead, preaching Christ became his greatest concern. In doing so, Spurgeon sought to fortify the faith of his listeners so that they, like Moses, might develop the gift to be able to see the One who is invisible.⁶⁷ In his sermon “Our Lord’s Humanity: A Sweet Source of Comfort,” Spurgeon revealed his concern for the preservation of Christ’s humanity. He said,

The Son of God is also the Son of man. We none of us doubt his deity, and therefore we shall be able to spend all our time in this sermon in musing

62. *MTP* 21:386.

63. *MTP* 9:698.

64. Spurgeon, *Christ’s Incarnation*, 31.

65. Ernest Renan, *The Life of Jesus*, 1862 (New York: Modern Library, Inc., 1927); John Robert Seeley, *Ecce Homo: A Survey of the Life and Work of Jesus Christ*, 1865 (repr., Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1866).

66. *MTP* 22:290.

67. Heb. 11:27.

upon his manhood, and the joys contained in that truth. Jesus is God; but Jesus was born, Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose again, Jesus is in heaven, *as a man*. He is God and man in one person, but there is no confusion of natures; he is neither a deified man nor a humanized God. His Godhead is altogether Godhead, and his manhood altogether manhood.⁶⁸

Spurgeon's Christ, who is "neither a deified man nor a humanized God," was joined to humanity by "entering into alliance with a nature which did not occupy the chief place in the scale of existence."⁶⁹ Christ could have come as an angel or seraph, Spurgeon mused;⁷⁰ however, it was not on the angels that God bestowed redemption. Instead, the blood of the begotten Son was reserved for humanity to the end that God entered into covenant with a *people* who had rebelled against him, who had deviated from the fellowship that had been established in the garden of Eden.

For this reason, Spurgeon believed that the "Infinite has become an infant."⁷¹ Proceeding from the "stock of David,"⁷² Jesus Christ took upon himself full humanity and experienced the "same conditions as the rest of us, suffering the same weakness, and sickness, and sorrow, and death as we do, for our sakes."⁷³ Divine and human at birth, Jesus was born of a virgin⁷⁴ and "never blushed to confess that He was man,"⁷⁵

68. *MTP* 22:290; italics in the original.

69. Spurgeon, *Christ's Incarnation*, 31.

70. *Ibid.*

71. *NPSP* 3:351. See also C. H. Spurgeon, *Till He Come: Communion Meditations and Addresses* (Albany, OR: Ages Library, 1997), 97.

72. *MTP* 28:195.

73. *MTP* 52:146.

74. Spurgeon's treatment of the historicity of the virgin birth is discussed in chapter 4. For now, it is enough to acknowledge Spurgeon's belief in the literal, physical birth of God through a virgin. *MTP* 30:25. He wrote, "The angel of the Lord thus spake concerning the manhood of 'that holy thing' that should be born of the favored virgin by the overshadowing of the power of the Highest. As to his divinity, we must speak concerning him in another style than this: but, as a man, he was born of the virgin, and it was said to her before his birth, 'He shall be great.'"

demonstrating his manhood through a willingness to suffer as it was prophesied by the prophet Isaiah.⁷⁶ Though fully God, Spurgeon believed that Jesus Christ embraced the full extent of what it meant to be human. “Pain, hunger, thirst, desertion, scorn, and agony,” preached Spurgeon, “Jesus himself has borne.”⁷⁷ Since the punishment of humanity for its sin was eternal suffering and separation from God, reasoned Spurgeon, the plan of salvation necessarily entailed that Jesus must suffer in the place of his people through separation from his Father’s presence. “Christ must be spit upon,” he preached, “for he has taken our sin: Christ must be tortured, for he is standing in our stead.”⁷⁸ Anything less than Christ’s full punishment would result in a quasi-redemption that could not atone perfectly for the sins of God’s elect.

As indicated in his unpublished sermon outlines, Spurgeon’s doctrine of the incarnation manifested in his earliest sermons as a “‘boy preacher’ of the fens.”⁷⁹ In a handwritten outline entitled “Condescending Love of Jesus,” sixteen-year-old Spurgeon recorded the act of the Son of God who, being “rich in glory, authority, power, felicity,” became poor “in the act of putting on humanity.”⁸⁰ So important was this doctrine to Spurgeon’s Christology that, in addition to the many sermons he would later preach on the subject, he also would write a separate publication entitled

75. *NPSP* 4:313.

76. *MTP* 39:22-23. In his exposition on Isaiah 53, Spurgeon summarized the aim of Christ’s suffering: “What a joyous note there is in that sorrowful line, ‘With his stripes we are healed’! Glory be to God, we are healed of our soul-sickness, cured of the disease of sin, by this strange surgery, not by stripes upon ourselves, but by stripes upon our Lord!”

77. *MTP* 23:693.

78. *MTP* 28:83.

79. James T. Allen, *The Man and His Wonderful Message; Being the Life Story of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Rio, WI: Ages Library, 2006), 15.

80. Spurgeon Sermon Outline Notebook 1:5.

Christ's Incarnation on the theme. In this work, Spurgeon spoke to the mystery of God's marvelous condescension to earth by writing,

Where can we find a greater contrast than between God and flesh? Yet the two are perfectly blended in the incarnation of Jesus Christ the Savior of the lost. "God was manifest in the flesh;" truly God, not God humanized, but God as God. He was manifest in real flesh; not in manhood deified, and made superhuman, but in actual flesh.⁸¹

Spurgeon believed that Christ, who from time's beginning planned on becoming flesh, did not merely cloak himself in the appearance of a man, but actually became human.⁸² Spurgeon had no patience with Docetism. "Flesh, and bone," he wrote, "and blood, and heart, that may ache and suffer, and be broken and be bruised, yea, and may die, such is Jesus."⁸³ It was not enough for Spurgeon's God to create a femur; he had to walk on one. Nor was it enough for God to create a lung; Spurgeon believed that he had to breathe through one.

On this point, Spurgeon revealed more than just an academic acknowledgment of the incarnation. His own struggle with physical illness served to heighten the significance of God's becoming human flesh,⁸⁴ and his language concerning Christ's humanity testified to a personal and earnest internalization of this doctrine, a comfort that was, to him, "better balm than that of Gilead."⁸⁵ For nineteenth-century England, where a beleaguered working class populace labored beneath the weight of the

81. Spurgeon, *Christ's Incarnation*, 33.

82. C. H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening: Daily Readings by C. H. Spurgeon* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1994; repr., 2000), 2 February, Evening. Hereafter, this source will be referenced as *ME*.

83. *MTP* 9:699.

84. *Autobiography* 4:115-16. As is recorded in his autobiography, Spurgeon was "a true comforter of the suffering and sorrowing; his frequent personal afflictions, added to his own sympathetic disposition, made him 'a succorer of many.'"

85. *MTP* 23:873.

Industrial Revolution,⁸⁶ any promise to alleviate suffering drew reference. The promise of future resurrection hinged on the belief that Christ consisted of actual flesh that died and rose from the dead. In this way, Spurgeon believed that Christ must be “a man just as we are, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.”⁸⁷ He later added, “We are not among those who spiritualize the incarnation,”⁸⁸ for a ghostly apparition that merely appeared to be in the likeness of man could not suffer the agonies of crucifixion, bleed, thirst, or hunger. A phantom Christ, unable to become flesh, could not offer the blood sacrifice required for substitutionary atonement, and in this scenario, humanity would be left without representation or redemption.

In his 1874 sermon “A Grateful Summary of Twenty Volumes,” Spurgeon reflected on his attempt to preach Jesus Christ throughout the years to his congregation, declaring, “I have preached him to you as no mere abstraction, but as a real Christ. I have not talked of him as if he were a myth, I have spoken of him always as an actual personage, who lived and died, and is risen and gone into heaven.”⁸⁹ True to his word, Spurgeon revealed Christ in the flesh throughout the course of his ministry, giving substantial attention to the physicality of Christ’s pre-resurrected and post-resurrected body, for only a Christ who experienced the austerity of human existence could identify with nineteenth-century working folk, many of whom were disenfranchised and marginalized.

86. John R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Church in England*, 1953, 3rd ed. (Harrisburg, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 1980), 377-78.

87. *NPS* 3:276.

88. *MTP* 28:195.

89. *MTP* 20:716.

The sufferings of Christ also played an important role in Spurgeon's ontological Christology. Spurgeon was reluctant to accept contemporary theological trends concerning a suffering deity. He explained,

I am told that deity cannot suffer. I am expected to subscribe to that because theologians say so. Well, if it be true, then I shall content myself with believing that the deity helped the humanity by strengthening it to suffer more than it could otherwise have endured: but I believe that deity can suffer, heterodox as that notion may seem to be.⁹⁰

Though initially subscribing to the reality of divine suffering, Spurgeon then intimated that the divine nature of Christ "helped the humanity," thus enabling the Son to endure the suffering. However, the question arises, Which of Christ's two natures suffered? A brief recollection of the development of the doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum*⁹¹ assists in answering this question.

In reaction to the Eutychians and Monophysites who taught that Christ possessed only one nature,⁹² Chalcedonian Christology insisted that Christ's humanity not intermingle with or penetrate his divinity, lest one absorb the other and both become indistinct.⁹³ To them, the doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum* conveyed the reality that Christ's humanity, with all its mortal properties, shared equal residence with his divinity, with all its divine properties, in the one person of Jesus Christ, the

90. *MTP* 26:162.

91. "communication of acts"

92. Eutychians believed in the one nature of Christ, with the addition that at the moment of Christ's incarnation, his dual nature became a single nature. Monophysites believed that Christ's divine nature absorbed his human nature; Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler, *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group), 22. For a helpful analysis of Monophysitism, see Roberta C. Chesnut, *Thee Monophysite Christologies: Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug, and Jacob of Sarug* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

93. T. F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 210.

Son of God.⁹⁴ In this way, each nature remains distinctively proper to itself, resulting in the essential preservation of Christ's human and divine natures.

Though John Calvin believed that Martin Luther's "notion of an exchange of attributes (*communicatio idiomata*) [sic] contradicted a proper doctrine of the distinction of Christ's natures because it threatened the reality of his human nature,"⁹⁵ Luther emphasized that Christ's divine nature must share qualities or attributes with Christ's human nature in such a way that they mixed, yet without confusion.⁹⁶ As Bernhard Lohse notes, Luther "adopted the doctrine of the *enhypostasis* to read that the human nature of Jesus Christ has no *hypostasis* (separate existence) of its own but possess it in the divine nature."⁹⁷ To Luther, any effort to divide the person of Christ resulted in Nestorius's heresy. Though asserting the cross-nature and mono-directional communication of Christ's divinity to his humanity, neither Luther nor Lutherans would have accepted the idea that God the Father suffered at the moment of the Son's crucifixion.

Both Luther and Calvin believed that an antiquated ontological explanation of Christ's two natures needed to be replaced. The full significance of the dynamic reality of Christ's presence in the lives of believers must necessarily involve a dynamic presentation of Christ's natures. However, the ways in which Christ's two

94. James Franklin Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine to the Time of the Council of Chalcedon* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2005), 293.

95. Stephen Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 214.

96. Paul R. Hinlicky, "Luther's Anti-Docetism in the *Disputatio de divinitate et humanitate Christi* (1540)" in *Creator est Creatura: Luthers Christologie als Lehre von der Idiomenkommunikation* by Oswald Bayer and Benjamin Gleede (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2007), 142.

97. Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, trans. and ed. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 229.

natures interacted became a point of contention between the two Reformers. Luther stressed the union of Christ's two natures to the end that Christ's human nature was assumed into his divine nature.⁹⁸ On the other hand, Calvin stressed a mutual and immediate participation of the two natures so that, as the Chalcedonians concluded, each nature remained separate, distinct, and true to its own property. The Reformed theologians accused the Lutherans of the heresy of Eutychianism on the grounds that Luther emphasized the unity of Christ's two natures at the expense of their individual distinctiveness. The Lutherans accused the Reformed theologians of the heresy of Nestorianism on the grounds that Calvin truncated the one, unified Christ by emphasizing two separate persons of Christ.⁹⁹ Though a spectrum of viewpoints later developed within the Lutheran and Reformed positions, Luther and Calvin maintained a theology of the two natures of Christ in which the mode of *communicatio* differed in emphasis, yet united in purpose.

Even though Spurgeon failed, at times, to pluralize Christ's *natures*,¹⁰⁰ he did so unintentionally and did not deviate from following Luther on this point in the belief that Christ's two natures shared a common exchange and interpenetration. "What an intimate mingling of the divine and human," he stated.¹⁰¹ "It is my solemn conviction, that the deity co-worked with his humanity in the wondrous passion."¹⁰²

98. Donald K. McKim, ed., *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 54. Lutheran theologian Martin Chemnitz uses *communicatio operationum* to explain how in the Eucharist, the properties of the divine nature of Christ were transferred to the human nature, thus resulting in the consubstantiation of the bread and wine.

99. Torrance, *Incarnation: Person and Life*, 215.

100. *MTP* 27:660. "The faith which brings life to the soul is faith in the person, offices, *nature*, and work of Jesus;" emphasis added.

101. *MTP* 22:714.

102. *MTP* 26:161-62.

Of course, if Spurgeon took this line of thought too far, he might have drifted toward Patripassianism in which the deity of the Father aids the humanity of the Son to the extent that he suffers in the Son's stead.¹⁰³ Even worse, Spurgeon might have committed the crime of *Praxeas* in which God the Father was crucified along with the Son.¹⁰⁴ Spurgeon, however, was no Sabellian.¹⁰⁵ Though the development of *kenotic* theology in the works of Peter Forsyth and others came after Spurgeon's ministry in London,¹⁰⁶ and though Spurgeon did not use the word "emptying" to describe those attributes that Christ forwent in his incarnation, nevertheless, at the heart of Spurgeon's Christology was a Christ who "stooped to shame, and borrow, and degradation,"¹⁰⁷ and who, "in both natures, as Son of God and Son of man . . . must be 'despised and rejected of men.'"¹⁰⁸

The preaching of Christ's suffering would have appealed to nineteenth-century London commoners who experienced the burden of the Industrial Revolution. To

103. Patripassianism is categorized under the umbrella of Sabellianism in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit exist as three separate modes of God. In this line of thinking, the Father suffers instead of the Son during the moment of crucifixion.

104. Stuart G. Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church* (London: SPCK, 1991), 72. Tertullian applied the nickname "praxeas" to one of the Monarchians who believed the Father was inseparable from the Son, and that the "Father suffered, or at least 'co-suffered' (*Compatitur*) as the invisible or spiritual part of Christ."

105. John Henry Blunt, *Dictionary of Sects, Heresies, Ecclesiastical Parties and Schools of Religious Thought* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2003), 510-11. Originating from third-century theologian Sabellius, Sabellianism was a form of modalism that taught that the Father and the Son were of the same person.

106. See John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 61. From the Greek, *kenosis*, meaning "emptiness." This term is used to describe Christ's "emptying of himself" by taking on human flesh, first posited by German theologian, Gottfried Thomasius (1802-75). Later British writers and theologians who developed kenotic theology further include Charles Gore, Andrew Fairbairn, and Peter Forsyth. See James Leslie Houlden, *Jesus in History, Thought, and Culture: An Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2003), 520.

107. *NPSP* 2:381.

108. *MTP* 57:542.

them, Spurgeon spoke to Christ's humanity with imagery with which furnace workers and chimneysweepers could resonate. "If man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward," he preached, "certainly Jesus Christ has the truest evidence of being a man."¹⁰⁹ In an era when bloodletting was a common alleviation for myriad maladies,¹¹⁰ Spurgeon reflected on Christ's humanity in Gethsemane. "No need to put on the leech, or apply the knife; it [Christ's blood] flows spontaneously."¹¹¹ Spurgeon also used this vernacular, so uncommon in nineteenth-century Victorian homiletics, to articulate the doctrine of the hypostatic union.

The Hypostatic Union

The combination of Christ's divinity and humanity proved central to Spurgeon's Christology, for while upholding the union of Christ's dual natures,¹¹² he also insisted on the distinctness of each nature.¹¹³ He preached, "We must not divide the person, nor confound the natures. He is as truly man as if he were not God, and as truly God as if he had never assumed the nature of man."¹¹⁴ Such rhetoric aimed at holding the two natures of Christ in perpetual tension, in a divine dialectic that allowed Christ's humanity and divinity to occupy equal residence. "We shall be wise never to dissociate the deity of Christ from his humanity," he added, "for they make

109. *MTP* 9:699.

110. Kathryn A. Kalanick, *Phlebotomy Technician Specialist: A Practical Guide to Phlebotomy* (New York: Delmar Learning, 2004), 5-6. Throughout the nineteenth century, *Hirudo medicinalis*, otherwise known as the leech, was used extensively to remedy medical ailments.

111. *ME*, 23 March, Morning.

112. *MTP* 22:290.

113. *MTP* 30:26.

114. *MTP* 22:290.

up one person.”¹¹⁵ Spurgeon recognized this was a “complex being.”¹¹⁶ Although Spurgeon never concerned his congregations with the nuances of *homoousia* and *homoiousia*, Spurgeon adhered to a Christ who is “of the same” and not “like” substance with the Father. That Christ the Son of God, who in his hypostasis occupies the essence of “God and man in one person,”¹¹⁷ should sustain his divine immutability even at the moment of incarnation, when “God the infinite, uncontained, boundless, was manifest in the flesh,”¹¹⁸ speaks to a mystery about which Spurgeon never claimed full disclosure. Resisting mechanical jargon to describe the doctrine of the hypostatic union, Spurgeon preached, “I cannot help remarking that in the New Testament you find a disregard of all rigid distinction of the two natures in the person of our Lord when the Spirit speaks concerning him.”¹¹⁹ Moreover, Spurgeon used Acts 20:28 to justify further his convictions. “The Holy Ghost does not stop to dissect and set out differences; but he says of the united person of our blessed Lord that which is strictly true either of his humanity or of his deity.”¹²⁰

Spurgeon believed that Jesus Christ is distinct from God, yet he is also God himself, a Christ who “is not a deified man any more than he is a humanized God.”¹²¹ Both natures of Christ, Spurgeon believed, must fully unite in the God-man, for “He

115. *MTP* 30:26.

116. *NPSP* 3:276.

117. Spurgeon, *Christ's Incarnation*, 34.

118. *MTP* 18:713.

119. *MTP* 30:26.

120. *Ibid.*, 26.

121. *MTP* 33:267.

was not man and God amalgamated. The two natures suffered no confusion.”¹²²

Not only did Spurgeon posit a Chalcedonian Christology in this way, he also believed that this doctrine should result in a believer’s exuberance. “Think of this wondrous combination!” he exclaimed. “A perfect manhood without spot or stain of original or actual sin, and then the glorious Godhead combined with it!”¹²³ Relishing the thought of Christ’s humanity married to his divinity, Spurgeon expressed this doctrine in phrases like “deity espousing manhood,”¹²⁴ the two natures “harmoniously blended,”¹²⁵ and Christ’s divine nature working “in strange union with humanity.”¹²⁶ For him, the hypostatic union held such mystery and majesty that it astonished Christians and non-Christians alike. Spurgeon preached,

We defy unbelievers to imagine another like him. He is God and yet man, and we challenge them to compose a narrative in which the two apparently incongruous characters shall be so harmoniously blended,—in which the human and divine shall be so marvelously apparent, without the one overshadowing the other.¹²⁷

While Spurgeon maintained belief in Christ’s dual natures, his experimental rhetoric again comes under consideration, particularly where he said, “The precious gopher wood of his [Christ’s] humanity is overlaid with the pure gold of his divinity.”¹²⁸ In this statement, Spurgeon’s language appears flirtatious with a form of

122. *NPSP* 1:77.

123. *MTP* 30:28.

124. *MTP* 9:700.

125. *MTP* 23:685.

126. *MTP* 37:247.

127. *MTP* 23:685.

128. *NPSP* 5:137.

Manichaeism;¹²⁹ however, Spurgeon inverted this heresy to imply that Christ's divinity coated his humanity. In other statements, Spurgeon spoke to Christ's natures as distinctively covering one another, using language associated with clothing. "God in our nature," he preached, "one Being, yet wearing two natures."¹³⁰ Though making full use of Puritan allegory in such statements, and also continuing an Alexandrian tradition, which will be examined below, statements like these could lead to unorthodox perceptions of the hypostatic union if they were interpreted too literally. Though Spurgeon offered a dynamic Christology in keeping with the Reformed tradition, his experimental phraseology often lacked consistency and frequently suffered from a lack of theological precision. Nevertheless, his colorful rhetoric, figures of speech, and colloquial vernacular reveal Spurgeon's impulse to stay within the parameters of Chalcedonian, Reformed, and Puritan Christologies while transmitting biblical doctrines in a way that London's lower-middle class populace could easily understand.

Spurgeon did not believe that Jesus Christ was merely God on the outside, as his aforementioned allegory suggests. Conversely, he did not preach that Christ's humanity existed in his interior, for that, too, would truncate the doctrine of the hypostatic union. Instead, Spurgeon believed that Christ's divinity and humanity permeated the entirety of his being without combining the two natures so that they are indeterminable. He wrote, "For, though Jesus Christ was truly human,—and let that

129. John Kevin Coyle, *Manichaeism and Its Legacy*, vol. 69 in *Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2009), 4-10. Manichaeism was a second-century heresy that combined Christianity, Gnosticism, and Persian Magi traditions to claim that Christ's humanity coated his divinity and did not fully permeate the full personhood of Jesus Christ.

130. Spurgeon, *Christ's Incarnation*, 80.

blessed fact never be forgotten,—yet his humanity was in so close an alliance with the Godhead, that, though we do not say that the humanity did really become divine, yet ‘Jesus Christ himself’ altogether is divine.”¹³¹ Though intending to simplify the hypostatic union for porters, factory workers, and common folk, Spurgeon’s phrasings had the potential to cause deviation from traditional orthodox Christologies.

Against the background of an “enlightened” generation that demythologized the miracles, doubted the virgin birth, and denied the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, Spurgeon asserted that human scientific knowledge could not encapsulate the entirety of God’s mysterious accomplishments. The childlike faith, so important to Spurgeon’s theology and rhetoric, stood in direct opposition to the spirit of his times. “It is enough for us to know that the incarnation is a glorious fact,” preached Spurgeon, “and it suffices us to hold it in its simplicity. God was manifest in the flesh of Jesus Christ the incarnate Word.”¹³² Spurgeon’s adherence to *mysterium fidei* characterized his explanation of the hypostatic union and the incarnation, for both of these doctrines required faith in order to be believed. “I wish that I had power to bring out this precious doctrine of the incarnation as I could desire,”¹³³ he confessed. “We speak of it [the hypostatic union] as though we understood it,” he added elsewhere, “but we do not . . . [It is] a miracle among miracles, and rises like an alp above all other mountains of mystery.”¹³⁴ Spurgeon often reflected on his intellectual limitations to explain the “mystery of mysteries” of Christ’s

131. *MTP* 47:51.

132. *MTP* 13:699.

133. *MTP* 12:718.

134. *MTP* 30:634.

personhood,¹³⁵ for “to gaze into this tremendous mystery were as great a folly as to look at the sun, and blind ourselves with its brilliance.”¹³⁶

Spurgeon frequently taught the hypostatic union in his sermons; however, he did not always resolve the Christological tension at play between Christ’s dual natures.¹³⁷ Frequently transitioning from descriptions of Christ’s humanity and divinity to doxologies about and for Christ, the following statement, originally preached in a sitting room to a group of Christians in Mentone, France, showcases the doxological dimensions of such teachings. Spurgeon stated,

In His complex nature He is so mysterious, and yet so manifest, that doubtless all the angels of heaven were and are astonished at Him. O Son of God, and Son of man, when Thou, the Word, wast made flesh, and dwelt among us, and Thy saints beheld Thy glory, it was but natural that many should be astonished at Thee!¹³⁸

For the reason that the person of Christ cannot be understood fully by human intellects, Spurgeon could not be satisfied with merely a cerebral knowledge of the hypostatic union. Spurgeon, who did not receive a formal theological education, never placed too much confidence in the academy, for he believed their professors “to be more dead than alive.”¹³⁹ Not only did he believe that their eyes were blinded to God’s truth revealed in the Scriptures, he also believed that they contributed to the widespread doubt and skepticism of his day.¹⁴⁰

135. *MTP* 24:6-7.

136. *MTP* 38:352. See also *MTP* 35:147.

137. *MTP* 38:352.

138. Spurgeon, *Till He Come*, 97.

139. *MTP* 20:8.

140. *Ibid.*

For Spurgeon, the *telos* of the hypostatic union involved a deepening of faith in the person of Jesus Christ. He preached, Christ's "manhood brings Jesus down to us, but united with the divine nature it lifts us up to God."¹⁴¹ Had Spurgeon lived in the subsequent century, he might have resonated with the late Scottish theologian T. F. Torrance who, in his book on the incarnation, positions the hypostatic union in the same chapter as Christ's reconciliatory work of atonement. Torrance writes,

The doctrine of the person of Christ cannot be abstracted from the doctrine of the divine decision to bestow eternal love upon us, and to gather us back into eternal life. . . . The doctrine of Christ's work of atoning reconciliation presupposes the doctrine of the hypostatic union of two natures in his one person, for the whole work of reconciliation depends upon the fact that *one person acts both from the side of God, and from the side of man.*¹⁴²

With this statement Spurgeon would concur, for both Christian thinkers believed that Christ's manhood allows humanity to relate to God, and Christ's divinity allows God to relate to humanity.

Charles Spurgeon and the Alexandrian School

In this section, Charles Spurgeon's use of allegory will be examined with particular focus resting on Spurgeon's use of allegory as manifest in his ontological Christology. From where did Spurgeon learn to allegorize? One year after his birth in 1835, Spurgeon moved from Colchester, where he lived with his parents, to Stambourne or, as he later called it, "My Grandfather's Country."¹⁴³ Eric Hayden notes that in Spurgeon's day, Stambourne was "a hamlet rather than a village,"¹⁴⁴ for

141. Spurgeon, *Clue of the Maze*, 31.

142. Torrance, *Incarnation: Person and Life*, 184; italics in the original.

143. C. H. Spurgeon, *Memories of Stambourne* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1993), iii.

144. Eric Hayden, *The Spurgeon Family* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1993), 3.

even in 1993, its total population exceeded no more than three hundred residents.

For six years, Spurgeon lived with his grandfather, surrounded with picturesque landscapes and farm life. So influential was this season of his life that in 1891, one year before his death, Spurgeon mustered the health to return briefly to his childhood haunts, after which he published a collection of his reflections entitled *Memories of Stambourne*.

The degree to which Spurgeon's early impressionable experiences influenced his hermeneutic is mere speculation; however, one might wonder whether such experiences influenced his later use of word pictures and allegory. For instance, it is striking to compare Spurgeon's statements of his grandfather's manse, which he described as so grand and full of "devotional tendencies,"¹⁴⁵ with his later interpretation of John 14:2, about which he wrote, "Heaven's preparation shall not be too abundant; he shall make room for those that believe, and because he hath made that room those that believe shall come there."¹⁴⁶ Additionally, the question is raised, To what degree did the streams and brooks that flowed through Stambourne sensitize Spurgeon to images of Christ as Living Water?¹⁴⁷ "To a thirsty man the sound of a rippling stream is music," he later preached, "and to a convinced conscience free pardon is as rivers of water in the wilderness."¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, one wonders if the large painting of David fighting Goliath that hung above his grandfather's fireplace baked into Spurgeon's consciousness a typological interpretation of David in which

145. *Autobiography* 1:14.

146. *NPSP* 3:272.

147. Spurgeon, *Memories of Stambourne*, 3; See *MTP* 50:398.

148. *MTP* 26:123.

he became a mediatorial *tupos* of Christ, dueling against death for the salvation of his people.¹⁴⁹ In one instance, Spurgeon likened the food on the kitchen shelf that always bore “*something for the child!*” to manna.¹⁵⁰ He later used this illustration soteriologically to note that grace is “not meant to be stored up, it must be eaten.”¹⁵¹

It was in the “upper room” of this house that Spurgeon discovered his grandfather’s study. In the early nineteenth century, the windows of this study were boarded up as a result of the window tax, or the wretched “light-excluding tax,”¹⁵² as Spurgeon called it. However, darkness did not prevent Spurgeon from reading the books that were housed in that study—Puritan tomes that had been passed down from minister to minister throughout the years.¹⁵³ It was here, in a dimly lit attic, that Spurgeon first encountered allegory. While Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* reveals a Christian’s journey to heaven, John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* reveals its cost. Not only did these works paint for Spurgeon pictures of the weary pilgrimage of the Christian life, but the very lettering within these books would have invigorated Spurgeon’s artistic sentiment. “Well do I remember certain ponderous tomes,” he wrote, “whose chief interest to me lay in their curious initial letters, adorned with pelicans, griffins, little boys at play, or patriarchs at work.”¹⁵⁴ When perusing the copies of such Puritan books, one detects carefully stippled animals, angels, and other creatures drawn in the

149. *Autobiography* 1:14; *MTP* 50:598-99.

150. *Ibid.*, 1:20.

151. *MTP* 39:522.

152. *Autobiography* 1:22.

153. *Ibid.*, 4:265; *ST* 3:342.

154. *Ibid.*

margins beside key phrases and paragraphs.¹⁵⁵ Spurgeon's appreciation for art and nature are also evidenced in his earliest unpublished journals, one being an illustrated study of bird heads and beaks.¹⁵⁶ The transition from artistic illustration to sermonic illustration and allegory proved effortless for Spurgeon, and his use of figures of speech, metaphors, analogies, similes, allegories, and word pictures became an extension of the appreciation of beauty and pictures found in nature. Spurgeon later preached,

There is something tangible in a picture, a something which our poor flesh and blood can lay hold of. And therefore the mind, grasping through the flesh and the blood, is able to understand the idea and to appropriate it. Hence the necessity and usefulness of the minister always endeavoring to illustrate his sermon and to make his discourse, as much as possible like the parables of Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁷

Spurgeon's love affair with Puritan literature such as *Pilgrim's Progress* lasted throughout the entirety of his ministry, as demonstrated in his *Commenting and Commentaries*, in which he commended Bunyan's commentary on Genesis to his students at the Pastors' College as "allegorical and spiritual" in which "Bunyan's characteristics are very prominently manifest."¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, Spurgeon possessed copies of Keach's *Travels of True Godliness*, *Key to Open Scripture Metaphors*, and *Exposition of the Parables*, and though he relished in their artistic engravings, being

155. Examples of Spurgeon's drawings can be found in the margins of pages 139, 399, 591, 616, and 1307 in his copy of Joseph Hall's Works in the Special Collections of John T. Christian Library at New Orleans Baptist Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana, United States of America.

156. Spurgeon Sermon Notebook.

157. *NPSP* 5:73.

158. *Commenting*, 53.

“in the best style of art of those days,” he believed that Bunyan’s allegory succeeded all the more in rhyme.¹⁵⁹

In 1882, Spurgeon published *Farm Sermons*, a collection of sermons that includes such chapters as “The Sluggard’s Farm,” “The Parable of the Sower,” “Farm Labourers,” “Spiritual Gleaning,” and “Wheat in the Barn.”¹⁶⁰ In this work, and also in the posthumous collection of sermons that were published under the title *Teachings of Nature in the Kingdom of Grace*,¹⁶¹ the influence of Spurgeon’s pastoral upbringing in Stambourne might be realized in that rural word pictures and farm illustrations are sprinkled throughout. Additionally, the use of allegory, frequent in these sermons, allowed Spurgeon to communicate Christ in a language with which farmers, who in nineteenth-century England were “as plentiful as ever,”¹⁶² could readily identify in the reading of his printed sermons.

Allegorizing became a defining feature of Spurgeon’s sermons, owing not a little to allegorical literature such as Dante’s *Inferno* and John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Donne’s *Sermons on the Penitential Psalms*, whose “every line is a pearl,” and R. C. Morgan’s *The Book of Esther Typical of the Kingdom* further stimulated such tendencies.¹⁶³ John Spencer’s *Things New and Old*, written in 1658 with the secondary title, *A Large Storehouse of Similies, Sentences, Apologues, Allegories, Apophthegms, Adagies, Divine, Morall, Politicall, &c., with their feversall*

159. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle*, 29-30.

160. Spurgeon, *Farm Sermons*.

161. *Autobiography* 4:318.

162. Spurgeon, *Farm Sermons*, 3.

163. *NPSP* 3:192, *NPSP* 3:119, and *MTP* 41:564; *MTP* 49:604, *MTP* 53:586, and *Autobiography* 3:7; *Commenting*, 94; *ibid.*, 74.

Applications, was so beloved by Spurgeon that in his personal copy the inscription is found, “The richest book in my library.”¹⁶⁴ For Spurgeon, a sermon rich in allegory provided depth and spiritual meaning to the Scripture, for to his students at the Pastors’ College he said, “An original figure, a noble image, a quaint comparison, a rich allegory, should open upon our hearers a breeze of happy thought, which will pass over them like life-giving breath, arousing them from their apathy, and quickening their faculties to receive the truth.”¹⁶⁵

Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Puritanism must be briefly mentioned for their influence on Spurgeon’s hermeneutic. The Puritans believed that the Scriptures “must ordinarily be interpreted literally or historically, not arbitrarily allegorized.”¹⁶⁶ In their day, it had not been long since William Tyndale had stated, “The Scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense, and that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth.”¹⁶⁷ However, the Puritans did recognize that the Scripture contains useful allegories, and the same desire to rid the world of symbols, so consistently manifested in Puritan minimalist architecture, also created an inherent tension in their interpretation of Scripture between a literal and symbolic understanding.¹⁶⁸ In this way, John Donne could write a sermon on prayer in

164. Spurgeon’s copy of John Spencer’s *Things New and Old* (London: W. Wilson and J. Streater, n.d.) can be found in the Special Collections of John T. Christian Library at New Orleans Baptist Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana, United States of America.

165. *Lectures* 3:4.

166. Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saint: The Puritans as They Really Were* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986; repr., 1990), 145.

167. Quoted in Ryken, 145.

168. Ryken, 145; Simon Brittan, *Poetry, Symbol, and Allegory: Interpreting Metaphorical Language from Plato* (Charlottesville-Londres: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 116.

keeping with a literal interpretive method of exegesis¹⁶⁹ while also using metaphors, allusions, and mystic “extasies in his *Songs and Sonets*.”¹⁷⁰ In his eleventh meditation on the Song of Sol., John Flavel demonstrates his affinity toward allegorizing, and, bypassing Reformation sentiments against allegory, appeals to Augustine’s justification for its use. He writes,

This book is a sacred allegory; the sense thereof is deep and spiritual. Our unacquaintedness with such schemes and figures of speech, together with the want of spiritual light and experience, makes it difficult to be understood; but the allegory being once unfolded, by reason of its affinity with the fancy, truth is more easily and affectingly transmitted, both to the mind and heart.

St. Augustine assigns this reason, why we are so much delighted with metaphors and allegories; because they are so much proportioned to our senses, with which our reason hath contracted an intimacy and familiarity; and therefore God, to accommodate his truth to our capacity, doth as it were, embody it in earthy expressions; according to that of the ancient Cabbalists, *Lumen supremum nunquam descendit sine idumento*; heavenly truth never descendeth to us without its veil and covering.¹⁷¹

This reanimation of allegory resulted not only in the allegorization of the Scriptures, but also of the Christian life. This reflexive allegorization is demonstrated vividly in John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* in which Hosea 12:10 is quoted on the title page: “I have used Similitudes.”¹⁷² In that Bunyan “fell suddenly into allegory,”¹⁷³ his hermeneutic approach to Scripture aligns with those of the Alexandrian Fathers in that “the pilgrimage commences with the materiality of the present world, moves through

169. Achsah Guibbory, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 193.

170. Ibid.

171. John Flavel, *The Whole Works of the Reverend Mr. John Flavel . . .*, vol. 8 (Paislet: A. Weir and A. M’Lean, 1770), 312.

172. Michel Despland and Gérard Vallée, eds., *Religion in History: The Word, the Idea, the Reality* (papers presented at a conference held in October 1989 at McMaster University, Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion/Corporation Canadienne des Sciences Religieuses, 1992), 50; Kathleen M. Swaim, *Pilgrim’s Progress, Puritan Progress: Discourses and Contexts*, vol. 1992 (Illinois: The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 1993), 19.

173. Bunyan, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, xxix.

an allegorical journey, and concludes in the higher, ultimate reality of the Celestial City as Bunyan perceived it.”¹⁷⁴ In his apology for his work, Bunyan justifies his use of allegory with the following words:

The prophets used much by metaphors
 To set forth truth; yea, whose considers
 Christ, his apostles too, shall plainly see
 That truths to this day in such mantles be.
 Am I afraid to say that holy writ,
 Which for its style and phrase puts down all wit,
 Is everywhere so full of all these things
 (Dark figures, allegories)? yet there springs
 From that same book that lustre, and those rays
 Of light, that turn our darkest nights to days.¹⁷⁵

In the same vein as *Pilgrim's Progress*, Benjamin Keach, Spurgeon's predecessor at New Park Street Chapel, offers a similar allegory entitled, *The Travels of True Godliness*. Whereas Bunyan depicts the Christian life as a pilgrimage of sanctification, Keach uses the metaphor of pilgrimage to depict the journey of religion and “the treatment it receives from the various orders of men.”¹⁷⁶ Like Bunyan, Keach similarly justifies the use of allegory in his work by arguing that the Holy Scriptures “abound with them.”¹⁷⁷

The Puritan tradition significantly influenced Spurgeon's use of allegory; however, Spurgeon's familiarity with the works of the Alexandrian Fathers also played a leading role in his hermeneutic. Spurgeon's regular use and quotation of

174. Richard L. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 264.

175. Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, xxxi.

176. Benjamin Keach, *The Travels of True Godliness* (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1829), iv.

177. *Ibid.*, vi.

Origen and Philo reveal his intimate familiarity with their writings.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, Spurgeon believed it was Origen, that “great master of mysticism” who “never could read a chapter but he must needs twist it from its plain sense to make a mystery of it.”¹⁷⁹ Such criticisms are common throughout the corpus of Spurgeon’s work and, as this section will reveal, speak not only to Spurgeon’s knowledge of and interaction with the Fathers, but also to both his continuation of and potential deviation from their allegorical tradition.

Did Spurgeon circumnavigate Reformed criticisms of allegory in favor of recovering an Alexandrian or medieval exegetical approach? The answer to this question necessarily involves three tasks. First, Spurgeon’s understanding of *sensus literalis* will be analyzed with the aim of ascertaining the weight he allocated to the Reformed belief in the literal and primary sense of Scripture. Second, a disentanglement of the uses of allegory, metaphor, and illustration will provide further precision in determining Spurgeon’s use of spiritualizing in his exegesis. Finally, an investigation into Spurgeon’s practice of *allegoresis* will reveal the consistency, or lack thereof, within his beliefs.

How significant to Spurgeon was the literal and primary sense of Scripture? Throughout his sermons, Spurgeon demonstrated the belief that any allegorical use of language must never negate the literal reading of the text.¹⁸⁰ While “allegorical

178. Spurgeon defers to Origen in a number of works, including but not limited to *MTP* 3:161, *MTP* 10:607, *MTP* 53:294, *MTP* 57:85, *Treasury of David* 3:175, *Treasury of David* 5:5, *ST* 2:92, *Commenting* 31, and *Lectures* 1:107. Spurgeon also incorporates the writings of Philo into his works, as seen in the following: *MTP* 9:895, *MTP* 26:450, *MTP* 30:295, *MTP* 33:346, *Treasury of David* 2:468, and *Lectures* 2:118.

179. *MTP* 50:776 and *MTP* 9:292.

180. *NPSP* 6:263 and *MTP* 50:26.

instruction with regard to heavenly things”¹⁸¹ could be located in Scripture, Spurgeon also believed that the literal sense must be recognized fully in order to draw out the proper meaning of the text. In this line of thinking, if one merely interprets the text allegorically without giving credence to its historical veritability, the Christian gospel lacks substance and historicity for, according to Spurgeon, a mythologized Scripture results in a mythologized salvation. In his sermon “Hagar at the Fountain,” Spurgeon refused to allegorize his text because he saw in allegory a departure from the intended subject matter of Gen. 16:13-14.¹⁸² Additionally, in his treatment of Job 28:11 in which God “bindeth floods,” he preached, “Whilst we like not the torturing scheme which finds a spiritual meaning every-where; we would not cramp a sentence into barely literal meaning when a natural figure appears in it.”¹⁸³ Furthermore, concerning the allegorical interpretation of Gen. 3:14-15, Spurgeon preached,

It seems to me that if there was only an allegorical serpent, there was an allegorical paradise, with allegorical rivers, and allegorical trees; and the men and women were both allegorical, and the chapter which speaks of their creation is an allegory; and the only thing that exists is an allegorical heaven and an allegorical earth. If the Book of Genesis be an allegory, it is an allegory all through; and you have an allegorical Abraham, with allegorical circumcision, an allegorical Jacob and an allegorical Judah; and it is not unfair to push the theory onward, and impute to Judah allegorical descendants called Jews. . . . There was a real serpent, as there was a real paradise; there was a real Adam and Eve, who stood at the head of our race, and they really sinned, and our race is really fallen. Believe this.¹⁸⁴

Reacting to the demythologization of this passage, which had become popular in his day,¹⁸⁵ Spurgeon affirmed his belief in the literal interpretation of the Genesis account

181. *MTP* 34:553.

182. *MTP* 31:613.

183. Spurgeon Sermon Outline Notebook 3:186; spelling in the original.

184. *MTP* 36:518.

in contradistinction to its exclusive allegorical reading. Unmoved in his convictions that the book of Genesis “records what actually was said and done,”¹⁸⁶ Spurgeon equipped his students to exegete the primary, literal interpretation of Scripture with such works as J. C. Whish’s *A Paraphrase of the Book of Isaiah* that aided in “getting at the literal sense.”¹⁸⁷ Additionally, though differing from the Arminianism of John Albert Bengel, Spurgeon exalted Bengel’s five-volume *The Gnomon of the New Testament* and revealed his attitude toward historical-grammatical exegesis by quoting Bengel’s appeal to the literal sense of the text:

The true commentator will fasten his primary attention on the *letter* (literal meaning), but never forget that the *Spirit* must equally accompany him; at the same time we must never devise a more spiritual meaning for Scripture passages than the Holy Spirit intended. . . . The *historical* matters of Scripture, both narrative and prophecy, constitute as it were the *bones* of its system, whereas the *spiritual* matters are as its muscles, blood vessels, and nerves. As the *bones* are necessary to the human system, so Scripture *must* have its *historical* matters. The expositor who nullifies the *historical* ground-work of Scripture for the sake of finding only spiritual truths everywhere, brings death on all correct interpretations.¹⁸⁸

Spurgeon’s appreciation of *sensus literalis* becomes further pronounced when it is seen against the backdrop of his criticisms concerning the dangers of over-allegorization. In his critique of I. R. Park’s *Exposition of Zechariah*, Spurgeon challenged the “new” spiritual interpretation of Zechariah.¹⁸⁹ In response to Park’s assertion that “the spiritual is the most literal interpretation,” Spurgeon wrote, “We

185. *Ibid.*, 517-18. Spurgeon pleaded, “I pray you, never regard that story of the serpent as a fable. It is said, nowadays, that it is a mere allegory.”

186. *MTP* 34:553.

187. *Commenting*, 122.

188. *Ibid.*, 16; italics in the original.

189. *Commenting*, 139.

more than doubt it.”¹⁹⁰ Similarly, in his exposition of Ps. 68:13, Spurgeon criticized Augustine’s “witty allegorical allusion” in that the silver wings of the dove represented the obvious letter of the text, while the golden feathers resemble in “inward, spiritual and mysterious sense.”¹⁹¹ Allegories of this extreme constituted unsatisfactory interpretive methods for Spurgeon and distracted from the primary intent of the canonical writers. Reserving exegetical suspicion for the allegorical interpretation of the Fathers, Spurgeon wrote, “So full, indeed, were they in their expositions, and so minute in their details, that at length they went too far, and degenerated into trifling.”¹⁹² Indeed, Spurgeon believed that they were “not always the best expositors.”¹⁹³ The exegetical methods of contemporary theologians of Spurgeon’s day were hardly satisfactory either. In *Commenting and Commentaries*, Spurgeon criticized John Mason Neile and R. F. Littledale’s *A Commentary, from Primitive and Mediaeval Writers*, saying that though, “as a collection of mediaeval mysticisms it is unrivalled,” nevertheless the “conceits, the twistings, and allegorical interpretations surpass conception.”¹⁹⁴

While the aforementioned criticisms reveal Spurgeon’s appreciation of the literal, historical-grammatical sense of Scripture, and while Spurgeon’s consistency in applying this belief is addressed in chapter 5, this investigation now turns to the question, What was Spurgeon’s belief concerning the correct method of spiritualizing? Furthermore, did Spurgeon employ a type of ad hoc allegorization in

190. Ibid.

191. *Treasury* 3:239.

192. *MTP* 50:589.

193. *Treasury* 3:239.

194. *Commenting*, 88-89.

his sermons, or did he seek purposely to develop this hermeneutical approach?

Insomuch as the disentanglement of Spurgeon's use of allegory, metaphor, and illustration will assist in the answering of this question, a brief summary of each will ensue.

An allegory is "a story, poem, or picture which contains a hidden meaning."¹⁹⁵ Such statements by Spurgeon as, "Leaving, however, this primary literal interpretation, we intend to draw your attention to the spiritual sense"¹⁹⁶ and "The spiritual sense is, however, the more rich in instruction"¹⁹⁷ reveal his belief that while the literal sense of Scripture was important to him, it was not the only way to exegete Scripture. According to Spurgeon, the establishment of the literal interpretation of the text liberates the exegete to explore allegorical and spiritual meanings. Spurgeon justified his position by examining the apostle Paul who used allegory in his writings, for he "gives us a precedent for discovering scriptural *allegories* in other places."¹⁹⁸ Using the image of solid food found in 1 Cor. 3:2, Spurgeon indicated that "a careful examination of the context will inform you that one form of strong meat which is only fit for full grown Christians is the *allegorical* exposition of Scriptural history."¹⁹⁹ It was this "strong meat" that Spurgeon identified to be the hidden truths in the text, truths that required allegorical exegeses to decipher. Moreover, when Spurgeon examined Christ's use of allegory and other figures of speech, as in the case of

195. *Oxford Paperback Dictionary and Thesaurus* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 26.

196. *MTP* 61:266.

197. *Treasury* 5:117.

198. *Lectures* 1:109; italics in the original.

199. *MTP* 9:229-30; italics in the original.

Nicodemus,²⁰⁰ he gained further resolve. In this instance, Spurgeon commented, “It is the duty of the minister always to look for these analogies. Our Savior did so. He is the model preacher—His preaching was made up of parables, pictures from the outer world, accommodated to teach great and mighty Truths of God.”²⁰¹

In his analysis of Spurgeon’s Christological hermeneutics, Talbert has shown that Spurgeon believed that certain texts contained underlying meanings that require allegorization;²⁰² however, Talbert also notes that in nuancing his allegorical hermeneutic, Spurgeon “did not make a clear distinction between symbolism and allegory.”²⁰³ To support his claim, Talbert quotes Spurgeon: “The historical books not only yield here and there an allegory, but seem as a whole to be arranged with a view to symbolic teaching.”²⁰⁴ This ambiguity can be seen in sermons such as “Israel at the Red Sea” in which Spurgeon implied that a correct reading of Israel’s pilgrimage out of Egypt should be interpreted as “the coming forth of God’s people from that spiritual house of bondage, that furnace of mental suffering whence they are delivered . . . at the time of their conversions.”²⁰⁵ Spurgeon’s *allegoresis* revealed further esoteric meanings in that the Red Sea was a symbol of “some great and trying providence” such as the temptations of a newly converted Christian, the husband that forbade his wife to attend church or be baptized, the departure from an unethical

200. *NPSP* 3:365.

201. *Ibid.*, 5:73.

202. Talbert, 97-110.

203. *Ibid.*, 98, 63n.

204. Spurgeon, *Lectures* 1:109, quoted in Talbert, 97-98.

205. *NPSP* 2:145.

business venture, or the uprooting of “all your comforts and your joys.”²⁰⁶ About these situations and others, Spurgeon concluded, “There, again, is a Red Sea before you.”²⁰⁷

Like Philo, who believed that Joseph’s coat was an allegory of his personality,²⁰⁸ Spurgeon stood in the tradition of the Alexandrian school of interpretation by allegorizing similarly Joseph’s coat to represent more than a mere spectrum of colors. Additionally, Spurgeon believed the underlying meaning of Gen. 37:3 spoke to the salvation of the Christian who benefited from the reality that God “dresses all his children”²⁰⁹ and was subsequently wrapped as in robes of righteousness. Not only was Joseph’s coat an allegory for salvation, but Spurgeon also interpreted it as representing life itself, for “like the year, life has it changeful season.”²¹⁰ Allegory, for Spurgeon, was not merely an impromptu technique employed in the preaching moment, but rather a thoroughly developed hermeneutic approach that placed him in direct continuity with pre-Reformation exegetical traditions such as those of the Alexandrian and medieval theologians.

For this reason, a closer look at Spurgeon’s metaphor, in contradistinction to his use of allegory, will clarify his practice of spiritualizing Scripture. Given that a metaphor is “a word or phrase used in an imaginative way to represent or stand for

206. *Ibid.*, 2:146-47.

207. *Ibid.*, 2:146.

208. Williamson, 521.

209. *MTP* 41:335.

210. C. H. Spurgeon, *The Salt-Cellars: A Collection of Proverbs and Quaint Sayings*, 2 vols. (Albany, OR: Ages Library, 1996), 2:275.

something else,”²¹¹ Talbert is correct in asserting that Spurgeon used metaphors to illustrate the “broader revelation of truth in the New Testament.”²¹² By observing how the writers of Scripture used metaphor, Spurgeon found justification for his own use of metaphor. Concerning Ps. 46:9, “He burneth the chariot in the fire,” Spurgeon revealed that “the chariot came to be one of the recognised forces in war, and we find it mentioned throughout the books of Scriptures, not only in its literal sense, but as a metaphor which every one could understand.”²¹³

An example of Spurgeon’s use of metaphor is found in his sermon “The Marvelous Magnet,” preached in 1883. Requesting that his congregation abandon their seats so as to allow strangers to fill the auditorium of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Spurgeon exegeted John 12:32, “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me,” by using the metaphor of a magnet to illustrate and represent Jesus’s “drawing, drawing, drawing.”²¹⁴ Spurgeon preached,

You know the horseshoe magnet, and you have seen how rapidly it picks up pieces of iron. Have you ever put a piece of iron right across the two ends of the magnet? You will then have noticed that it ceases to attract anything else. The magnetic circuit is completed, and the magnet rests perfectly quiet, refusing to go beyond its own circle of pure content.²¹⁵

The metaphor of the magnet concluded in the application that the person who finds true contentment and completion in God can rest in the Christ who has an “attractive power”²¹⁶ to pull people into his kingdom. Spurgeon then explained how Christ,

211. *Oxford Paperback Dictionary and Thesaurus*, 582.

212. Talbert, 88.

213. *Treasury* 2:389-90.

214. *MTP* 29:232.

215. *MTP* 29:235.

216. *Ibid.*, 229.

through the power of the Holy Spirit, draws sinners to himself. “I suppose that all of you have felt a measure of that drawing,”²¹⁷ he noted. Additionally, Spurgeon extended the metaphor of the attracting love of Christ to include the love of other individuals who, like nails, were linked together intrinsically due to their common connection to the primary source of power. “All the magnetism comes from the first place from which it started,” he explained, “and when it ceases at the fountain-head there is an end of it altogether.”²¹⁸ Spurgeon extended the metaphor further to include not only individuals, but also nations that are pulled into the proximity of Christ the Magnet. India is a “long tug,” he said, and although the eastern nations “never appear to move,” “Japan is being drawn as in a net.”²¹⁹

In this sermon, Spurgeon’s tendency to expand metaphors resulted in a Christ whose attracting power far exceeds the limits of the horseshoe magnet. In fact, the Son of God is the “great central sun”²²⁰ whose powerful gravitational attraction protected both people and planets from drifting away. Not only so, Spurgeon preached that Christ is also the moon that gently causes ocean tides, like hearts, to pulse and throb with love.²²¹ Spurgeon concluded his sermon in similar fashion to that of Jonathan Edwards who, in his “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” compared the sinful nature of humanity to the raging waters of the ocean that would overtake

217. *Ibid.*, 232.

218. *Ibid.*, 237.

219. *Ibid.*, 232.

220. *MTP* 29:238.

221. *Ibid.*

sinners save the restraining grace of God.²²² For Edwards, “natural men are held in the hand of God over the pit of hell,”²²³ whereas for Spurgeon, sinners drifted downward in ships into a bottomless vortexing ocean abyss, spared only by the restraining nail-scarred hand of Christ.²²⁴

From the outset of his ministry in London, Spurgeon’s use of metaphor in describing the person and work of Christ can be observed. In 1857, he said, “Instead of addressing them [the congregation] in a didactic and doctrinal manner, I shall adopt the parable of my text, and endeavor to imitate the example of my Lord, in trying to make faith plain to those who are but children in grace.”²²⁵ Additional Christological metaphors are found throughout his ministry. The righteousness of Christ was the waves of the sea, “deep as the demands of the law, deep as the miseries of hell, deep as the thoughts of God,” breaking “upon the eternal shore of divine justice”²²⁶ and covering the people of God. Though sins were as tall as mountain peaks, “the blood of Christ was like Noah’s flood; twenty cubits upwards shall this blood prevail, and the top of the mountains of thy sin shall be covered.”²²⁷ No sin was too great that Jesus Christ, the young deer, could skip “over the mountains of our sins, and all the dividing mountains of our unbelief and ingratitude which might keep him away.”²²⁸

222. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of President Edwards . . .*, vol. 4 (New York: Leavitt & Allen, 1852), 315.

223. *Ibid.*, 316.

224. *MTP* 29:239.

225. *NPSP* 3:365.

226. *MTP* 11:46.

227. *NPSP* 4:470.

228. *MTP* 56:94.

Though “pools and cisterns dry up,”²²⁹ the river of Christ trickled into eternity, a well of cool water from which sinners quench their thirst.²³⁰ Like the street fountains that laced nineteenth-century London, Christ was “open to every thirsty wanderer,”²³¹ and “to live on Christ is like drinking sea-water, the more ye drink the more thirsty ye grow.”²³² An arrow that was “shot from the bow of destiny,” such was the love of Christ, for “it flies, it flies, and heaven itself cannot change its course.”²³³ Additionally, Spurgeon pictured Christ as a flame “upon the altar which never went out,”²³⁴ a “sweet perfume in a box,”²³⁵ and a steel engraving that “is deeply cut, and cannot be easily erased.”²³⁶

Spurgeon also used familial metaphors to describe the Son of God. Christ was a brother who, being “born for adversity,”²³⁷ entered into the family of humanity.²³⁸ He was a son—of God, of Man, of Judah, of David;²³⁹ a bridegroom who, in eager expectation, awaited the eschatological moment when God’s people would forever

229. *MTP* 21:391.

230. *MTP* 62:199.

231. *NPSP* 5:288.

232. *MTP* 9:635.

233. *MTP* 7:132.

234. *MTP* 12:472.

235. *MTP* 9:429.

236. *MTP* 48:415.

237. C. H. Spurgeon, *Around the Wicket Gate; Or, A Friendly Talk with Seekers concerning Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ* (originally published by Passmore & Alabaster, n.d.; repr., Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1992), 104.

238. *MTP* 39:450.

239. *MTP* 20:88-89.

enjoy company with Christ;²⁴⁰ and a husband who was “married to every believing heart, united with us in a conjugal union which never can be broken by divorce.”²⁴¹ In one instance, Spurgeon attributed to Christ the concomitant roles of brother and father: “There is a sense,” he explained, “in which he is our Father also, and he exercises towards his poor, downcast children a father’s pity and care.”²⁴²

The aforementioned metaphors are not dissimilar to the “I am” statements Spurgeon encountered in the Gospel of John in which Christ is the “Light of the World,” or as Spurgeon rendered it, the “Sun of righteousness”²⁴³ that illuminated the hearts of God’s people and shed light onto wickedness. He is the “Living Bread,” the holy manna that was sent by God to nourish weary pilgrims with eternal life.²⁴⁴ Jesus is the “Door,” the “way of access to God”²⁴⁵ that is still open²⁴⁶ and “is wide enough to let the biggest sinner come through.”²⁴⁷ Furthermore, Christ is the “Good Shepherd” who knows his sheep,²⁴⁸ who watches over²⁴⁹ and defends his flock in times of need.²⁵⁰ Christ is also the “True Vine” that grows in the garden of the

240. *MTP* 49:80.

241. *MTP* 48:5.

242. *MTP* 53:7.

243. John 8:12; *MTP* 56:380.

244. John 6:51; *MTP* 56:180 and *MTP* 11:124.

245. John 10:9; *MTP* 44:352.

246. *MTP* 26:132.

247. *MTP* 39:81.

248. John 10:11; *MTP* 56:156.

249. *MTP* 58:574.

250. *MTP* 56:155.

Father²⁵¹ and whose branches form the authentic church.²⁵² While Spurgeon felt liberty to exhaust every conceivable image to describe Jesus Christ, he also realized the endlessness of using metaphors. He asked his congregation, “Is he both Shepherd and Door? Yes, and many other figures meet in him; all creation cannot set him forth completely. We may multiply all the types and symbols and analogies of nature, and yet not fully picture our Lord Jesus Christ.”²⁵³

Speaking to the degree of literality that should be observed in his metaphors, Spurgeon understood that the strength of a metaphor is found in its communication of one or two primary points. For instance, in his sermon “Examination Before Communion,” Spurgeon discussed transubstantiation and the literality of metaphor. He preached,

Our Lord could not possibly have meant that the bread was his body, for there was his body sitting whole and entire at the table; and they would have been astonished beyond measure if they had understood him literally. But they did not do so, for they were well used too the Oriental custom of leaving out the word for “like”, and just saying, “It is so-and-so.” Besides, Christ had also said, “I am the door,” “I am the way,” “I am the good Shepherd;” and there is also that striking sentence, “I am the rose of Sharon.” No idiot ever understood these passages literally; and those are more foolish than idiots who render literally these words: “This is my body.” They are wickedly, and wantonly, and wilfully foolish, in thus misrepresenting our Savior’s meaning.²⁵⁴

However sincere Spurgeon might have been in his desire to retain balance in his belief in the literality of metaphors, the same effectiveness that came with using such figures of speech to describe theological doctrines also risked being interpreted too literally by the audience with whom figures of speech best resonated. This tendency

251. John 15:1; *MTP* 29:14.

252. *MTP* 52:273.

253. *MTP* 40:214.

254. *MTP* 46:527.

occasionally jeopardized Spurgeon's theological precision and consequently risked departure from Chalcedonian Christological teachings.

While a discussion of Spurgeon's use of metaphors is continued in greater detail in relationship to his Old Testament typology in chapter 4, presently, an accurate portrayal of Spurgeon's scriptural spiritualizing must take into account the differences between his use of metaphors and his use of allegory. While metaphors and other figures of speech often served as biblical illustrations for his arguments, they need not be confused with the underlying allegorical hermeneutic at play beneath Spurgeon's exegesis, as seen in his sermon "How to Read the Bible." He preached,

For instance, when our Lord himself would explain to us what faith was, he sent us to the history of the brazen serpent; and who that has ever read the story of the brazen serpent has not felt that he has had a better idea of faith through the picture of the dying snake-bitten persons looking to the serpent of brass and living, than from any description which even Paul has given us, wondrously as he defines and describes.²⁵⁵

The third and final aspect of Spurgeon's continuity with Alexandrian and medieval hermeneutics involves the question, To what degree did Spurgeon apply the allegorical restrictions he set for his students? In answering this question, Morden posits, "One is tempted to conclude that he [Spurgeon] overstepped the bounds he set for his own students on a number of occasions."²⁵⁶ Is this accusation warranted?

The clearest account of Spurgeon's *allegoresis*, and particularly his criticisms of and continuity with the Alexandrian tradition, is found in a lecture he gave to his students entitled, "On Spiritualizing."²⁵⁷ In this lecture, Spurgeon revealed his understanding of inappropriate methods of allegorizing. For instance, he did not

255. *MTP* 25:632.

256. Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 123.

257. *Lectures* 1:102-16.

approve of the *degree* to which Origen, “that great master of mysticism,”²⁵⁸ allegorized the Scripture. Though elsewhere Spurgeon lauded Origen’s commentary on Genesis,²⁵⁹ he generally believed that Origen “exceeded what can be regarded as wise interpretation in giving spiritual meanings to literal records.”²⁶⁰ Even moreso, he preached, “What can I say that would be censure severe enough upon Origen himself, who never could read a chapter but he must needs twist it from its plain sense to make a mystery of it.”²⁶¹ In *The Sword and the Trowel*, Spurgeon noted that Origen’s practice of allegorizing, though attractive, lacked the resources needed to nourish a soul that was hungry for truth. He wrote, “To allegorize with Origen may make men stare at you, but your work is to fill men’s mouths with truth, not to open them with wonder.”²⁶² Spurgeon cautioned his students at the Pastors’ College never to “*spiritualize for the sake of showing what an uncommonly clever fellow you are.*”²⁶³ Those who fell into this error “did much damage to the Church of God, bringing precious truths into serious discredit.”²⁶⁴ Spurgeon added, “Gentlemen, if you aspire to emulate Origen in wild, daring, interpretations, it may be as well to read his life and note attentively the follies into which even his marvelous mind was drawn by

258. *MTP* 50:589.

259. Thomas Watson, quoted in *Treasury* 1:43, “Origen compares the saints to sapphires and crystals: God calls them jewels;” Origen, quoted by J. M. Neale, in *Treasury* 2:254; Origen, quoted in *Treasury* 3:175; and Lorinus on Origen, quoted in *Treasury* 4:381-82.

260. *MTP* 50:589.

261. *MTP* 9:233.

262. *ST* 2:222.

263. *Lectures* 1:107; italics in the original.

264. *MTP* 50:589.

allowing a wild fancy to usurp absolute authority over his judgment.”²⁶⁵ Despite the over-allegorical perversion of the early Fathers’ exegesis, Spurgeon believed that a proper amount of allegory was not only useful for preaching, but necessary for correct exegesis.²⁶⁶ He preached,

We cannot, however, bring ourselves to think that a good thing ceases to be good because it has at some time been turned to an ill account. We think it can still be used properly and profitably. Within certain limits, then—limits, we suppose, which there is little danger of transgressing in these mechanical, unpoetic times—the types and the allegories of Holy Scripture may be used.²⁶⁷

What were, in fact, the “certain limits and boundaries”²⁶⁸ of Spurgeon’s exegesis? In the beginning of his lecture, Spurgeon acknowledged the presence of those who believed that even the occasional allegory should be omitted from homiletics altogether, citing Adam Clark as saying, “Allegorical preaching debases the taste, and fetters the understanding both of preacher and hearers.”²⁶⁹ Departing from “this learned opinion” for the reason that allegorizing “yields us a sort of salt with which to give flavor to unpalatable truth,”²⁷⁰ Spurgeon then challenged his students to “continue to look out passages of Scripture, and not only give their plain meaning, as you are bound to do, but also draw from them meanings which may not lie upon their surface.”²⁷¹ Such exegesis, however, required qualification. “Do not

265. *Lectures* 1:107.

266. *MTP* 50:589.

267. *Ibid.*, 589-90.

268. *Lectures* 1:103.

269. *Lectures* 1:102, footnote.

270. *Ibid.*, 102-3.

271. *Lectures* 1:102-3.

drown yourselves because you are recommended to bathe,”²⁷² he warned.

Allegories were to be denounced when the audience forgot that the “*narratives which you spiritualize are facts*, and not mere myths or parables.”²⁷³ Furthermore, allegories were only to be used as long as the preacher did not “*violently strain a text by illegitimate spiritualizing*,” “*spiritualize upon indelicate subjects*,” or “*pervert Scripture to give it a novel and so-called spiritual meaning*.”²⁷⁴ Morden, in his analysis of Spurgeon’s allegorical restrictions, is correct in that Spurgeon was “not especially clear”²⁷⁵ concerning these restricted criteria. At the end of his lecture, Spurgeon reasserted, “Guided by discretion and judgment, we may occasionally employ spiritualizing with good effect to our people;”²⁷⁶ however, nowhere are Spurgeon’s inconsistencies so conspicuous as in his tolerance of Bunyan’s use of allegory. Spurgeon said,

Despite this caution, you may allow much latitude in spiritualizing to men of rare poetical temperament, such as John Bunyan. . . . Mr. Bunyan is the chief, and head, and lord of all allegorists, and is not to be followed by us into the deep places of typical and symbolic utterances. He was a swimmer, we are but mere waders, and must not go beyond our depth.²⁷⁷

Spurgeon’s arbitrariness is further detected when such statements are placed beside his criticisms of those like Keach who, in his “laborious treatise” on metaphors, ran “not only on all-fours, but on as many legs as a centipede.”²⁷⁸ Even Gill, for whom

272. Ibid.

273. Ibid., 108; italics in the original.

274. Ibid., 103, 106, and 1008; italics in the original.

275. Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 123.

276. *Lectures* 1:116.

277. Ibid., 114.

278. Ibid., 109.

Spurgeon bore utmost respect, could not escape Spurgeon's criticism for interpreting the fatted calf of Luke 15:23 as being the slain Jesus Christ.²⁷⁹ Whereas Keach and Gill were not excused for their illegitimate exegeses, Bunyan, who Spurgeon believed possessed superior allegorizing abilities and created a "remarkable performance," received Spurgeon's forgiveness for his "far-fetched explanations."²⁸⁰ In the case of Bunyan, Spurgeon demonstrated that exegetical ends outweighed hermeneutical means. This double standard raises the question, Was Spurgeon's exegesis so different than those of whom he criticizes?

In multiple instances, Spurgeon's exegeses of Luke 25:22, 26 reveals that, despite his criticism of Gill's interpretation of the fatted calf, Spurgeon also interpreted the fatted calf that was slain for the prodigal son after his pilgrimage in the wilderness as none other than Jesus Christ. In his sermon "The Reception of Sinners," Spurgeon wrote, "Meat is wanted for the banquet. Let a calf be killed. Which shall it be? A calf taken at random from the herd? No, but *the fatted* calf. . . . Yea, he has given to sinners the best of the best in giving them Christ Jesus."²⁸¹ In his sermon "For Whom Did Christ Die?" Spurgeon juxtaposed the killing of the fatted calf with the reality that "Christ died for the ungodly."²⁸² Moreover, in "The Prodigal's Climax," he additionally encouraged Christians to take hope in the fact that if the fatted calf "was killed for the younger son, it was for you also!"²⁸³ Furthermore, in

279. Ibid., 112. Spurgeon wrote, "Dr. Gill is one whose name must ever be mentioned with honour and respect in this house in which his pulpit still stands."

280. Ibid.

281. *MTP* 20:652-53.

282. Ibid., 498.

283. *MTP* 41:249.

“Prodigal Love for the Prodigal Son,” Spurgeon spoke to the prodigal who dined on the fatted calf at his father’s table as representing the Lord’s Supper “to which we are invited.”²⁸⁴ Although Spurgeon’s criticisms of Gill’s interpretation of the fatted calf resulted in the statement, “Really, one shudders to see spiritualizing come to this,”²⁸⁵ Spurgeon’s endorsement of Christmas Evan’s sermon on The Prodigal Son lacks such criticisms. Evans preached,

The fourth royal command to the servants is, “Bring forth the fatted calf, and kill it,” *i e.*, sacrifice it. Preach Christ as a fiery sacrifice to justice in the room and stead of prodigals, and also as a meat and drink-offering to starving souls. Only one calf, so there is but one sacrifice, once offered in the end of the world. It will remain to form a feast to welcome all the prodigals, and there is a fresh glory bestowed upon the sacrifice of the cross whenever a famishing sinner comes into the church of God.²⁸⁶

In response to this interpretation of the fatted calf, Spurgeon wrote, “The sermon contains some of the finest touches which have ever come before us.”²⁸⁷

In summary, Spurgeon’s allegorical hermeneutic did not circumnavigate Reformed criticisms of allegory entirely, for he retained a deep appreciation of the primary, literal, historical-grammatical sense of Scripture. However, in addition to the *sensus literalis*, Spurgeon also believed that “beyond a doubt, the historical parts of Scriptures are intended to be instructive allegories, setting forth heavenly mysteries.”²⁸⁸ In this way, Spurgeon’s exegesis displayed Alexandrian and medieval characteristics wherein a deeper, hidden textual layer existed. Like the treasure of a

284. *MTP* 37:658.

285. *Lectures* 1:112.

286. *Ibid.*, 274.

287. *ST* 7:271, footnote.

288. *MTP* 9:230.

king that was locked away from the masses, only “a thorough search” could discover it.²⁸⁹

This investigation has also revealed that one might be tempted to accuse Spurgeon of trespassing beyond his self-defined allegorical restrictions, as Morden has posited. Moreover, such temptations are altogether warranted given the similarities between his sermons and those of whom he criticized. In this way, Spurgeon’s use of allegory might be compared to that of Luther who also allegorized beyond the boundaries of his avowed resistance to medieval allegoresis. Nevertheless, such observations must not be allowed to overshadow the ultimate *telos* of Spurgeon’s practice of spiritualizing, a practice that involved communicating Jesus Christ in a language that common people could understand. That faith comes through believing, believing comes through hearing, and hearing comes through preaching constituted Spurgeon’s belief in a preacher’s liberty to use any technique that would heighten an ability to communicate the truth of Christ.²⁹⁰ While setting allegorical parameters for his students, Spurgeon did not place too much weight on them, for his primary concern did not involve staying within the appropriate boundaries of proper hermeneutics, but instead preaching Christ for the salvation of souls. To this end, Spurgeon preached, “I have thus spoken in the form of an allegory. If I have put in some words of pleasantry, it was that I might engage your attention.”²⁹¹

289. *MTP* 25:633.

290. Rom. 10:17.

291. *NPSP* 6:97.

Christ as Pilgrim

Spurgeon's ontological Christology is best summarized as being in continuity with the Alexandrian School with the examination of his highly favored and developed metaphor, that of Christ as pilgrim. Inasmuch as Charles Hambrick-Stowe is correct in that the "principle metaphor running through Puritan spirituality and devotional practice was the pilgrimage,"²⁹² it is the opinion of the present writer that Spurgeon threaded the metaphor of pilgrimage throughout his theology in general and his Christology in particular. While a list of sermons in which this theme surfaces is given in chapter 1, it is helpful to note briefly other scholars who also have recognized this significant aspect of Spurgeon's thinking. Morden offers a helpful study of Spurgeon's use of pilgrimage as an underlying motif of his spirituality, alluding to Spurgeon's indebtedness to Bunyan's use of this allegory. When Morden's research is coupled with that of Donald Ashmall, a more comprehensive picture comes into view.²⁹³

Against the backdrop of the Free Church tradition, Ashmall observes Spurgeon's use of allegory, arguing that that "the constellation of imagery which relates to pilgrimage has become so deeply embedded within the free church tradition that to imagine the tradition without the imagery is well-nigh impossible."²⁹⁴ Both Morden and Ashmall address the motif of pilgrimage in Spurgeon's thought; however, Morden succeeds all the more not only by positioning Spurgeon in

292. Charles Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-century New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 54.

293. Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 28-30; Donald H. Ashmall, "Spiritual Development and the Free Church Tradition: The Inner Pilgrimage," *Andover Newton Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (January 1980): 141-52.

294. *Ibid.*, 142.

theological continuity with Puritan allegorical traditions, but also by implying that this metaphor has further-reaching implications; indeed, Spurgeon admitted that the allegory of pilgrimage was a “framework for understanding the Christian life.”²⁹⁵ Though also placing Spurgeon in continuity with the allegorical Puritan tradition, Ashmall does not extend his investigation beyond the sanctificational implications of Spurgeon’s use of this allegory. Furthermore, Ashmall sees harm in organizing theology around this motif, saying that the “image of pilgrimage is not an all-purpose motif by which all of theological reality and daily experience can be organized; it has been a hindrance to the growth of the tradition that some free church thinkers have attempted to make it so.”²⁹⁶

It is none other than Drummond, whose biography of Spurgeon is problematic, who should be commended rightly for structuring his tome in alliance with the chapters of Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. In Drummond’s work, Spurgeon, who often identified with being on pilgrimage,²⁹⁷ is portrayed as a pilgrim who experienced the City of Destruction and the Yonder Wicket-Gate; who encountered Evangelist, Hopeful, and Faithful; and who finally arrived, after much tribulation, at the Celestial City.²⁹⁸ Drummond cleverly organizes the details of Spurgeon’s life around Bunyan’s allegory; however, this theme has wider theological and Christological implications than even Drummond realized. Indeed, Spurgeon used the motif of pilgrimage catechetically to reinforce doctrines such as election, regeneration, sin, assurance,

295. Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 29.

296. Ashmall, 142.

297. See *MTP* 38:66, *MTP* 16:380, and *MTP* 34:458.

298. Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 31-68, 69-110, 275-332, 175-274, 333-92, and 717-60.

heaven, hell,²⁹⁹ and, as is demonstrated in this thesis, Christ's person, natures, and work.

Pilgrim's Progress became Spurgeon's favorite book, an "ingenious allegory" that was "always as truthfully instructive as it is delightfully attractive."³⁰⁰ Throughout the course of his lifetime, Spurgeon read this book over a hundred times, frequently citing it in his sermons.³⁰¹ So much did he favor Bunyan's allegory that, at the end of his life, he sought to publish a series of addresses concerning the characters of *Pilgrim's Progress*—a feat that his brother, Thomas, had to bring to fruition in 1903 in the publication of *Pictures from Pilgrim's Progress*.³⁰²

Spurgeon appreciated Bunyan's allegory because in it, Bunyan accomplished what Spurgeon himself attempted, that is, the incarnation of theology for the common individual.³⁰³ Metaphorically speaking, Spurgeon clothed abstract theological realities of Jesus Christ with flesh and bones, making them visible and accessible to his audience. To this end, one critic observes that Spurgeon transmitted a "daring homeliness."³⁰⁴ Spurgeon's familiar and homely rhetoric communicated a Christ who sympathized with and traveled alongside lower-middle class workers in London as they sought escape from the horrors of their City of Destruction en route to the

299. *NPSP* 5:133-34; *MTP* 31:110; *MTP* 31:466; *MTP* 26:635, *MTP* 28:624, *MTP* 32:412; *MTP* 26:575, *MTP* 32:173; *MTP* 32:410.

300. *MTP* 29:303. See also *NPSP* 5:73, "The fact is, I do not know of but one good allegory in the English language, and that is, the 'Pilgrim's Progress.'"

301. Charles Spurgeon, *Pictures from Pilgrim's Progress: A Commentary on Portions of John Bunyan's Immortal Allegory with Prefatory Note by Thomas Spurgeon*, (1903; repr., Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1992), 11; See *NPSP* 3:119.

302. *Ibid.*

303. The word "incarnation" here is used in its basic meaning, "to make into flesh."

304. Ellison, *Victorian Pulpit*, 70.

Celestial City. In his sermon “Up from the Country and Pressed into Service,” Spurgeon compared his congregation to Simon, who journeyed to the city of Jerusalem from the rural countryside.³⁰⁵ Such analogies would have resonated with a city in which half of those over the age of twenty had not been not born in London.³⁰⁶

That Spurgeon encountered a copy of *Pilgrim’s Progress* in his grandfather’s attic is not surprising, for, as Frank Turner notes, Bunyan’s work could be found on the kitchen table of every Victorian Christian family.³⁰⁷ In his study of nineteenth-century hymnody, J. H. Y. Briggs notes that the allegory of pilgrimage enjoyed ubiquity. The popularized “Sankey-type” hymns that included “very concrete analogies: pilgrim, strangers and wanderers,”³⁰⁸ along with hymns such as Neale’s “O Happy Band of Pilgrims” (1862) and Gould’s “Through the Night of Dark and Sorrow Onward Goes the Pilgrim Band” (1867),³⁰⁹ further engraved this allegory into the consciousness of the Victorian people.

Understanding how this allegorical hermeneutic tradition survived the Reformation, however, is perplexing. N. H. Keeble notes that, given the acrimonious reaction to the abuses of artistry, liturgy, and papal practices, the Reformed tradition proved anomalistic in its retention of the use of pilgrimage and allegorical

305. *MTP* 31:424.

306. Chadwick, 1:325. Chadwick notes that Victorian generations experienced the rapid transition of an England of villages in 1837 to an England of cities in 1901 (2:425).

307. See *Autobiography* 4:265; Turner, “The Victorian Crisis of Faith and the Faith That Was Lost” in Richard J. Helmstadter and Bernard Lightman, eds., *Victorian Faith in Crisis: Essays on Continuity and Change in Nineteenth-century Religious Belief* (London: MacMillan, 1990), 21.

308. Briggs, 40.

309. Chadwick, 2:467.

hermeneutical methods.³¹⁰ That Puritans appropriated, through allegory, the practice of pilgrimage in works such as Simon Patrick's *The Parable of the Pilgrim*, Keach's *Travels of True Godliness*, and Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, among others,³¹¹ speaks to the thoroughly biblical nature of the theme itself, a motif that surely would have dissipated in this tradition had it not been located in Scripture.

A dyed-in-the-wool Nonconformist, Spurgeon retained the theme of pilgrimage despite his own detestation of papal authority. When examining the homiletical frequency of the motif of pilgrimage in his sermons, one glimpses the ubiquity of this theme in Spurgeon's works. Thus, this present researcher has compared two cross-sections of Spurgeon's sermons, the first from 1855 to 1859 and the second from 1880 to 1884. In the first section, the theme of pilgrim or pilgrimage is referenced or expounded upon fifty times out of two hundred and eighty five sermons. In the second section, these themes occur eighty times out of three hundred one sermons. Apparently, the themes of traveling, wayfaring, sojourning, and pilgrimage played a significant role in the formulation of Spurgeon's thinking and theology.

So ingrained into Spurgeon's consciousness was the allegorical method of interpretation that not only did Spurgeon use the theme of pilgrimage to describe a Christian's "alien"³¹² journey through life as being "with Christ and to Christ,"³¹³ he also believed that Jesus Christ was a pilgrim who, "being in the form of God, thought

310. N. H. Keeble, "To be a pilgrim:" constructing the Protestant life in early modern England" in Colin Morris and Peter Roberts, eds., *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 245.

311. *Ibid.*, 110. Keeble records a number of Puritan sermons/works of divinity in which the pilgrimage motif surfaces.

312. *MTP* 33:657.

313. Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 29.

it not robbery to be equal with God”³¹⁴ and abandoned the comforts of heaven to journey to the world, through the world, and for the world. Spurgeon further illustrated Christ’s pilgrimage by claiming that, like a man who leaves his parents to cleave to a wife, so “hath he [Christ] left the glory of his Father’s house and become one flesh with his people.”³¹⁵ On this point, Spurgeon attached the pilgrimage motif to his ontological Christology.

According to Spurgeon, the incarnation of the Son of God to earth—from terrestrial to celestial—set into motion a pilgrimage of thirty-three years in which Jesus Christ identified to the fullest with the plight of humanity. In this way, Spurgeon’s Christological metaphor anticipated Karl Barth’s own attachment of pilgrimage to the incarnation when, in *The Way of the Son of God into the Far Country*, he wrote, “In being gracious to man in Jesus Christ, [God] also goes into the far country. . . . It is in this high humility that he speaks and acts as the God who reconciles the world to Himself.”³¹⁶ Becoming like Rebekah, the wife of Isaac who “would be willing to go on a long and venturous journey, and be a pilgrim in a strange land with her husband,”³¹⁷ so Spurgeon observed that Christ Jesus became a willing pilgrim, an “inhabitant of the same mortality, wrestler with the same pains and ills, companion in the march of life.”³¹⁸ Even “Abraham, the pilgrim, saw Christ as a

314. Phil. 2:6.

315. *MTP* 9:699.

316. Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, vol. 4 of *Church Dogmatics*, trans. W. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 158-59.

317. *MTP* 37:591. See also *MTP* 34:558. Spurgeon was referencing Genesis 24.

318. *NPSP* 1:77.

pilgrim,”³¹⁹ noted Spurgeon, for only as a pilgrim and stranger in the world could Jesus Christ encourage fellow aliens, sojourners, and pilgrims.³²⁰ Concerning the full humanity of Christ, Spurgeon believed that “the footsteps of the flock are identical with the footsteps of the shepherd,”³²¹ and in no small degree did Christ escape the tribulation of his “sorrowful pilgrimage to Calvary.”³²² Spurgeon further illustrated Christ’s humanity in “The Remembrance of Christ” by picturing Christ as a hungry “wayworn pilgrim”³²³ who, if he pleased, had the power to convert stones into bread. Spurgeon used this image to underscore the belief that because Christ embarked on a pilgrimage in the wilderness, he therefore possessed the ability to edify a weary, peripatetic humanity that also found itself in the wilderness of the world.³²⁴ Because Christ had blazed a trail for them, Spurgeon believed, they could follow in his footprints.³²⁵

An interesting theological and homiletical entrance into Matt. 28:6, Spurgeon’s sermon “The Tomb of Jesus” is unique among his Christological pilgrimage sermons. Not only did Spurgeon lament the “weary pilgrimage, from Bethlehem’s manger to Calvary’s cross,”³²⁶ but he also used the sermon presentation itself to usher his

319. *MTP* 29:644.

320. *MTP* 30:6.

321. *NPSP* 5:47.

322. *MTP* 28:560.

323. *NPSP* 1:11.

324. *MTP* 37:51-52.

325. *Ibid.*, 166.

326. *NPSP* 1:133.

listeners on a symbolic pilgrimage to the tomb of Christ.³²⁷ Like Daniel, who could not go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem but instead prayed in its general direction,³²⁸ so Spurgeon acknowledged, “We cannot set out on journeys, now, to go to Jerusalem on foot—little bands of us together,”³²⁹ but “we will try, if it is possible, by the help of God’s Spirit, to go as she [Mary] did—not in body, but in soul—we will stand at that tomb.”³³⁰ In this way, Spurgeon’s allegory of pilgrimage, and primarily his statements such as, “We are, at this moment, a great caravan traveling across this wilderness world”³³¹ and “To become a believer is to enter upon a pilgrimage,”³³² were throwbacks to Augustine’s concept of the church being on pilgrimage through the world.³³³ In this way, Spurgeon initiated “The Tomb of Jesus” with the following words:

I shall commence my remarks this morning by inviting all Christians to come with me to the tomb of Jesus. “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” We will labour to render the place attractive, we will gently take your hand to guide you to it, and may it please our Master to make our hearts burn within us, while we talk by the way.³³⁴

Spurgeon’s use of phrases such as “Let me lead thee by the hand of meditation, my brother” and “Let me take thee by the arm of thy fancy” assisted his congregation on

327. See also *NPSP* 1:313 and “The Death of Christ,” *NPSP* 4:65-72.

328. *MTP* 32:409-10.

329. *MTP* 27:555.

330. *NPSP* 1:133.

331. *MTP* 26:418.

332. *MTP* 29:62.

333. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 465.

334. *NPSP* 1:133.

its allegorical journey to Christ's empty tomb.³³⁵ Those who were not serious about sojourning were invited to leave,³³⁶ for "if we are true to him, we are strangers and sojourners with him, as all our fathers were."³³⁷

Not only were Christ's incarnation and humanity displayed in this sermon, but Spurgeon also revealed the divine nature of Christ through the metaphor of pilgrimage. "What did you see when you visited 'the place where the Lord lay?'" he asked his congregation. "The first thing you perceive, if you stand by his empty tomb, is *his divinity*."³³⁸ Spurgeon added, "O Christian, thy Jesus is a God; his broad shoulders that hold thee up are indeed divine; and here thou hast the best proof of it—because he rose from the grave."³³⁹ According to Spurgeon, Christ's pilgrimage out of the tomb not only proved his divinity, but it also reinforced the teaching that the dead shall likewise one day be raised,³⁴⁰ for Christ not only pilgrimized from heaven to earth in his incarnation, but he also traveled from earth to heaven in his ascension. This doctrine would have comforted a beleaguered populace, constantly surrounded by disease and death, such as that existing in mid-nineteenth-century London.³⁴¹

335. *NPSP* 1:135.

336. *Ibid.*, 133-34.

337. *MTP* 22:290.

338. *NPSP* 1:139; italics in the original.

339. *Ibid.*

340. *Ibid.*

341. The first year Spurgeon arrived in London in 1854, a cholera outbreak resulted in the death of twenty thousand people. As James R. Moore described, cholera "mowed through neighborhoods" and "corpses rotted in garrets," James R. Moore, "Theodicy and Society: The Crisis of the Intelligentsia" in Helmstadter and Lightman, 158. See also J. F. C. Harrison, *Early Victorian Britain: 1832-51* in *The History of British Society* (Great Britain: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971; repr., Glasgow: Fontana Press, 1988), 69-70; Early nineteenth-century London struggled to manage its ever-increasing population. When the promise of factory jobs drew residents to the city, the slums expanded. Church cemeteries could not cope with number of corpses such that in Enon Street Baptist

Spurgeon additionally used the pilgrimage motif to speak to the Second Coming of Christ. Whereas Christ embarked upon a pilgrimage of ascent to heaven, Spurgeon argued that Christ was also capable of embarking on a return pilgrimage of descent for the purpose of retrieving his pilgrim followers.

While Spurgeon admitted that his ability to allegorize would never equal that of Bunyan,³⁴² his allegorical treatment of Jesus Christ as pilgrim stood in continuity with the motif of pilgrimage that Bunyan furthered in his *Pilgrim's Progress*. Although an exhaustive study of Spurgeon's use of pilgrimage as an allegory for Christological, soteriological, ecclesiological, and teleological doctrines cannot be pursued presently, nevertheless, the use of this theme will be threaded through the remaining chapters as it related to Spurgeon's functional and exegetical Christologies.

In this chapter, the primacy of Spurgeon's Christological endeavor has been analyzed, along with his treatment of Christ's divinity, Christ's humanity, and the hypostatic union. Although Spurgeon's highly charged, anti-Arian language might reflect an unnuanced understanding of Arius's Christology, Spurgeon's primary concern involved the preservation of the doctrine of Christ's humanity and divinity. This theological impulse placed him in direct continuity with Chalcedonian Christology in which Christ was co-equal with God.

Particular attention has been given to Spurgeon's experimental use of language in conveying his Chalcedonian Christology. While Spurgeon's rhetoric contained metaphor, vivid descriptions, and colorful idioms, this chapter has revealed that his vernacular was not without weakness. As demonstrated, his colloquialisms

Church, the floor "was bare planks dividing the congregation from the mounds of skeletons beneath," Chadwick, 1:326.

342. *MTP* 26:544.

did, at times, become theologically inexact and imprecise and, if taken in isolation from the corpus of his theology or if taken too literally, could allow for an interpretive maneuverability that risked deviation from orthodox Christological teaching on Christ's natures and person. Furthermore, Spurgeon's inconsistencies concerning *allegoresis* reveal that, on occasion, Spurgeon did not practice what he preached concerning acceptable criteria of allegorical interpretation.

That Spurgeon returned to Alexandrian and medieval hermeneutics in his recovery of the spiritual sense of Scripture is demonstrated throughout his sermons in which he revealed an underlying allegorical method similar to those used by Origen, Clement, Cassian, and Bernard of Clairvaux. Inasmuch as Spurgeon communicated Christ in the vernacular of nineteenth-century Britain through the use of figures of speech, he continued the reformational sentiment that Scripture must be translated into the language of the common people, and he succeeded in offering an *ultra-*dynamic Christology that portrayed Jesus Christ as a pilgrim, traveling beside London commoners. In doing so, Spurgeon's ontological Christological contribution is felt in his transmission of a theology that is robustly Chalcedonian, and in a style that is allegorically Alexandrian.

CHAPTER 3

THE WORK OF CHRIST: FUNCTIONAL CHRISTOLOGY

In the previous chapter, Spurgeon's ontological Christology was analyzed, in addition to the experimental rhetoric he utilized to describe the relationship between Christ's humanity and divinity. However, insomuch as Christ's *doing* is an extension of his *being*, a study of Spurgeon's Christology would be incomplete without exploring Christ's functionality. "When the preacher has laid a good solid foundation by preaching the person of Christ and the Messiahship of Christ," argued Spurgeon, "he must go on to preach *the work of Christ*."¹ To this end, Christ's divine offices of prophet, priest, and king are analyzed in this chapter, in addition to the motif of pilgrimage as it relates to the *munus triplex*.

Toward an Organized Doctrine of Christ's Threefold Office

In keeping with Chalcedonian Christology, Spurgeon believed that the two natures of Jesus Christ combined to the end that the person of Christ must be understood in his totality. For him, this involved recognizing both his divine and human natures, and also his divine offices. "Our Lord is not to be divided and parcelled out," Spurgeon said. "You must have him altogether or not at all, you must admit him in all his offices, or he will not come under your roof."² With fumes of Socinianism in the air, Spurgeon intentionally maintained belief in ontological and

1. *MTP* 56:483.

2. *MTP* 12:16.

functional Christological unity so that no one could accuse him of preaching a “narrow Saviour”³ whose natures and offices could be brought together yet not fully integrated.

With language similar to that which he used to describe the ontological union of Christ’s humanity and divinity, Spurgeon emphasized the interdependent relationship of prophet to priest and priest to king. “You cannot have the Priest unless you will also have the Prophet, nor can he be your Prophet unless he also becomes your King.”⁴ For Spurgeon, the Lamb of God must be eaten in its entirety, or not at all. A priest becomes worthless without a prophet for the reason that priestly activities find fulfillment in prophecy. Furthermore, he believed that as a prophet, Christ must become king because the kingship of Christ had been prophesied. Circular as it might have been, Spurgeon’s line of thinking ensured a “whole Christ in undivided honour.”⁵ According to Spurgeon, the offices of Christ not only interlocked, but they also buttressed one another in such a way that he preached, “He [Christ] is better than Moses, for his hands never grow feeble; and if the prophetic hand of Jesus should grow weak, there is his priestly office, like Aaron, to bear up one hand, and his princely office, like Hur, a prince, to bear up the other; and so the three together, prophet, priest, and king.”⁶

Spurgeon’s struggle to achieve linguistic clarity concerning the doctrine of Christ’s threefold office is no less arduous in this instance than in his struggle to

3. *MTP* 15:4.

4. *MTP* 41:161-62.

5. *Ibid.*, 162.

6. *MTP* 12:539.

convey the relationship of Christ's humanity to his divinity. "In his wondrous complex nature he is God and man," he concluded. "He is prophet, priest, and king"⁷ who is "anointed in a threefold sense"⁸ and assumes a "rare conjunction"⁹ of his offices.

Spurgeon's search for colloquial analogies to make Christ's functionality clearer deserves attention. Alluding to Ps. 45:8, he exhorted, "Triumph in him [Christ], in all his garments, for they all smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia."¹⁰ Clever in his connection of spice to Christological office, Spurgeon used his knowledge that cassia was a chief ingredient in the anointing of priests,¹¹ and that kings were embalmed with myrrh, to reinforce his comparison. Elsewhere, Spurgeon continued his analogy: "'All' his garments are thus fragrant. . . . We delight as much in his purple of dominion as in the white linen of his priesthood, his mantle as our prophet is as dear to us as his seamless coat as our friend."¹²

Similar to Spurgeon's comparison in chapter 2 of the gold of Christ's divinity overlaying the wood of Christ's humanity, here, again, theological precision is brought into focus. In donning the office of prophet, for instance, one may reason that Christ only possessed an external office that was incapable of permeating the entirety of his being. Was Christ a prophet, or did he merely prophesy? Was he a priest, or did he merely perform priestly duties? Elsewhere, Spurgeon maintained that Christ indeed

7. *MTP* 31:444.

8. *MTP* 22:899.

9. *MTP* 17:701.

10. *MTP* 8:331.

11. Lev. 21:10

12. *Treasury* 2:355.

was a prophet, and “shall be prophet for ever.”¹³ Likewise, he posited that Christ is the Great High Priest who continues to intercede for his people. He did not merely cloak himself with his offices, but rather he was saturated with them through and through.

Spurgeon’s analogy also raises questions of modality. Did Christ wear all three offices simultaneously? Did he, in similar manner to the Monarchians and Eutychians, who taught that Christ modalistically exchanged natures, replace one garb with the next? In light of Spurgeon’s statement that Christ “*has come* to be a Prophet, Priest, and King,”¹⁴ one might postulate that Christ was once a prophet, and afterward put on his priestly garb. Though analogies of this kind are useful in condensing difficult teachings into palatable concepts, they also raise fundamental theological questions that, if stretched or taken out of context, might deviate from the Chalcedonian Christological orthodoxy that Spurgeon sought to convey.

Spurgeon worked out his Christology in a soteriological context, for through the person and work of Christ, humanity achieves redemption from sin and reconciliation with God. However, unlike nineteenth-century theologians Albrecht Ritschl and Wilhelm Herrmann, who did not speak to Christ’s divinity “except in so far as it is a function of the believer’s experience of his life,”¹⁵ Spurgeon never collapsed Christology entirely into soteriology. While Christ’s person and work were actualized in the salvation of sinners, and Spurgeon rarely preached Christ without extending an invitation of salvation, studying Christ for his own individual merits

13. *MTP* 25:34.

14. *MTP* 41:161; emphasis added.

15. Colin E. Gunton, *Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology* (London: SPCK, 1997), 27-28.

found significance, for Spurgeon, to the end that Christ, apart from humanity, dwells in eternal, intra-Trinitarian interdependency with the Father and the Spirit.

In chapter 2, Spurgeon's interaction with the doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum* was analyzed in his statement concerning the capacity of deity to suffer. For Spurgeon, the same "penetrating" attributes that allowed the Son to be both God and sufferer at the same time also allow Christ to hold simultaneous offices of prophet, priest, and king. If Luther and Calvin offered a dynamic presentation of the doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum* by pushing it toward its logical *telos* in the action of Christ's mediatorial work as redeemer and reconciler, Spurgeon offered an *ultra*-dynamic Christology in which the threefold office of Christ fosters fervent spiritual vitality, soteriological depth, and pneumatological power. To Spurgeon, "the word of God is not frozen: divine truth is not turned into an iceberg;"¹⁶ rather, it "softens and melts, and warms the heart."¹⁷ Static, mechanical ontology could not save anyone, nor could it communicate the Christ that Spurgeon encountered personally and experientially. In this way, Spurgeon concurred with Calvin concerning the "coldness" of patristic Christology, for such teachings brought to mind "professors who for evermore spoke about 'the truth,' but seemed little careful about following 'the way' or exhibiting 'the life.'"¹⁸

Abstract theological principles aside, Spurgeon perceived the divine offices as a source of profound spiritual nourishment. In response to what he believed to be the divorcing of knowledge from application, he said, "It is one thing to be a fluent talker

16. *MTP* 33:695.

17. *Treasury* 1:231.

18. *MTP* 27:194. In this context, Spurgeon was speaking against Antinomians.

about theological truths, but it is quite another thing to know Christ personally.”¹⁹ A Christology that did not have at its core a living, active Christ had no place in Spurgeon’s theology.

In *ultra*-dynamic terms, Spurgeon spoke to the ways in which the believer perceives the threefold office of Christ. Beholding Christ in his offices requires a personal relationship with Christ in which it is not enough merely to know that Christ is prophet, priest, and king; one must experience his prophecy, atonement, and rule. This doctrine is not perceivable immediately in the life of the regenerate believer, but rather is realized progressively. True believers realize Christ as prophet, priest, and king through an exercise of spiritual maturity in which the Holy Spirit and the Holy Scripture play central roles.²⁰ For Spurgeon, both Word and Spirit were vital to understanding the accomplishment of Christ’s activity in his offices.

Leading up to the middle of the seventeenth century, the doctrine of Christ’s threefold office had been haphazardly addressed by the Church Fathers and by medieval theologians, relatively organized by Reformed and Lutheran traditions, and further developed by English Puritans such as John Owen. However, in 1644, a significant paradigm shift occurred. No longer was the *munus triplex* understood merely as a subcategory of Christology; rather, in the 1644 *London Baptist Confession of Faith*, every major category of theology found relevance to this doctrine in such a way that Holy Scripture, the atonement, and eschatology became viewed through the prism of Christ’s divine offices of prophet, priest, and king. Separatist writings such as the *True Confession of the Faith* of 1596 contributed

19. *MTP* 47:138.

20. *MTP* 50:520; italics in the original.

greatly to the formation of this confession. Although its primary purpose entailed allowing individual congregations to ordain and excommunicate their own ministers, its formation of the threefold offices of Christ played a significant role in the *Baptist Confession*.²¹

In the *1644 London Baptist Confession of Faith*, the first seven clauses speak to God the Father in relation to the Son and the Holy Spirit's being undivided, immutable, and sovereign, and to humanity, its fallen sinful condition, and the redemption that comes from God's free grace and mercy.²² The eighth through thirteenth clauses introduce the offices of Christ in soteriological terms. Christ's prophetic office relieves human ignorance of God, "whereof they stand in infinite necessity of;" Christ's priestly office takes into consideration "alienation from God" and allows for reconciliation with God; and Christ's kingly office recognizes "our utter disability to return to him" and assists and governs his creatures through his power.²³ Beginning with clause fourteen, however, these offices become not only an *organized* principle as they had been understood in the past, but also an *organizing* principle through which all theology may be perceived and structured.

In this way, Christ's prophet office aids the gift of faith, being the "Gospel which is to be preached to all men as the ground of faith," as such that "they come to see, know, and believe the truth of the Scriptures."²⁴ Christ's prophetic office involves

21. E. Jeffrey Mask, *At Liberty under God: Toward a Baptist Ecclesiology* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1997), 33; Stephen R. Holmes, "Baptists and the Bible," *Baptist Quarterly*, 43, no. 7 (July 2010):419.

22. *London Baptist Confession of Faith A.D. 1644 . . .*, (London: Matthew Simmons, 1644, clauses 1-4 and 5-7.

23. *Ibid.*, clause 14.

24. *Ibid.*, clauses 21-22.

the mediation and application of Scripture to the end that all matters of the Christian life such as worship, faith, obedience and other duties that are “contained in the Canonical Scriptures” are seen in the context of the “Nature and Office of Christ, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen to the praise of God.”²⁵ Under the umbrella of Christ’s priestly office, justification by faith becomes possible through the atoning work of the Christ who provides “the great privilege of that new Covenant, peace with God, and reconciliation.”²⁶ In this way, Christ was “Priest, Sacrifice and Altar” and “hath appeared once to put away sin by the offering and sacrifice of himself.”²⁷ Christ’s kingly office speaks to the eschatology of his kingdom that shall be “fully perfected when he shall the second time come in glory to reign among his Saints.”²⁸ Furthermore, God “shall put down all rule and authority under his [Christ’s] feet, that the glory of the Father may be full and perfectly manifested in his Son” to the end that the elect shall “reign with Christ” in the resurrection of their bodies.”²⁹

Spurgeon, who often utilized a technique of particular luminosity in his sermons,³⁰ permitted the doctrine of the threefold offices of Christ to explain or expound upon Scripture, the atonement, and eschatology in his sermon “True Learning.” In this way, the prophetic office exposes the revealed truth of God, that is, what God has disclosed in his Word about his Son. Jesus Christ reveals to humanity

25. *Ibid.*, articles 7-8.

26. *London Baptist Confession*, article 30.

27. *Ibid.*, articles 17-18.

28. *Ibid.*, clause 20.

29. *Ibid.*, clause 20 and article 40.

30. The phrase “particular luminosity” speaks to Spurgeon’s ability to communicate doctrines through brief biblical texts. For example, one of Spurgeon’s finest presentations on the doctrine of the humanity of Christ is found in his sermon on the shortest sentence in the Scripture, “Jesus Wept,” *MTP* 35:337-48. See also his doctrine of the atonement in his sermon “The Blood,” *NPSP* 5:25-32.

the Father and also reveals the “condition of our hearts to us”³¹ through the revelation of his word. In the priestly office of Christ, the doctrine of reconciliation is exposed, being such that “God has seen the blood, and has passed over us,”³² having found satisfaction for sin in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Likewise, in Christ’s kingly office, a doctrine of eschatology is seen in that God’s saints forever will submit to his sovereignty, having “bowed our willing neck to his gracious rule, and we can feel him reigning over our stubborn but subdued lusts.”³³ Spurgeon expounded on these themes in other sermons, too, as is demonstrated in later sections of this chapter; nevertheless, this sermon reveals the significant role that the Particular Baptist tradition played not only in the content of Spurgeon’s doctrine of the threefold office of Christ, but also in the way in which Spurgeon interpreted other theological realities in its light.

The Westminster Confession,³⁴ which was later revised by English Congregationalists under the title *The Savoy Declaration* (1658), became the inspiration for the Baptist *Second London Confession of Faith* (1689). Chapter 8 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* speaks to the *munus triplex* in that “it pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man, the Prophet, Priest, and King.”³⁵

31. *MTP* 47:137.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *MTP* 47:137.

34. *The Westminster Confession of Faith. A.D. 1647*, 2nd ed. in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), Christian Classics Ethereal Library, www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds3.txt (accessed 9 January 2011).

35. *Ibid.*, ch. 8, “Of Christ the Mediator,” I.

However, with few exceptions,³⁶ the *Westminster Confession of Faith* presents the doctrine of Christ's threefold office less dynamically than had the *London Baptist Confession of Faith* by reverting to the way John Calvin presented this doctrine in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The *Second London Confession of Faith* followed suit, departing from *Westminster* only on subjects of baptism and church government. In doing so, the *Second London Confession of Faith* "showed movement away from some traditional Anabaptist positions and toward that of Presbyterian and Congregational polity," according to Graham Beynon.³⁷

Spurgeon, who aligned himself with the Particular Baptist tradition and often spoke highly of it,³⁸ republished the *Second London Confession of Faith* in 1855³⁹ and commented that it was "a most excellent epitome of the things most surely believed among us."⁴⁰ Of no small matter of pride for Spurgeon was the role of his predecessor at New Park Street, Benjamin Keach, in the formation and composition of this confession.⁴¹ Spurgeon revised it minimally in such a way as to preserve the principles therein contained while rendering it more readable for his audience.

36. Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, ch. 30, "Of Church Censures." The *Westminster Confession of Faith* utilizes the kingly office of Christ to speak to church government and officers, "distinct from the civil magistrate."

37. Graham Beynon, *The Rise and Development of the English Baptists*, www.theologian.org.uk/churchhistory/englishbaptists.html, (accessed 31 October 2010).

38. *NPSP* 1:250. See also Spurgeon, *Down Grade Controversy*, 11.

39. C. H. Spurgeon, *Baptist Confession of Faith* (London: Alabaster & Passmore, 1855). See also *NPSP* 1:313. According to Tom Nettles, this confession was "the single most formative theological influence on Baptist life in England and America," *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity*, vol. 1 (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2008), 36.

40. *Autobiography* 2:160.

41. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle*, 33.

Spurgeon hoped to use confessions, whether from the patristic, Reformation, or Puritan era, to provide a succinct way for his congregation to “learn” Christ.⁴²

For Spurgeon, it was not enough simply to know the doctrines of Christ, and in so doing to stay within the parameters of orthodox Christology. True learning of the person and work of Christ occurs only in the act of faith in which the believer encounters the Christ who is both anointed to and qualified for his divine offices. Furthermore, Spurgeon maintained that only this kind of Christ could be the prophet and the Word of God, the priest and the sacrificial lamb, the king and the “King of Kings.”⁴³ Unprecedented was this “teacher, priest, and ruler as was never seen before,”⁴⁴ who preceded and superseded all else.

According to Spurgeon, there have been prophets like Melchizedek who have also been priests, and prophets like David who have also been kings. However, the combination of prophet, priest, and king in one person had “never rested upon any other man.”⁴⁵ He added, “Never did prophet, priest, and king meet in one person before among the sons of men, nor shall it ever be so again.”⁴⁶ Given the weight of such statements, one might be surprised to discover how generously Spurgeon bestowed the *munus triplex* upon others, thereby jeopardizing Christ’s unique ability to hold it. For instance, in speaking about the apostle Paul’s shipwreck in Acts 27, he noted,

42. *MTP* 47:135.

43. *MTP* 20:87.

44. *MTP* 17:701.

45. *MTP* 22:714.

46. *MTP* 17:701.

On board that ship Paul was prophet, priest, and king. In our text he spoke prophetically; for he declared to them their perfect safety. He acted like a priest in his prayers for them all; and I had almost added that, in his breaking of bread, he was dimly like Melchizedek, blessing men, and refreshing them with bread and wine. As for the kingly office, was not Paul truly royal? No mortal brow was ever more worthy of a crown. Amid that crowded ship he was more imperial than Caesar, and all on board acknowledged it.⁴⁷

In this comparison of Paul to Christ, one recalls Peter's de-elevation of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration when he sought to construct three equal tents—one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.⁴⁸ The following statement offers no escape for Spurgeon of the allegation of de-elevating Christ, or in the elevation of humanity, both of which are equally problematic allegations: “Albeit that he [Christ] is great, and everything about him is colossal, we, if we follow Jesus, are like him, and in this world we are as he was.”⁴⁹ However, given Spurgeon's continual aggrandizement of Christ, when such statements are taken into consideration with the whole of his writings, they are found to be out of character both theologically and exegetically.

In *The Sword and the Trowel*, Spurgeon attacked John Nelson Darby, an influential leader in the Plymouth Brethren movement. In a sarcastic attempt to discredit Darby and the exclusivity of the Brethren congregations in London, Spurgeon promoted the publication of a Mr. Grant's research on Darbyism. Grant wrote, “Mr. Darby is, to all intents and purposes a thorough Pope, though under a Protestant name.”⁵⁰ Though “the printer was ashamed or afraid to put his name to the written paper,” Darby was a “prophet, priest, and king” who exercised “a perfect

47. *MTP* 55:242.

48. Matt. 17:1-13.

49. *MTP* 55:242.

50. “Mr. Grant on ‘The Darby Brethren,’” *ST* 2:203.

despotism within the domains of Darbyism.”⁵¹ Crippling an opponent with caustic sarcasm was not beneath Spurgeon. However, in this instance, a flippant reference to the offices of Christ reveals more than just animadversive attitudes against Darbyism via Grant. Indeed, it speaks to the great power and authority Spurgeon believed such offices command, having consigned them to so great an adversary.

Spurgeon and the Threefold Office of Christ

Christ as Prophet

In the next three sections, Spurgeon’s treatment of Christ’s offices of prophet, priest, and king, as recorded in his sermons and writings, are analyzed. With the exception of Eusebius in the patristic era, Aquinas in the medieval era, and Bucer and Calvin in the Renaissance era, the doctrine of the “threefold” office often lacked the office of prophet. Hesselink reveals that even Calvin, whom Luther read on this subject, did not include originally the office of prophet in his Catechism, but instead added it to his Geneva Catechism (1541) and *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1539) the following year.⁵²

For Spurgeon, however, the preaching of Christ as prophet appeared in his first sermon, preached in the cottage of Tevershem in which he “earnestly commended the Lord Jesus as Prophet, Priest, and King, and spoke of the love of Christ to him and to all men.”⁵³ Later developments of this office in Spurgeon’s Christology constituted two main strands of thought. First, the prophetic office spoke

51. *Ibid.*, 204.

52. I. John Hesselink, *Calvin’s First Catechism: A Commentary in Columbia Series in Reformed Theology, Featuring Ford Lewis Battle’s translation of the 1538 Catechism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 119.

53. Bacon, 29.

to Christ's sacred anointing by the Father in which Christ received his calling to fulfill his offices. Second, it underscored the function of Christ's teaching and preaching during his three-year ministry.

Knowledge and interpretation of Christ's prophetic anointing originated in Old Testament characters. "We find Elisha anointed to prophesy," declared Spurgeon, "and so is Jesus Christ the prophet anointed amongst his people."⁵⁴ In this way, Spurgeon brings Old Testament occurrences to the forefront of New Testament teachings and allows Scripture to interpret Scripture. By viewing Christ's prophetic anointing through the prism of Old Testament prophetic anointings, the office of prophet acquired additional depth and meaning.

That no prophet anointed himself proves significant in Spurgeon's Christological teachings, and also in his Calvinist theology in general. Just as humanity cannot initiate its own election,⁵⁵ a teaching applied to Spurgeon's own life and also preached throughout his sermons, neither is Jesus self-anointed for the role of Christ and prophet. Rather, he is "Christ anointed of the Father"⁵⁶ and the "Father's own anointed."⁵⁷ If human election follows a "path has all been marked out in the great decrees of His predestination,"⁵⁸ so also was the pilgrimage of Christ, God's own anointed.⁵⁹ In his sermon "Jesus Christ Immutable," Spurgeon showed that Christ did not initiate his own anointing, but rather submitted in obedience to the will

54. *MTP* 15:6.

55. *Autobiography* 1:170.

56. *MTP* 38:267-68.

57. *MTP* 9:334.

58. *NPSP* 5:45.

59. *Treasury* 2:569. Spurgeon wrote, "God himself anoints the man Christ Jesus."

of his Father. “He [Christ] comes not as a prophet who assumes office, but God hath anointed him to preach glad tidings to the poor,”⁶⁰ Spurgeon believed.

The Father’s anointing of the Son occurred after Christ arose from the waters of baptism in the River Jordan. “This is my beloved Son,” the Father declared.⁶¹ Spurgeon used this event to show that through Christ’s anointing, Christ was elevated above all other prophets. Unlike Jeremiah, who initially resisted God’s calling on his life to be a prophet,⁶² Jesus was obedient to his anointing from the onset of his ministry. In his paraphrase of Christ’s baptism in “The Voice from the Cloud and the Voice of the Beloved,” Spurgeon pronounced, “‘This.’ As if he [Christ] called their [the disciples’] attention away from Moses and Elias and said, ‘This is he of whom I speak to you. He is above the law and the prophets, he is my Son.’”⁶³ “Thus Christ,” as Spurgeon recorded, “[was] *anointed at Jordan*.”⁶⁴ Spurgeon believed Christ’s anointing was confirmed in Nazareth when Christ read from the scroll of Isaiah in the temple, “The spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.”⁶⁵

Other prophets had received anointings to preach good news to the poor, yet Spurgeon demonstrated that Christ’s anointing, and his prophetic ministry in general, superseded them all. “Jesus Christ is the Prophet of Christendom,” he observed. “His

60. *MTP* 15:7.

61. Matt. 3:17.

62. Jer. 1:6.

63. *MTP* 29:352.

64. *MTP* 38:728; italics in the original.

65. Luke 4:18 NIV. Jesus is quoting Isa. 61:1.

words must always be the first and the last appeal.”⁶⁶ By drawing attention to the juxtaposition of the Hebrew name Joshua, “salvation,” and the Greek name Christos, “anointed,”⁶⁷ Spurgeon conveyed the supremacy of Christ’s prophetic anointing. He exhorted, “Now, put the two titles together and ring out the harmony of the two melodious notes: Jesus Christ, Savior-anointed.”⁶⁸ To no other prophet could such a name be given.

Spurgeon wasted little time arriving at the application of this thought. What can limit a Christ who is both Savior of the world and anointed Son of God? “Wilt thou think that his anointing is imperfect and cannot qualify Jesus to meet thy case?” asked Spurgeon. “O do not so slander the grace of heaven!”⁶⁹ As the divine Word of God,⁷⁰ Christ the prophet speaks as, from, and for the Father. “As for his prophesying he speaketh not of Himself,” said Spurgeon. “Those things which he hath learnt of the Father, he hath revealed unto us.”⁷¹ Since prophets reveal the mind of God,⁷² the remedy for the sinful human condition is addressed in the words of the Father through the words of the Son. For this reason, Christ’s divine anointing intersects with his relationships with the Father and with believers.

To this end, Spurgeon’s plea for salvation stemmed from Christ’s anointing. “Do not only put him on as your Master and Savior,” he urged, “but as your Christ,

66. *MTP* 15:6.

67. *Ibid.*, 5.

68. *Ibid.*, 7.

69. *Ibid.*, 17.

70. John 1:1.

71. *MTP* 15:7.

72. *MTP* 49:435.

anointed for you.”⁷³ Spurgeon attempted to portray the totality of Christ’s offices with rhetoric that anticipated his congregation’s sentiment, putting himself in his congregation’s place by responding to his own salvific invitation. “Since he is the Christ anointed for me I will trust him, and share his anointing. Since Christ is the Son of God I will rest in him, that I also may become in him a child of God.”⁷⁴

Spurgeon’s emphasis on humans who share in Christ’s anointing is ubiquitous throughout his sermons and writings. “Here are his people sharing that anointing,”⁷⁵ he said. Elsewhere, Spurgeon echoed this belief. “As he is the Christ, they are *Christians*, anointed with the same anointing as he himself is.”⁷⁶ One should not conclude from these statements that believers share *exactly* in the same anointing as Christ. If that were the case, one could assume that Christians possess sinless infallibility and divine deity. Rather, Spurgeon spoke to the fact that “they should endeavor to be in all respects missionaries to the world, even as Christ was God’s great missionary to the lost.”⁷⁷ This leads to the second main concept that Spurgeon associated with Christ as prophet, that is, Jesus’s ministry of teaching and preaching.

In his sermon “The Prophet like unto Moses,” Spurgeon brought attention to the prophecy of Moses. “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.”⁷⁸ In his comparison of Christ to Moses, Spurgeon showed how Moses stood out among the

73. *MTP* 27:470; emphasis added.

74. *Ibid.*, 660.

75. *MTP* 9:144.

76. *MTP* 55:322; italics in the original.

77. *Ibid.*

78. Deut. 18:15 KJV.

other Old Testament prophets. “Moses not only spoke with matchless power, but wrought miracles. You shall find no other prophet who did both.”⁷⁹ To support his argument, Spurgeon reflected on Elijah and Elisha, who performed spectacular miracles yet “left us but few words.”⁸⁰ However, in Jesus, who “far exceeds Moses and all the prophets put together,” “you find lip and heart working together with equal perfectness of witness.”⁸¹ Spurgeon added, “You cannot tell in which he is the more marvelous, in his speech or in his act.”⁸² This is a common example in which Spurgeon elevated characters in the Scripture above one another, and subsequently demonstrated how Christ supersedes them all.

While the life of Christ will be examined in a coming section, Spurgeon’s treatment of the preaching of Christ in the context of his prophetic office are analyzed presently. From examining Spurgeon’s usage of “prophet,” “prophesy,” or “prophesying,” it is clear that he associated these words with teaching and preaching more than he associated them with predicting future events. Indeed, Christ was “anointed to preach.”⁸³ Unlike Luther, however, who expanded Christ’s roles as teacher and preacher beyond his prophetic office, Spurgeon believed in the sufficiency of the prophetic office to encapsulate these roles and thereby relegated Christ’s proclamation to prophetic unction.⁸⁴

79. *MTP* 25:441.

80. *Ibid.*

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.*

83. *MTP* 11:723.

84. One exception to this statement is found in the context of Christ’s priestly office in which Spurgeon demonstrated the connection between Christ’s anointing as priest and God’s anointing of preachers. He noted, “Though we are but as the skirts of the garment of our Great High Priest, yet the

Although Spurgeon often touted a Mr. Knill's prophecy that young Spurgeon would one day preach the gospel in Rowland Hill's Chapel, and also to the largest audience in the world,⁸⁵ Spurgeon maintained that the act of prophesying no longer entails predicting the future, but rather proclaiming the gospel. In fact, Spurgeon had little patience for those who claimed the ability to foretell future events. "Those who prophesy smooth things, and those who prophesy future things at all apart from the Scriptures, are dangerous people," he wrote. "Modern prophets are unprofitable."⁸⁶

A book entitled *Sabbath Morning Readings on Exodus* by one such unprofitable prophet, Joliet Cumming, received an ambivalent review from Spurgeon in *Commenting and Commentaries*. "Dr. Cumming's style is a model, but his matter seldom verges upon originality. He always gives you the gospel when he is not prophesying."⁸⁷ Spurgeon's distrust of modern prophets can be seen in his recording of a sarcastic saying in *The Salt-Cellars*: "Never prophesy till you know."⁸⁸

In *Lectures to My Students*, Spurgeon taught that prophesying is nothing more than being "moved by the Holy Ghost to give oneself up wholly to the proclamation of the gospel."⁸⁹ Elsewhere, he furthered this thought with the words, "By prophesying, I do not mean foretelling future events; but simply uttering the message

holy oil upon his head has come down even to us, as it is written, 'ye have an unction from the Holy One,'" *MTP* 41:548.

85. *Autobiography* 1:33.

86. Spurgeon, *Salt-Cellars* 2:75.

87. *Lectures*, vol. 4, *Commenting*, 55.

88. *Salt-Cellars* 2:51.

89. *Lectures* 1:20.

which we have received from the Lord.”⁹⁰ Though Spurgeon did believe that Jesus was anointed to predict future events such as the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, the “consummation of the age,”⁹¹ the coming of the Holy Spirit, and Christ’s own Second Coming, Spurgeon underscored that “our Lord’s anointing was with a special view to his preaching.”⁹²

In addition to preaching to his disciples and other listeners, Christ also undertook a ministry of teaching.⁹³ Though it is unfruitful to distill exhaustively the characteristics of Christ’s teaching from his preaching in this discussion, it is noteworthy that when Spurgeon chose to use the word “teach” over “preach” in describing Christ’s prophetic utterances, he often did so to emphasize the doctrine or teaching that transpired, rather than the act of proclamation or preaching. The following two statements are representative of this fact: “You must *listen to his doctrine*. Seek to know, oh, weary ones, what it is that Jesus teaches,”⁹⁴ and “Oh! what freeness was there in the Gospel when Christ preached it! No cold theology froze his lips; words did not hang like icicles there, but out of his mouth there flowed rivers of living water.”⁹⁵ This comparison exemplifies Spurgeon’s interest not only in the way that Jesus fulfilled his prophetic office through acts of preaching, but also in the doctrinal content that flowed from his proclamations.

90. *MTP* 38:117.

91. *MTP* 40:658; *MTP* 40:479 and C. H. Spurgeon, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: A Popular Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1893; repr., Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1996), 175.

92. *MTP* 57:73.

93. *MTP* 15:7.

94. *MTP* 59:208; italics in the original.

95. *MTP* 9:65-66.

In his sermon “A Caution to the Presumptuous,” Spurgeon encouraged those who were “marching along through this weary pilgrimage” to “take heed lest you fall.”⁹⁶ Spurgeon understood that, like a pilgrim without a map, so is the Christian without instruction. Bunyan posits that when Christian reached for the scroll after climbing the Hill of Difficulty and “found it not,” he was forced to backtrack to the place where he left it.⁹⁷ To this end, Spurgeon believed that pilgrims who were deficient in catechesis would falter on the journey, but he “walks in a blessed path who sees the footsteps of Providence and reads the map of Scripture and so discovers, ‘This is the way wherein I am to walk.’”⁹⁸

In this way, Spurgeon grounded his understanding of Christ’s divine office of prophet not in abstract theological assertions, but rather in concrete metaphor. It was not enough for Spurgeon to know *of* Christ the prophetic pilgrim who taught other pilgrims how to proceed to heaven; he must “put on” Christ who, as a pilgrim, travels with them along the path.⁹⁹ Not only did Spurgeon’s plea for salvation involve the communication of Christ’s catechetical power in his divine office as prophet, but also, in making these pleas, Spurgeon attempted to encourage his congregation to feel sympathy for the traveling Christ who, at the end of his earthly pilgrimage, experienced much tribulation. “Remember how they mocked him as a prophet. ‘When they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote thee?’ They treated his prophetic office as though it

96. *NPSP* 1:172.

97. Bunyan, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, 63.

98. *NPSP* 3:318.

99. *MTP* 36:127; italics in the original.

had only been worthy of a jest or a jeer.”¹⁰⁰ Attempts to make his congregation feel sympathy for Jesus were not uncommon in Spurgeon’s homiletic. For him, since “all the words of Christ are wisdom and truth,”¹⁰¹ and in order to understand truth, one must understand Christ, any technique used to preach the immediacy of salvation in Christ was acceptable hermeneutically.

Christ as Priest

“If I receive Jesus as ‘prophet,’” argued Spurgeon, “I must also take him as a ‘priest.’”¹⁰² Such was Spurgeon’s line of thinking concerning the priestly office of Christ, an office that illuminated Christ’s work as mediator, sacrifice, intercessor, and advocate.¹⁰³ In this section, Spurgeon’s treatment of these roles is analyzed.

As in the case of Christ’s prophetic office, Old Testament passages shed light onto Spurgeon’s doctrine of Christ’s priestly duties. A priest who received his special anointing was but a shadow for Christ, who “hath received that which their oil did but set forth in type and shadow, he hath the real anointing from the Most High.”¹⁰⁴

Spurgeon advanced this thought in his sermon “The Tenderness of Jesus” in which he expounded upon Christ’s anointing and his role as high priest. “All that Israel had under the law we still retain; only we have the substance, of which they had only the shadow.”¹⁰⁵ Jesus Christ, “who is the substance of the former shadows,”¹⁰⁶ fulfilled

100. *MTP* 57:542.

101. *MTP* 15:7.

102. *MTP* 12:15; italics in the original.

103. *Treasury* 4:393. Spurgeon noted that the definition of *cohen*, priest, “is from *cahan*, to plead a cause, as an intercessor, mediator, or advocate.”

104. *MTP* 15:6.

105. *MTP* 36:313.

the work of Great High Priest in establishing communion between God and humanity. “He must mediate,” declared Spurgeon, “and allow his mouth to be God’s mouth to the people.”¹⁰⁷ In this way, Jesus followed “not after the order of the Aaronic priests, for they died, and there was an end of them so far as their priesthood was concerned,”¹⁰⁸ but rather after a “Melchisedec priesthood”¹⁰⁹ in which Christ rose from the dead. For Spurgeon, Christ’s resurrection allowed him to be sacrificed unlike those in the Old Testament; in having defeated death through death, Christ provided the eradication of animal sacrifice altogether.

That Jesus Christ revealed the Father in such a way that his people could comprehend him induced Spurgeon to champion a Christology “from above” in which humanity’s understanding of God originates with God’s self-disclosure to humanity in Scripture and in the person of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁰ He preached, “Some say that they will go from nature up to nature’s God; they will do no such thing—the steps are much too steep for their feeble climbing.”¹¹¹ In this economy of divine descent, a priest is needed to mediate between a holy God and unholy humanity.

Insomuch as “a high priest took the other side also: *he was to communicate with God from men,*”¹¹² Spurgeon also recognized the necessity of developing a

106. *MTP* 10:438.

107. *MTP* 36:315.

108. *MTP* 47:52.

109. *Ibid.*; spelling in the original.

110. Roger Haight, *The Future of Christology* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2005), 52.

111. *MTP* 36:316.

112. *Ibid.*; italics in the original.

Christology “from below” in which Christ’s humanity becomes the starting point for discussing his priestly duties:

He [Christ] must needs sit down and hear all the trembling petitions of troubled mothers who had come from the utmost end of Israel laden with their domestic burdens; he must listen to all the complaints of the oppressed, the woes of the afflicted, the trials of the poor, the perplexities of the distracted; and then, as a man of God, he was ordained to take all these things in prayer before the Host High.¹¹³

In doing so, Christ familiarized himself with humanity’s plight; he hungered in accordance with its hunger, thirsted in accordance with its thirst, and suffered in all the ways that humanity possibly could suffer. In his sermon “Our Sympathizing High Priest,” Spurgeon revealed a Christ who embarked on a pilgrimage of suffering and hardships so that he could identify with the plight of his pilgrim people. Spurgeon maintained,

If he cannot go with us through all the rough places of our pilgrim-way, how can he be our guide? If he has never traveled in the night himself, how can he whisper consolation to us in our darkest hours? We have a fully qualified High Priest in our Lord Jesus Christ: he is perfect in that capacity.¹¹⁴

In this way, Tom Nettles is correct in his description of Spurgeon’s Christology, that Spurgeon was “a cataract, an avalanche, a flooding Mississippi in his unrelenting emphasis on the death by crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹¹⁵ Christ’s journey to Calvary and his atoning work on the cross paved a new road for humanity, one from destruction to construction, degeneration to regeneration. The path blazed by sin had been paved over with one that led to perpetual fellowship with God. Spurgeon’s

113. Ibid.

114. *MTP* 32:590.

115. Tom Nettles, “Spurgeon’s Message of Christ’s Atoning Sacrifice Part 1,” *The Founder’s Journal*, 14 (Fall 1993), wwwFOUNDERS.org/journal/fj14/article1.html (accessed 1 November 2010): paragraph 1.

affirmation of the real death of Christ gave power to his affirmation of his resurrection, and in this way, he believed that Jesus Christ “has finished his own work, and can therefore take our work into his hands, and bring it to perfection.”¹¹⁶

However, in Spurgeon’s ascending economy of mediation in which Christ expresses the concerns of humanity to the Father, a priest who merely suffered with humanity is not enough; indeed the Great High Priest must suffer *for* humanity, and by doing so provide humanity with a means of future escape from suffering altogether. The Great High Priest must become the sacrificial lamb whose blood, offered as a ransom for many, satisfied for the punishment of sin. At this point in his Christology, Spurgeon underscored the teaching that Levitical priests had to repeat the process of sacrifice since a single sacrifice for the sins of the people could not suffice for a lifetime of trespasses.¹¹⁷ However, Christ, in presenting himself as the ultimate sacrifice, pilgrimizing to the cross, and then rising from the dead in victory, made perfect atonement for the sins of his people once and for all. Spurgeon believed that in doing so, not only were sacrifices rendered obsolete, but all earthly priests became unnecessary as well.

Unlike Socinians, who did not recognize Christ’s priestly office,¹¹⁸ the Roman Catholics and Anglicans of nineteenth-century England produced priests in large number. Spurgeon allocated no small amount of ink to pointing out what he considered these blasphemous theological blunders. “The up-going of priests is the dishonour of the High Priest Christ Jesus; but when priestcraft ceases to be, and is

116. *MTP* 57:618.

117. *MTP* 38:563.

118. *Socinianism Unmasked: In Four Letters to the Lay-Members of the Church of Scotland* . . . (Edinburgh: W. Laing, n.d.), letter 3, 73.

cast down, then the Lord alone is exalted in that day.”¹¹⁹ For Spurgeon, the sacrifice for sin had already been offered; the path to reconciliation had already been paved. Any man who embraced the role of mediator was redundant, useless, and culpable of the severest of offenses. “A fine day is this,” Spurgeon lamented, “in which we are to go back to the superstitions of the dark ages—so dark that our forefathers could not bear them—and for the unsearchable cunning of priests are to give up the unsearchable riches of Christ.”¹²⁰

Spurgeon’s upbringing in Nonconformist Essex, and also the Nonconformist heritage he had inherited, played significant roles in the development of his attitudes against Roman Catholics and Anglicans. The Church of England, closely linked to the Catholic apostasy in Spurgeon’s understanding, received its authority not from the Holy Spirit, but rather by the authority of the government, and for this reason, Spurgeon ridiculed the “Popish mummeries” who survived the “reformers’ pruning knife.”¹²¹

At the height of his ministry in 1861, when Spurgeon said, “the curse of the State had engendered priestcraft, popedom—and what if I say hell-dom—in all lands,”¹²² there was a second-generation Catholic presence in Southwark, London, as could be found around Red Cross Street, for instance.¹²³ Also near Spurgeon’s Tabernacle were the Ritualists, who combined a Wesleyan “enthusiasm” with high

119. *MTP* 7:219.

120. *MTP* 13:210.

121. *ST* 2:207.

122. *MTP* 7:612.

123. S. C. Williams, *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark c. 1880-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 140.

liturgical, ceremonial trappings.¹²⁴ Committed to spreading the gospel in slums like Southwark, which contained numerous public baths and “dirty little places,”¹²⁵ Ritualists flocked to Spurgeon’s neighborhood, particularly during the cholera epidemic of 1849.¹²⁶ In Spurgeon’s estimation, sacramentalism and all its popish evil had been advancing on all sides from the outset of his ministry. “We fight against doctrinal Popery,” he wrote, “not in Rome alone, but at Oxford too.”¹²⁷ Referring to the Oxford Movement, influenced in 1833 by John Henry Newman, Spurgeon believed that the Oxford intelligentsia, with their emphasis on restoring the spiritual principles of the Church of England, had shortchanged the gospel of Jesus Christ by aligning themselves too closely with the deceitful practices of Catholicism.¹²⁸ Only a boy when Tractarians like Newman and Edward Bouverie Pusey advanced their cause, Spurgeon could remember a time when a minister once declared, “Puseyism is a lie!”¹²⁹ In those days, high churchmanship was foreign to the rural Essex population. In 1880, however, when Anglican ritualism had come into vogue, Spurgeon announced, “Our parish churches are commonly turned into mass houses, and the

124. Desmond Bowen, *The Idea of the Victorian Church: A Study of the Church of England 1833-1889* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1968), 285.

125. C. Booth, quoted in Williams, *Religious Belief*, 47, 135n.

126. Bowen, 289.

127. *ST* 2 (1868), preface.

128. Bowen, 42, 45, and 51. The Oxford Movement originated in on 14 July 1833. John Keble of Oriel College preached a sermon concerning “National Apostasy” which fell on the ears of Newman, who later published a tract entitled, “Thought on the Ministerial Commission Respectfully Addressed to the Clergy,” which provided a name to their movement, Tractarianism. Tractarians believed in the sovereignty of the Church apart from the State, and the movement quickly spread in popularity among the Oxford dons.

129. *MTP* 26:387.

Church of England is slightly to be distinguished in many parishes from the church of Rome, and yet nobody is astonished.”¹³⁰

To the end that Spurgeon sought to excoriate Catholic and Anglican beliefs and warn his congregation of the pitfalls of sacramentalistic movements, he declared, “How dare ye bring forward a virgin, blessed among women, and cause her very name to be defiled by styling her our intercessor before God? How dare ye bring your saints and saintesses and make these to mediate between God and men?”¹³¹ Spurgeon had little patience for those he believed had robbed Christ of his priestly office, and many of his statements concerning Anglicanism and Catholicism, particularly in his early London years, reveal his biting vitriol. “Onward come the bands of priestcraft, cowled monks, and shaven priests,”¹³² he said. “The ‘priest’ preaches up himself, the extraordinary value of his ordination, the occult influences which flow from his touch, the mysterious power which dwells in baptismal water, and in ‘consecrated’ wafers and poured-out wine.”¹³³ At best, ritualism, in all its manifestations, detracted from Christ’s priestly functions, he perceived, and at worst, it replaced Christ entirely by fostering the religious superstition that had prevailed throughout the Dark Ages.

Spurgeon’s doctrine of Christ’s office as Great High Priest further developed in his belief in the dissolution of the distinctions between laity and clergy. “I like *scriptural* priestcraft, for that is the craft or work of the people who are all priests. . . . We are priests, each one of us, if we are called by divine grace.”¹³⁴ In this sense,

130. Ibid.

131. *MTP* 21:174.

132. *MTP* 12:539.

133. *MTP* 55:538.

134. *NPSP* 1:75; italics in the original.

Spurgeon did not mean that every Christian makes propitiation for sin, for that role only Christ could occupy. Rather, as Luther posited for the first time the priesthood of all believers in his *Sermon von der heiligen Messe* in 1520,¹³⁵ Spurgeon concurred with Luther's assessment and preached, "You are all priests, because you love his dear name and have a great sacrifice to perform."¹³⁶ In Spurgeon's theology, offering sacrifices of praise, adoration, and thanksgiving for what God has accomplished allows believers to share Christ's priestly office to the end that they were united with him. "If Luther had not affirmed it," Spurgeon added, "the doctrine would have been just as true, for the distinction between clergy and laity has no precedent in Scripture, which calls the saints 'God's kleros.'"¹³⁷

For Torrance's Christology, as for Spurgeon's, only Christ can be "*pontifex* who is himself the *pons*."¹³⁸ Spurgeon, who often utilized mono-dialogue in his sermons,¹³⁹ asked his congregation the question, "Will he throw himself into the chasm?" He then answered it with, "He will. Into the grave he plunges, the abyss is closed! The gulf is bridged, and God can have communion with man!"¹⁴⁰ That Christ the bridge became Christ the bridge-maker also manifested in the quote mentioned below, taken from the sermon "The Ever-living Priest." In this sermon, Spurgeon

135. Julius Kostlin and Charles E. Hay, *Theology of Luther in Its Historical Development and Inner Harmony*, vol. 1 (n.p.: Lutheran Publication Society, 1897), 361.

136. *NPSP* 1:75. See also *MTP* 29:625.

137. *MTP* 29:625.

138. *Pontifex*, "bridge-maker." Torrance, 190.

139. Spurgeon dialogued with himself from the pulpit with questions and answers. This was a common homiletic strategy in his sermons, for it allowed Spurgeon to identify with his listeners by anticipating their questions and then providing an answer for them.

140. *MTP* 9:195.

expounded upon Heb. 7:23-25 to showcase Christ's atoning accomplishment in bridging the abyss that separated humanity from divinity:

Our Lord Jesus, being God and man in one person, reaches from side to side of the chasm. Coming near to us, this ladder stands at our foot in the human nature of our Lord, and it reaches right up to the infinite Majesty by reason of the divine nature of our Redeemer. God and man, in one person, unites God and man in one league of love.¹⁴¹

In simple terms, here Spurgeon's functional Christology is condensed. Christ, who in his human nature identifies with humanity, and in his divine nature identifies with divinity, bridges the gap that separates the two from each another. No longer must a priest sacrifice regularly for the sins of the people, Spurgeon believed; the Lamb of God was "offered upon the altar of Calvary for our sakes, that he might die as our Substitute and Representative."¹⁴² The motif of pilgrimage finds relevance in Spurgeon's doctrine of Christ's priestly office in that Christ's interceding work makes spotless the footprints of his people. Spurgeon explained,

He goes behind; here he finds that his child has left a black mark, and he takes that away; he finds here a heap of rubbish, a mass of broken good works, and here another load of evil, of filth, and he carefully removes all, so that in that track of his children there is not a spot or a blemish; and though they have trodden the road the most observant of their foes at the last great day shall not be able to find that they have done any mischief on the journey, or one wrong thing in all their march, for the God of Israel hath so swept the way that he has taken away their iniquities and cast their sins behind his back.¹⁴³

Spurgeon further unpacked Jesus Christ as the pilgrim priest not only by expounding on Christ's *endless life* that fulfills *endless priesthood*, but also by speaking to a Christ who not only makes *endless intercession* through occupying the roles of high priest, mediator, and sacrifice, but also intercedes for humanity in

141. *MTP* 32:446.

142. *MTP* 45:594.

143. *NPSP* 5:48.

heaven.¹⁴⁴ Spurgeon preached, “His occupation in the skies is to plead for those sinners whom he redeemed with his blood, and hence he is able to save them unto the uttermost.”¹⁴⁵ Following Christ’s pilgrimage from earth to heaven, Spurgeon believed that he continually intercedes on behalf of his people.¹⁴⁶ Additionally, for the ignorant and uneducated, and for those who “cannot put a dozen words together,”¹⁴⁷ Christ sits on his mercy seat and offers their unpolished prayers to the Father.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, Christ takes not only their prayers, but also their praise,¹⁴⁹ which is also unsophisticated and elementary, and in this way offers to the Father the people’s tribulation and their adulation. He is no “amateur,”¹⁵⁰ said Spurgeon, this priest who continues to mediate, no “slumbering”¹⁵¹ intercessor who cannot accomplish his task. Elsewhere he continued, “Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ is no petty, puny Savior.”¹⁵² Rather, the Great High Priest who never falters, flounders, or fails¹⁵³ pleads in “midnight wrestlings for all his people,”¹⁵⁴ unwaveringly entreating his Father on their behalf of his sojourning saints.¹⁵⁵

144. *MTP* 32:447; *ibid.*, 449; *MTP* 32:451.

145. *MTP* 14:260.

146. *ME*, 19 December, Morning.

147. *MTP* 16:512.

148. *MTP* 15:274.

149. *MTP* 10:518.

150. *MTP* 36:580.

151. *MTP* 15:594.

152. *MTP* 33:93.

153. *ME*, 4 June, Evening.

154. *MTP* 14:269.

155. *MTP* 47:307.

Who were the benefactors of Christ's intercession? On the one hand, Spurgeon was resolved to believe that Christ intercedes on behalf of Christians, for those "of old"¹⁵⁶ whose names were written in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world, for "all those whom the Father gave to him,"¹⁵⁷ Christ makes perfect and perpetual intercession. On the other hand, however, Spurgeon claimed that "our great Intercessor pleads for such as never asked him to plead for them," for "*guilty* men" who are dead in their sins, unregenerate, and rebellious against God.¹⁵⁸ Even while they "scoff at his gospel, his heart of love is entreating the favor of heaven on their behalf."¹⁵⁹ Without a robust adherence to the doctrine of irresistible grace, which ensures that Christ will save all those whom the Father draws, articulated by Calvin in his commentary on John 6:44,¹⁶⁰ Spurgeon would have been forced to say that Christ intercedes for the sins of those who would never find atonement, whose pursuit of sin is not overcome by the intervening agenda of God, and who would eventually reap the eternal punishment of their rebellion against God by being separated from his presence forever. This line of thinking, of course, was unacceptable for Spurgeon, for Christ's intercessions could not be offered in vain.

Spurgeon rightfully cannot be accused of universalism, in which everyone finds salvation in the irresistible grace of God.¹⁶¹ His evangelistic efforts were fueled

156. Ibid.

157. *MTP* 36:265.

158. *MTP* 15:592.

159. Ibid., 593.

160. John Calvin, *Commentary on John*, vol. 1 (repr., Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom34.html, (accessed 29 October 2010), 168; italics in the original.

161. Spurgeon, *Down Grade Controversy*, 39.

by his belief in a real hell into which sinners fall by the hour.¹⁶² However, inasmuch as God is capable of wooing and winning a people, inasmuch as he is able to draw a flock unto himself, Spurgeon believed that Christ makes full intercession for his elect before, during, and after their acceptance of God's redeeming gift of grace. In this way, Jesus the intercessor can say, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."¹⁶³

Spurgeon concluded his doctrine of Christ's priestly offices, as in the case of all his other doctrines, in application. For Spurgeon, true understanding of Christ's priestly work occurred not in the classroom, but rather in the hearts of believers. He maintained, "We have learned Christ's priesthood, not only out of the book, but because the blood of his atonement has been sprinkled upon us."¹⁶⁴ Knowledge of Christ's priesthood that is void of personal experience resulted in useless, abstract theological pursuits, the kind of which Tractarians were often accused.¹⁶⁵ For Spurgeon, true Christianity involved "personally living with a personal Savior, personally trusting a personal Redeemer, personally crying out to a personal Intercessor."¹⁶⁶ In this way, Spurgeon's functional Christology must be seen as auxiliary to his ontological Christology in that Christ's work for humanity is realized properly in the reality of Christ's human nature. It is only through the person of Jesus Christ that a personal relationship with the Father is possible.

162. *MTP* 8:v.

163. *MTP* 10:102.

164. *MTP* 47:137.

165. Bowen, 151.

166. *MTP* 47:136.

Christ as King

Reacting to the antinomianism that had plagued London since 1769,¹⁶⁷ Spurgeon ensured that Christ's priestly office also entailed Christ's divine office as king. If one acknowledged in the atonement, for example, yet did not live in accordance with Christ's kingly laws, Spurgeon believed that this resulted in a partial-Christology, and "Half a Christ is no Christ," he concluded. "A Christ who is a priest but never a king is not the Christ of God,"¹⁶⁸ he added. The Great High Priest who "hath put on all his jewels" also dons the "majesty of his kingship: 'On his head are many crowns.'"¹⁶⁹

Descended from the kingly lineage of David,¹⁷⁰ Christ is a "mediatorial king"¹⁷¹ who rules and controls, possesses the power of life and death,¹⁷² and who, with great sovereignty and dominion, judges individuals and nations according to his good pleasure. "As surely as he did hang upon the cross," declared Spurgeon, "so surely does he, the self-same man, sit upon the throne of God and reign over creation."¹⁷³ As Lord over all that he created, Christ's reign knows no boundaries,

167. In 1769, the antinomianism of James Rely, associate of George Whitefield, became controversial in London (Oliver, 114). Since that time, antinomianism had spread from Calvinistic Methodists to Particular Baptists. In 1804, Andrew Fuller noted its influence in London (Fuller's *Letters*, "Fuller to John Williams, 1 Aug 1804;" Fuller to Ward, 27 Oct 1804," cited in Oliver, 29n).

168. *MTP* 28:94.

169. *MTP* 33:93.

170. Spurgeon, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 1.

171. *MTP* 25:304.

172. *Ibid.*

173. *MTP* 31:21.

extending in such a way that “all things are put under his feet; he is the Prince of the kings of the earth.”¹⁷⁴

However, Spurgeon believed that nature is not the only jurisdiction that Christ’s dominion occupies. Heaven, too, is ruled by his presence and power. The angels and “highest powers and potentates of the spiritual kingdom bow before him,”¹⁷⁵ said Spurgeon. Constant adoration, praise, and worship flow from seraphs, angels, and heavenly creatures. Not only so, evil spirits also submit to Christ, who is the “conqueror of demons.”¹⁷⁶ In the case of the possessed man in Matthew 8, Spurgeon underscored that the demons “were glad to get into a herd of swine, and ran violently down a steep place into the sea, to escape from the frown of our Lord.”¹⁷⁷ Though Spurgeon did not believe that demonic possession was possible in the nineteenth century,¹⁷⁸ he relished in their submission to Christ in the first century.

For Spurgeon, the divine office of king also spoke to Christ’s miraculous act of re-creating his creation. “The angels sang of him as Lord, and yet as born,” he noted. “So here again the godlike in dominion is joined with the human in birth.”¹⁷⁹ Spurgeon’s theology of the incarnation reveals a Christ who has dominion over both life and death. By submitting temporarily to death on the cross, Christ defeated death forevermore through the power of his resurrection whereby he ushered into the world

174. *MTP* 22:363.

175. *Ibid.*

176. *MTP* 39:588.

177. *MTP* 36:35.

178. *Ibid.* Spurgeon pronounced, “Satan is still busy, going about, seeking whom he may devour; but not exactly in the particular way in which he raged in Christ’s day. He cannot take possession of men’s bodies as he did then.”

179. *MTP* 22:714.

a “marvellous and matchless kingdom”¹⁸⁰ that could not be moved, shaken or defeated.¹⁸¹ “The new creation,” said Spurgeon, “is God’s sole domain.”¹⁸² For this reason, Spurgeon believed that the chief expression of Christ’s kingly power is the re-creation of his people. After all, he said, “it was more difficult to create a Christian than to create a world.”¹⁸³

Question 25 of Spurgeon’s *Puritan Catechism* reveals that Spurgeon, who shared a common soteriological impulse with the Reformers, grounded his doctrine of Christ’s kingly in the life and spirituality of the believer. His catechism asks, “How does Christ execute the office of a king? [Answer:] Christ executes the office of a king in subduing us to himself (Psalm 110:3), in ruling and defending us (Matthew 2:6, I Corinthians 15:25), and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.”¹⁸⁴ Such power, though manifested in the taming of nature, is cleverly applied to the elect to the end that Jesus Christ became the prince of his pilgrim people.

In his sermon “Israel’s in Egypt,” Spurgeon spoke to God’s power to tame both nature and humanity. By referring to Israel’s pilgrimage to the Promised Land as a depiction of God’s power over nature, he said, “You and I are marching through a sea, the floods of which are kept upright only by the sovereign power of God.”¹⁸⁵ In

180. *MTP* 7:461.

181. *MTP* 14:231.

182. *MTP* 15:404.

183. *Ibid.*

184. Spurgeon, *Puritan Catechism*, 12.

185. *NPSP* 3:234.

the following paragraph, Spurgeon showcased his belief that God rules both nature and his elect:

Courage, men and brethren, the winds which toss the waves of the Atlantic of your life, are all sworn to waft your bark safely into the desired haven. Every wind that rises, whether soft or fierce, it is a divine monsoon, hurrying in the same direction as your soul's desires are aiming at. God walks the tempest, and rules the storm; order reigns supreme in the uproars of elements or men, for the divine hand compels the most rebellious creatures to obey without fail the divine and all-wise decree.¹⁸⁶

Not only is human nature volatile and as in need of submission as the wildest eruptions of nature, this statement reveals that in Christ, even the most tempestuous depravity is brought into divine submission and “the passions, once rabid as vultures at the sight of the carrion of sin, now turn with loathing from iniquity, and are only stirred by holy principle.”¹⁸⁷ Spurgeon articulated the climax of his doctrine of Christ's kingly office in his belief that God reigns over the heart and has “a right to do as he wills with me.”¹⁸⁸ For him, surrendering to Christ's providence, aligning human will with divine, and becoming “subservient to the anointed King who hath a right to rule over it”¹⁸⁹ constituted the chief aim for obedience to Christ's demanding kingship. Since non-allegiance to Christ is automatic allegiance to another,¹⁹⁰ anything less than wholehearted surrender is treasonous. “Oh let not your heart become a haunt for things that God abhors,”¹⁹¹ pleaded Spurgeon, who believed that harboring sins, like entertaining traitors, is also treasonous. The only response to a

186. *MTP* 15:328.

187. *Ibid.*, 402.

188. *MTP* 12:39.

189. *MTP* 15:6.

190. *MTP* 26:449.

191. *Ibid.*, 706.

king who is “wise enough, and strong enough, and willing enough to help my soul in its greatest extremity”¹⁹² is unreserved submission. Either way, concluded Spurgeon, Christ’s dominion is unshaken and unquestioned. “He will reign over you, either by your own consent, or without it.”¹⁹³ Spurgeon posited that God reigns in the heart, but he also, like a shepherd who goes before and behind his sheep,¹⁹⁴ travels in close proximity to his wayfaring Christians so much so that, at the end of their journey, he assists them on their pilgrimage across the River Jordan and into the Celestial City.¹⁹⁵

Not only does God protect his elect, in Spurgeon’s theology, but he also destroys “his and our enemies.”¹⁹⁶ Spurgeon illustrated this point by speaking to the collapsing of the Red Sea above the Egyptian army as God’s people traveled to the Promised Land. After the “living army of the living God” passed through, “God’s fiery wrath and tremendous anger shall dash down upon the ground whereon you now walk safely.”¹⁹⁷ This is one example in which Spurgeon used the metaphor of pilgrimage to buttress not only his doctrine of election and God’s sovereign freedom of choice, but also the doctrine of reprobation, that is, God’s power to damn.

Having the freedom to select people for both salvation and damnation, Jesus Christ’s authority is frequently coupled, in Spurgeon’s sermons, with humility. “None so majestic as he who wore the thorn-crown, but who shall put upon his head the

192. *MTP* 49:435.

193. *MTP* 14:239.

194. *NPSP* 5:44.

195. *NPSP* 3:236.

196. Spurgeon, *Puritan Catechism*, 12.

197. *NPSP* 3:234.

crown of universal monarchy.”¹⁹⁸ In this way, Christ’s crucifixion paved the way for his coronation. “They put a reed into his hand as a mock scepter,”¹⁹⁹ “they mockingly bowed the knee before him,”²⁰⁰ and “the only gifts they brought to him were cruel blows and coarse insults,”²⁰¹ Spurgeon posited. In Calvin’s theology, Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate as priest and “there Jesus remained silent in order that ever after He might speak for us.”²⁰² For Spurgeon, however, Christ existed as king when he stood before Pilate. In his sermon “The King in Pilate’s Hall,” Spurgeon exegeted John 18:37 to show that Christ first embraced his kingly title when he said to Pilate, “‘Thou sayest that I am a king.’”²⁰³

While Calvin and Spurgeon approached this text from differing angles, both adhered to the belief that the one who was judged would become the Judge.²⁰⁴ As a result of Christ’s suffering, Spurgeon said, “Jesus claimed omnipotence and universal sovereignty: ‘*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*’”²⁰⁵ to the end that Pilate, Caesar, “and all Caesars and Czars and emperors and kings and princes” will stand in humility “as prisoners to be tried by him”²⁰⁶ when Christ pronounces his future judgment.

198. *MTP* 15:7.

199. *MTP* 57:543.

200. *Ibid.*

201. *Ibid.*

202. Jansen, 96.

203. *MTP* 49:171.

204. *MTP* 31:21.

205. Spurgeon, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 257.

206. *MTP* 25:305.

Common in nineteenth-century evangelicalism was the doctrine of the Day of Judgment in which humans would be forced to account for their actions on earth. One example of the ubiquity of this doctrine occurred in 1853 when distinguished professor Frederick D. Maurice was found “unfit to be a teacher at King’s College”²⁰⁷ in London because he could not adhere to the doctrine of eternal judgment. On 27 October, the motion at the council of King’s College resolved to “dismiss him as teaching a dangerous doctrine on the future punishment of the wicked.”²⁰⁸ This episode was not uncommon in mid-Victorian England, particularly in light of the reaction against the growing movement of Unitarians who denied divine judgment in favor of universalism.

Spurgeon, who from 1855 to 1892 cited the “Day of Judgment” three hundred sixty-six times in his New Park Street and Metropolitan Tabernacle sermons, familiarized himself with such literature as *Last and Learned Worke of the Foure Last Things, Death, Judgment, Hell and Heaven* by Robert Bolton²⁰⁹ and stood unwaveringly in the tradition of the English Puritans, who maintained the doctrine of future judgment in which every thought, attitude, and deed will come under scrutinizing examination by Jesus Christ, the Great Judge. “At the day of judgment,” preached Spurgeon, “you will not have to cast up a hurried recount in the gross, but every item shall be read.”²¹⁰ Since “the hour of death is coming on, and the day of

207. Chadwick, 1:547.

208. *Ibid.*, 548.

209. According to William Jewel College’s records of Spurgeon’s Puritan library, Spurgeon owned a copy of Robert Bolton, *Last and Learned Worke of the Foure Last Things, Death, Judgment, Hell and Heaven* (London: Miller, 1632).

210. *NPSP* 4:85.

judgment is close upon its heels,”²¹¹ Spurgeon offered an urgent plea for salvation.

“Dear hearers,” he pleaded, “I should not like to meet one of you at the day of judgment and have to feel that I preached you into a greater blindness than you might have known. Oh, be converted!”²¹² It behooved his congregation to think, speak, and act in light of their upcoming adjudication, for death, judgment, and hell were frequent themes in Spurgeon’s homiletic.²¹³

Human actions played a significant role in Spurgeon’s doctrine of Christ’s kingly judgment. Believing that future judgment should not be understood in the context of a works-based righteousness in which human actions merit divine grace, Spurgeon taught that the judgment seat of Christ will allow saints to provide an answer to the accusation of their sin, not a propitiation on its behalf.²¹⁴ In the following statement, Spurgeon’s explanation for why the righteous, who are saved by grace yet destined for judgment, could place their confidence in Christ’s atoning work for them: “We do not fear the Day of Judgment; we do not dread the thought of standing before our Lord Jesus, because we have a plea which we know will answer every purpose. Our plea is this: we have been tried, condemned, and punished already.”²¹⁵ In this way, God’s elect will be “openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment,”²¹⁶ for the Father beholds their actions through the lens of

211. *MTP* 61:118.

212. *MTP* 31:323.

213. *MTP* 11:728.

214. *MTP* 38:239.

215. *MTP* 25:311.

216. Spurgeon, *Puritan Catechism*, 14.

Christ's condemnation. The unregenerate wicked, on the other hand, discovered a far less fortunate fate.

In Spurgeon's *Puritan Catechism*, the answer to question 39, "What shall be done to the wicked at the day of judgment?" is given: "At the day of judgment the bodies of the wicked being raised out of their graves, shall be sentenced, together with their souls, to unspeakable torments with the devil and his angels for ever."²¹⁷ If the righteousness of Christ does not cover the unrighteousness of the wicked, Spurgeon maintained, and if the consequences of their sin are left untouched at Calvary, eternal damnation in hell becomes the punishment, consequence, and reward for rebellion against God.

Though the doctrine of eternal punishment fell out fashion in late nineteenth-century England,²¹⁸ Spurgeon could not sidestep this fundamental doctrine, and he preached it with great persuasion. "There is a fire which knows no abatement," he preached, "a worm which never dies, a flame unquenchable. As ye go down those stairs, think there is a hell. It is no fiction."²¹⁹ In a letter to Thomas William Medhurst on 14 July 1854, Spurgeon, who was answering the inquiry, "Will you be kind enough candidly to inform me whether I have any room for hope that I belong to the elect family of God,"²²⁰ began a letter of assurance to him with, "A sinner deserves

217. *Ibid.*, 5 and 15.

218. Helmstadter and Lightman, 16. See also Hugh McLeod, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* in *Croom Helm Social History Series* (London: Croom Helm, 1974), 51.

219. *MTP* 11:636.

220. Letter from Thomas William Medhurst to C. H. Spurgeon, recorded in *Autobiography* 2:142.

hell, yea, the hottest place in hell.”²²¹ However, Spurgeon understood that the kingly rule of Christ could not fully be appreciated apart from the destructive consequences of depravity. That is why, later in his letter, Spurgeon balmied the wound he inflicted with the comforting words, “If the Lord had meant to destroy you, He would not have showed you such things as these. If you are but as smoking flax, there is hope.”²²² This letter represents a key feature of Spurgeon’s Christology and soteriology, namely that to know from what one is saved highlights all the more the actions of the one who saves. Even moreso, in this letter Spurgeon spoke directly to the price of such salvation in that for Christ, the path to heaven necessarily led through hell, and the way up for him became the way down.²²³ Spurgeon once illustrated this reality in a theatrical performance when he, pretending to be a screaming sinner sliding into hell, swung his leg over the side of the pulpit banister at New Park Street Chapel and slid on his stomach from the platform near the pulpit to the floor.²²⁴ Yet even there, when Christ “descended into hell,” as Spurgeon believed,²²⁵ Christ dominated the dark places by “delivering the spirits that were in that awful prison-house”²²⁶ and furthermore displayed his sovereign dominion.

221. Letter from C. H. Spurgeon to Thomas William Medhurst Spurgeon, 14 July 1854, recorded in *Autobiography* 2:143.

222. *Ibid.*

223. C. H. Spurgeon, *The Saint and His Savior* (Albany, OR: Ages Library, 1998), 63.

224. Northrop, 610.

225. *MTP* 49:14. Spurgeon affirmed the Apostles’ Creed in that Jesus “descended into hell” but said, “All that kind of talk seems to me very like that which come from dreamland,” and he applauded the Puritans who revisited this doctrine and questioned the literal understanding of it. See also *MTP* 15:560.

226. *MTP* 49:14. Spurgeon also noted, “As in hell Christ has power over all the damned spirits,” *MTP* 15:557.

Spurgeon's doctrine of the kingly office concluded with the teaching that Christ shares his kingship with his saints. He believed not in a miserly king who hoarded honor and glory. Instead, in heaven, where all the "pomp imperial of his kingship" is displayed and where "all that the majesty of his everlasting power can bestow," saints are privileged to sit with Christ and also "reign with Christ."²²⁷ In this way, the elect are "next of kin to the King of kings"²²⁸ and are, therefore, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus,"²²⁹ partakers in the spoils of Christ's kingdom. Furthermore, Spurgeon preached that Christ delegates his elect to be kings while they live on earth, kings to rule over and dominate sinful passions. "By our self conquest," said Spurgeon, "he [Christ] may be undisputed sovereign of the Isle of Man."²³⁰ With the aid of the Holy Spirit, taming the flesh and making it obedient to Christ could provide mastery over the self.

On 10 April 1881, Spurgeon delivered a sermon entitled "The Common Salvation." Near the middle of his exposition, he paused to say, "I feel inclined to stop the sermon and ask you to join in singing Charles Wesley's verse—'Partners of a glorious hope:'

'Lift your hearts and voices up
Jointly let us rise and sing
Christ our Prophet, Priest, and King.'"²³¹

This incident, illuminative of Spurgeon's entire doctrine of the threefold office of Christ, reveals a doctrine that not only shaped his theology by enhancing his

227. *MTP* 10:9.

228. *MTP* 7:371.

229. *MTP* 10:182.

230. *MTP* 14:237.

231. *MTP* 27:201; emphasis added.

understanding of Christ's work, but also resulted in deepened adoration and praise, for in it Christ's glorious achievements, gracious gifts, and omnipotent power were magnificently displayed.

To conclude this chapter, it is helpful to position Spurgeon in relation to his theological predecessors concerning the doctrine of the divine offices of prophet, priest, and king. Sherman notes that theologians often emphasize a particular office to the exclusion of the others. He explains that while Luther underscores the priestly office of Christ, Calvin emphasizes his kingly office. Furthermore, Sherman posits that the Enlightenment stressed the prophetic office of Christ, "Christus als Lehrer!"²³² If Spurgeon's Christology gravitated toward one of these offices, which office would it have been?

Before submitting an answer to this question, it is appropriate to note that Spurgeon would hesitate to give partiality to any one office to the exclusion of the others. He believed in the kind of "Christological equilibrium" that Sherman would later coin,²³³ an environment in which all three offices receive equal importance and treatment. Nevertheless, the question, if answered correctly, does shed light on the emphases of Spurgeon's doctrine of the work of Christ, and in that regard, is helpful to this study.

Throughout his ministry, Spurgeon developed the doctrine of the prophetic office of Christ quite adequately. His sermons suggest that his understanding of Christ's teaching and preaching did not stray from the position of his Reformed, Lutheran, and Puritan ancestors. Christ, the prophet of old, who is himself the Word,

232. "Christ our teacher," Sherman, 75.

233. *Ibid.*

fulfilled Old Testament prophecies that were uttered concerning himself and also fulfilled the self-prophecies that he made about his future. In this way, Spurgeon offered little contribution to the expansion of this office. Similarly, concerning the priestly office of Christ, Spurgeon revealed that Christ, the Great High Priest, became the sacrifice and offered himself for the atonement of the sins of the elect. Furthermore, in the reality that every Christian fulfills this office, Spurgeon stated no more than Luther did concerning the priesthood of believers and their responsibility to offer sacrifices of praise, adoration, and thanksgiving.

However, when the subject of Christ's kingship is examined further in Spurgeon's Christology, one discovers not only a favored doctrine in which Christ's sovereignty, rule, dominion, and kingdom are thoroughly developed,²³⁴ but also original thinking in the structuring of this doctrine in relationship with the study of theology as a whole. At the very end of his life, Spurgeon sought to "produce a devotional Commentary, specially calling attention to the Kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ."²³⁵ The result became a commentary on Matthew, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Having already completed a commentary on the Psalms, *The Treasury of David*, a project of twenty years in the making, Spurgeon's second and final commentary differed from his extra-sermonic literature in that every one of his twenty-eight chapters spoke directly to Christ's kingly office. Each verse he fashioned to point in some way to Christ who, as Matthew underscored, fulfilled the role of king. From Christ's teachings, prophecies, and miracles to his crucifixion, death, and resurrection,

234. See select sermons "Bringing the King Back" (*MTP* 14:241-52), "First King of Righteousness, and After That King of Peace" (*MTP* 30:121-32), and "God's King Magnified" (*MTP* 58:601-12).

235. *Autobiography* 4:315-16. Spurgeon's death forced the completion of this commentary to be undertaken by his private secretary, who added nothing original to the work but integrated Spurgeon's earlier material into the concluding chapters.

each episode in the Gospel of Matthew found significance in its relationship to this doctrine. Through no other office did Spurgeon so exhaustively expose this doctrine, and in this way, he incorporated techniques of Christological organization, as seen in Baptist confessions, by routing all theology through the conduit of a particular doctrine.

To conclude, though the systematization of the doctrine of *munus triplex* was advanced greatly in the works of Eusebius, Aquinas, Calvin, and in the *1644 London Baptist Confession of Faith*, Spurgeon contributed to the development of this doctrine not only in his interpretation of all other areas of theology in light of it, but also in his ability to translate this doctrine into nineteenth-century English vernacular.

Thoroughly appropriated, Spurgeon's doctrine on the threefold office of Christ found significance outside the traditional parameters of Christology, such as in the case of having assigned these offices to Paul in his shipwreck. As prophet who taught wayworn pilgrims, as a priest who died for their sins, and as a king whose sovereign jurisdiction over creation and creatures ensured their safe arrival in heaven, Jesus Christ fulfills his work of redemption in the lives of his elect. To the end that Spurgeon furthered the systematization of this doctrine that Reformed, Lutheran, Puritan, and Baptist theologians had communicated, he transitioned the *munus triplex Christi* from the realm of orthodoxy to orthopraxy, and in this way, it lives on not only as a doctrine to be believed, but also as a paradigm in which Christ-centered ministry, missions, and spirituality might occur.

CHAPTER 4

THE LIFE OF CHRIST: EXEGETICAL CHRISTOLOGY

In the previous two chapters, Charles Spurgeon’s ontological and functional Christologies received analysis through a *diachronic* method. This analysis revealed that his beliefs did not develop independently of the historical theological traditions, movements, and doctrines around him. In this chapter, Spurgeon’s doctrine of the life of Christ is examined *synchronically* in the belief that his engagement with or avoidance of nineteenth-century influences, pressures, and movements underscores the underlying impulse of his Christology.

Spurgeon believed that four primary events of Christ’s earthly pilgrimage “shine out brightly in our Savior’s story”¹—his birth, death, resurrection, and ascension. “These make four rounds in that ladder of light,” he explained, “the foot of which is upon the earth, but the top whereof reacheth to heaven. We could not afford to dispense with any one of those four events, nor would it be profitable for us to forget, or to under-estimate the value of any one of them.”²

For this reason, these four snapshots in the life of Christ are analyzed in this section. Additional attention is given to Spurgeon’s treatment of Christ’s eternal election, baptism, miracles, and transfiguration, for they contribute in no small part to Spurgeon’s understanding of the life of Christ.

1. *MTP* 31:13.

2. *Ibid.*

The Second Coming of Christ, which Spurgeon indicated as the “fifth link in the golden chain,”³ is already well treated in Dennis Swanson’s article, “Charles H. Spurgeon and Eschatology.”⁴ Since the higher critical movement challenged the traditional Christology that Spurgeon embraced, special attention is awarded to Spurgeon’s interaction with this movement. Similarly, Spurgeon’s engagement with Roman Catholic doctrines on the virginal conception and birth are analyzed. Insomuch as nineteenth-century religious movements and popular literature find relevance, they, too, will be addressed in the context of Spurgeon’s Christology.

Old Testament

Eternal Election

Spurgeon’s doctrine of divine election goes to the very heart of his Christology. That God the Father, according to his own pleasure, should predestine a people who were bent on destruction; that God the Son, the Great Prophet, the High Priest, the King of Kings should absorb the punishment of their sins by humbling himself to the point of death; that God the Spirit should pursue and woo them until they succumb to the free gift of eternal life—this truth became for Spurgeon the greatest expression of love, the essence of salvation, and the impetus for preaching, evangelism, and ministry.

Colquitt, Thornton, Earls, and Bullock have adequately investigated Spurgeon’s doctrine of election.⁵ In these cases, the recipients of the Father’s divine

3. *MTP* 31:13.

4. Swanson, intro.

5. Colquitt, 129-53; Thornton, “The Soteriology of C. H. Spurgeon”; Earls, 116-18; Bullock, 73-74.

election are the saints. However, this section contributes to this discussion by exploring Spurgeon's doctrine of *Christ's* election by the Father. Since the appointment of Christ to the mission of salvation directly involves those for whom Christ was sent to save, these two doctrines cannot be mutually excluded from one another. Christ's election by the Father aids the understanding of Old Testament Christophanies and also Christ's prophetic anticipation.

According to Spurgeon, Jesus Christ was the "first elect" of the Father.⁶ As is written in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and preserved in the *London Baptist Confession of Faith*, "It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus."⁷ Spurgeon, in his *Puritan Catechism*, retained this teaching, stating that for the elect, God entered "into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the state of sin and misery, and to bring them into a state of salvation by a Redeemer."⁸ He preached, "It was from everlasting that his mighty fingers grasped the pen, the stylus of ages, and wrote his own name, the name of the eternal Son of God."⁹ In this way, from before the foundation of the world, the Father appointed the Son to become incarnate, to live with and die for the sins of the people he had chosen for himself. This appointment involved a covenant of grace between God and humans in which Christ represents humanity before God the Father.

Spurgeon acknowledged that before creation, humanity did not exist and, thus, could not represent itself before God.¹⁰ Therefore, "with the telescope of his

6. *NPSP* 4:405.

7. *Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647*, ch. 8, "Of Christ the Mediator."

8. Spurgeon, *Puritan Catechism*, 11.

9. *NPSP* 2:30.

10. *NPSP* 5:346.

prescience, he [Christ] foresaw our existence, and he loved us when we had no being. Then he struck hands with the great Father, and entered into covenant on our behalf, and engaged that he would stand sponsor for us, and redeem us from the ruin of our sin.”¹¹

Grounded in eternal love, this covenant between the Father and the Son existed outside the love that humanity would later demonstrate in response to the Father’s predetermined election. For Spurgeon, the unmerited grace of God must remain unmerited; the love of the Father must begin with God. To the end that God intertwined his existence with the existence of his people, sought to redeem them from the consequences of their sin, and humbled himself in becoming obedient to death on their behalf, Spurgeon declared that God entered into “solemn counsel with himself” and “decreed, determined, purposed, and predestinated the salvation of his people.”¹² Few words encapsulated so profound, marvellous, and comforting a truth for Spurgeon. Indeed, it was the “very poetry of that old Calvinistic doctrine,”¹³ a doctrine that should result in gratitude and obedience.

Spurgeon spoke to this doctrine in his sermon “Eyes Opened” wherein he compared the mercy of the Father in the election of the Son to Hagar’s discovery of the life-saving well in the desert of Beersheba.¹⁴ “The water was not created as a new thing to supply Hagar’s thirst,” Spurgeon observed. “It was there already.”¹⁵ In this way, Spurgeon emphasized that salvation was not a secondary action inspired after

11. *MTP* 39:65.

12. *NPSP* 5:347.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Gen. 21:14-20.

15. *MTP* 12:160.

the fall of humanity. Rather, the Living Water that would quench all thirst flowed from before the foundation of the world. Spurgeon lamented those who did not believe in the predetermined decree of God for their salvation, for he believed this doctrine to be beautiful and comforting.¹⁶

That God designed the blueprints of salvation long before he executed his plans in the person and work of Jesus Christ proved central to Spurgeon's Christology. "God has a grand design," he preached, "from which he has never swerved, no, not by so much as a hair's breadth."¹⁷ In this way, Christ intentionally journeyed to the cross. Spurgeon believed that his pilgrimage to Calvary was not an afterthought, proposed by the Father to the Son after humanity fell into sin. Rather, Christ's elect mission was premeditated and purposed before the foundation of the world so that "the manger of Bethlehem was big with glory; in the incarnation was wrapped up all the blessedness by which a soul, snatched from the depths of sin, is lifted up to the heights of glory."¹⁸ Throughout the duration of Christ's ministry, the Father "was ever with him in the grand design of salvation,"¹⁹ working together for the accomplishment of his formerly designed blueprints. Did Christ's reconciling work of atonement cease upon the event of Christ's ascension? Spurgeon would not have his congregation think so. In pointing believers to Christ, he believed that the Holy Spirit makes God's enemies his friends and continues the work of reconciliation.²⁰

16. *MTP* 11:213; *NPSP* 4:35.

17. *MTP* 31:437.

18. *MTP* 10:718.

19. *MTP* 36:140.

20. *MTP* 50:497. Spurgeon preached, "Now lift the illustration again into the higher sphere,

Christophanies

As has been shown, Spurgeon understood that before the foundation of the world, the Son was appointed by the Father to carry out the plan of salvation. In the words of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Jesus Christ, being equal with God, “did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon him man’s nature.”²¹ However, the question of Christ’s existence and manifestations after humanity sinned in the garden of Eden and before “the fullness of time was come” deserves attention as well.

In his work *Cristofaneia*, George Balderston Kidd presents not only an exegetical synopsis of Christophanies in Scripture, but also a comprehensive history of Christophanical reception, debate, and development from Fathers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and others, to English divines such as William Perkins, Joseph Hall, John Owen, Thomas Tenison, John Stott, and John Milton, to nineteenth-century theologians and writers such as Timothy Dwight, Richard Watson, and J. Pye Smith.²² Kidd’s work is helpful for acknowledging the variety of interpretations concerning Old Testament manifestations of Christ.

The teaching of the pre-incarnate Son of God appears in the earliest Christian literature;²³ however, German theologian David Friedrich Strauss first used the term *Christophany* to refer to the manifestation and appearance of Christ in human form

and see, through it, the grand design of God to make his foes his friends, to change rebels into loyal courtiers, to make ingrates into sons and daughters, and to uplift the heirs of wrath, and cause them to sit with him as kings and priests upon his throne.”

21. Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, 619.

22. George Balderston Kidd, *Cristofaneia: The Doctrine of the Manifestations of the Son of God under the Economy of the Old Testament*, ed. Orlando T. Dobbin (London: Ward and Co., 1852); *ibid.*, 478-53; *ibid.*, 545-73; *ibid.*, 602-37.

23. Andrew S. Malone, “John Owen and Old Testament Christophanies” in *The Theologian*, www.theologian.org.uk/doctrine/johnowen.html#f3, (accessed 5 September 2010), footnote iii.

other than during the time of his incarnate life.²⁴ Nowhere in Spurgeon's sermons or writings can this term, coined by his contemporary, be located. Nevertheless, the teaching and preaching of Christophanical appearances occupied a noteworthy place in Spurgeon's doctrine of the life of Christ to the end that Spurgeon may be well classified as a Christophanist.

A distinction must first be drawn between Christophanies and Christological typologies in Spurgeon's theological understanding. Unlike Christophanies, in which the *physical* appearance of Christ is taught, typologies speak to the *symbolic* appearance of Christ in Old Testament passages. For Spurgeon, many Old Testament characters symbolically represented and foreshadowed Christ—Moses in delivering God's people from bondage in Egypt, Jonah in his descending pilgrimage into the Mediterranean Sea, Daniel in being falsely accused and sought out for execution, Joseph by being hated by his brothers, David in collecting spoil from his conquests, Judah in having the prowess of a lion, and Isaac in being led to his death.²⁵ Even though both Joshua the son of Nun and Joshua the son of Jozadak did nothing more than bear what would become Christ's name, they, too, were rewarded by Spurgeon for being types of Christ.²⁶ Furthermore, for Spurgeon, Old Testament characters could paradoxically be, and not be, types of Christ. For instance, the wealth, wisdom, and honor of Solomon earned him the title "type of Christ."²⁷ However, inasmuch as

24. Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Cambridge: James Clarke Co., Ltd., 2002), 33. See also David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined, in Three Volumes*, vol. 3, trans. from 4th German ed. (London: George Woodfall and Son, 1846), 337, 340, 342, 368, 389, and 393.

25. *MTP* 45:347; *MTP* 51:108. Spurgeon also compared the descent of Jonah to Christ's burial in Joseph's tomb. *MTP* 52:610; *MTP* 14:335; *MTP* 8:265; *MTP* 34:194; *MTP* 58:157; *MTP* 62:363.

26. *Autobiography* 1:296.

27. *MTP* 8:671. See also *MTP* 27:295.

he did not build his temple singlehandedly, Solomon also failed in being Christ's type.²⁸ Furthermore, Solomon, who fetched "horses out of Egypt to minister to his pride," was nothing like the Christ who was quite content to ride upon "*the foal of an ass*."²⁹

In Spurgeon's work, animals such as doves, goats, and lambs were also types of Christ, along with inanimate objects such as honeycombs, altars, blood, rocks, vines, bread, flowers, myrrh, arks, and even animal dung.³⁰ "It would be almost impossible to count the types of Christ that are given in the Old Testament," confessed Spurgeon.³¹ He applied little restraint, one notes, in his attempt. In his excellent treatment of Spurgeon's homiletic, Talbert shows how Spurgeon's typological interpretation of the Old Testament must be seen in light of the English Puritans who, in taking a literal and symbolic approach to the Scriptures, also "spiritualized" the text in order to offer "ancillary and derivative" meanings.³² However, Talbert's statement that Spurgeon "minimized the importance of valid principles of hermeneutics"³³ may be challenged on the grounds that Spurgeon appealed to alternate hermeneutical principles, such as that of the allegorical Alexandrian School, as has been argued in chapter 2. In this way, Spurgeon's utilization of Old Testament typology to illuminate the life of Christ belongs to a

28. *NPSP* 4:213.

29. *MTP* 51:288; italics in the original.

30. *Treasury* 3:26; *NPSP* 2:332; *MTP* 47:239; *MTP* 21:196; *MTP* 40:328. See also *MTP* 15:398; *NPSP* 2:333; *MTP* 12:529; *MTP* 41:610; *MTP* 19:278; *MTP* 37:247; *MTP* 10:137; *MTP* 14:95; *MTP* 13:143.

31. *MTP* 13:143.

32. Talbert, 66.

33. *Ibid.*, 207.

different hermeneutical tradition and is, indeed, valid within the parameters of that system.

In his sermon “The Immutable Christ,” Spurgeon preached that Jesus “is the same to-day as he was from old eternity.”³⁴ Though Christ took various appearances throughout the Old Testament, he remained fundamentally unchanged in his person and nature.³⁵ Nevertheless, Spurgeon’s theology aligned with that of his Puritan hero, John Owen, who believed that Christ “did not create a human nature, and unite it unto himself for such a season; only by his divine power he acted the shape of a man composed of what ethereal substance he pleased, immediately to be dissolved.”³⁶ In this way, Spurgeon’s preaching of pre-incarnate Christophanical appearances never eclipsed the reality of the incarnation.

According to Spurgeon, Christ took human form several times throughout the Old Testament. Christ did not appear regularly to humanity before his incarnation, for “humanity is scarcely capable of the incessant strain of a perpetual manifestation of God.”³⁷ Rather, Spurgeon described these manifestations as being “‘like angels’ visits, few and far between”³⁸ and observed that they often occurred in the direst of circumstances. “Our blessed Lord reveals himself to his people more in the valleys, in the shades, in the deeps, than he does anywhere else,”³⁹ noted Spurgeon. One may conclude, then, that Spurgeon believed that Christ did not show himself to his saints

34. *MTP* 15:9.

35. The pre-incarnate Christ bore only a divine nature.

36. John Owen, *Glory of Christ* (1684), *Works* 1, 349–50, quoted in Malone, paragraph 16.

37. *MTP* 27:38.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*, 39.

on a regular basis. Moreover, he did not appear to every person, in every situation, in every passage of the Old Testament. Instead, extraordinary and difficult times brought him down into human manifestation so that he made himself known physically to his people in their tribulation.

In his sermon “The Incarnation and Birth of Christ,” Spurgeon utilized a question-based sermonic structural scheme⁴⁰ and addressed the issues of who sent Jesus, where he originated, and the purpose of his coming.⁴¹ Spurgeon then turned to the question of whether Jesus Christ ever came before. “We answer, yes,”⁴² he declared. Then, Spurgeon summarized his doctrine of the pre-incarnate appearances of Christ in the Old Testament:

We believe that Christ *has come forth of old, even to men, so that men have beheld him*. I will not stop to tell you that it was Jesus who walked in the garden of Eden in the cool of the day, for his delights were with the sons of men; nor will I detain you by pointing out all the various ways in which Christ came forth to his people in the form of the angel of the covenant, the Paschal Lamb, the brazen serpent, the burning bush, and ten thousand types with which the sacred history is so replete; but I will rather point you to four occasions when Jesus Christ our Lord has appeared on earth as a man, before his great incarnation for our salvation.⁴³

Before delving into these four Christophanies, Spurgeon interestingly confessed his belief that it was Jesus Christ who walked with Adam in the garden of Eden. Eight months earlier, in his sermon “The Carnal Mind Enmity Against God,” Spurgeon

40. Spurgeon often incorporated this scheme into his sermons. In a handwritten sermon note on Ps. 134:13-14, Spurgeon revealed his method by outlining “Where, What, How Much, To Whom” without filling in the content of his outline. See Spurgeon Notes in the Special Archives of the John T. Christian Library in New Orleans Baptist Seminary, New Orleans, LA.

41. *NPSP* 2:25, 26, and 30.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*, 31; italics in the original.

indicated that God the Creator walked with Adam in the cool of the day.⁴⁴ Eleven years later, in 1866, Spurgeon amalgamated the two teachings, saying, “As the Lord God walked in the garden of Eden in the cool of the day.”⁴⁵ One may conclude, then, that Spurgeon believed that Jesus Christ played an active part in creating the world⁴⁶ and walked with Adam in the garden of Eden.

The first Christophany to which Spurgeon spoke occurs in the eighteenth chapter of the book of Genesis in which “Jesus Christ appeared to Abraham.”⁴⁷ Christ had appeared to Abraham on multiple occasions, as Spurgeon explained: “*The Lord often visited Abraham*. Friends are sure to visit one another.”⁴⁸ However, Spurgeon noted that Abraham needed active faith to see the pre-incarnate Christ.⁴⁹ In this account, three strangers visited Abraham as he was sitting near the trees of Mamre.⁵⁰ Only to one of the strangers did Abraham bow down and call “Lord,”⁵¹ Spurgeon exacted. The other two men in their company were allegedly angels who assumed the form of strangers. Christ “was in the positive form of man,” Spurgeon explained, “so that when he walked the streets of Judea it was not the first time that he was a man; he

44. *NPSP* 1:149.

45. *MTP* 58:93.

46. *MTP* 45:388-89.

47. *NPSP* 2:31.

48. *MTP* 33:269; italics in the original.

49. C. H. Spurgeon, *Gleaning among the Sheaves* (Rio, WI: Ages Library, 2006), 4. Spurgeon wrote, “I do not know that Abraham ever saw the Lord till he had become a stranger and a wanderer in the plains of Mamre, and then the Lord appeared unto him as a wayfaring man.”

50. Gen. 18:1.

51. *NPSP* 2:31.

was so before.”⁵² One should not take from this statement the idea that Spurgeon believed in a *dual-incarnate* Christ; there were not two manglers, two Bethlehems, two Christs. Rather, for Spurgeon, the previous manifestations of Christ were only foreshadowings of what he would later become. Moreover, these Christological prefigurations served to highlight the once-and-for-all event of incarnation in that they prepared the way for Christ’s advent.

It is here that Spurgeon’s Christophanical doctrine reached its finest form. Jesus, who from the foundation of the world purposed to become man and save his elect, practiced his ministry on earth before his appointed time. *Practice*, in this sense, does not imply that Spurgeon believed that Christ needed to rehearse his earthly mission in order to execute it properly. Spurgeon could locate no handicapped Christ in Scripture. Rather, Spurgeon believed that Christ embarked on pre-incarnate pilgrimages to the locations where his ministry would occur because he sought the company of his elect. So great was Christ’s love for humanity, so dedicated was Christ to his mission, that before his incarnation, Jesus “communed here and there with his chosen servants”⁵³ and actively drew together a people that he would eventually save. “In diverse ways and forms,” Spurgeon noted, “he proved that his delights were with the sons of men.”⁵⁴ This teaching is expressed chiefly when Christ appeared to Abraham, who would become the “father of many nations.”⁵⁵ To Abraham, Christ disclosed secrets concerning “the birth of Isaac, and his intent that

52. Ibid.

53. *MTP* 27:38.

54. Ibid.

55. Gen. 17:5.

the covenant blessing should run in the line of the child born according to promise.”⁵⁶ Spurgeon extended this line of thinking in speaking to the Second Coming of Christ. “He has been here before, so he knows the way to come again.”⁵⁷ One should not conclude, from this statement, that Christ is capable of forgetting his way to earth. An incompetent Christ who cannot remember how to descend to the earth from which he ascended proved useless to Spurgeon. Instead, Spurgeon used this rhetoric to highlight not Christ’s deficiency of power, but rather his succeeding sovereignty. That Christ successfully pilgrimized to earth in his first advent gives confidence to Christians who expect a second, he believed.

The second Christophany to which Spurgeon alluded is in Genesis 32 in which Jacob wrestles with the man after sending his family across the brook of Jabbok. “This was a man, and yet God,”⁵⁸ Spurgeon explained. “It was the man Christ Jesus putting on the form of manhood before the time when he would actually be incarnate.”⁵⁹ Elsewhere, Spurgeon referred to this creature as the unknown stranger, heavenly visitor, wondrous Man, mysterious man, covenant angel, prince of angels, and the wrestling Christ.⁶⁰ In the context of each case, it is clear that Jacob wrestled not merely with a man, but indeed with Jesus Christ himself.

In his sermon “Brought Up from the Horrible Pit,” Spurgeon used this Christophany to illuminate the suffering of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane.

56. *MTP* 33:269.

57. *MTP* 43:26.

58. *NPSP* 2:31.

59. *MTP* 52:143.

60. *MTP* 56:496; *MTP* 62:27; *MTP* 52:516; *MTP* 17:612; *MTP* 52:143; *MTP* 23:560; *MTP* 47:383.

Interestingly, in this case he likened Christ to Jacob, wrestling with God.

Spurgeon exhorted, “Let Gethsemane tell of that wrestling which infinitely excelled the wrestling of Jacob. . . . His [Christ’s] was a wrestling, not to sweat alone, but unto sweat of blood.”⁶¹ Not one to rob a text of its application, Spurgeon frequently gleaned the motif of wrestling with God from this Christophany and applied it directly to the life of the believer: Christians, like Jacob, must lay hold of Christ and wrestle him into submission through prayer until the blessing has been attained. For Spurgeon, Christians wrestle with Christ in besieging the throne of God until the church is multiplied, the Word is prospered, the assurance of faith is received, the guilt of sin is gone,⁶² and “all lands may know that Jesus Christ is Lord.”⁶³

In 1859, however, Spurgeon’s understanding of this Christophany underwent a change in emphasis. “I thought Jacob wrestled with God,” he admitted, “but I find it is the contrary, he did not wrestle with God; *God wrestled with him.*”⁶⁴ Spurgeon indicated that Christ, in wrestling Jacob, “wanted to get his cunning and deceit out of him;”⁶⁵ he was successful, for Jacob walked away with a limp. So it is in the life of the believer, Spurgeon believed. Not only do Christians engage Christ in arduous struggle, but Christ also engages them and removes all that is not holy in their lives.

The third Christophany to which Spurgeon alluded is in the fifth chapter of the book of Joshua in which Christ, with sword drawn, stood above Joshua after he had crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land. The stranger could not have been a

61. *MTP* 28:448.

62. *MTP* 29:550; *NPSP* 2:44; *NPSP* 3:321; *NPSP* 4:preface; *MTP* 15:704; *MTP* 56:104.

63. *MTP* 17:684.

64. *NPSP* 5:357; emphasis added.

65. *Ibid.*

mere angel, Spurgeon argued, for an angel would have rejected the title “Lord” bestowed upon it by Joshua as he fell on his face in worship.⁶⁶ This was one of two proofs necessary for Spurgeon to conclude that the angel was a pre-manifestation of Jesus Christ. Additionally, Spurgeon maintained that an angel would not have commanded Joshua to remove his shoes because he stood on holy ground. Only God possesses the authority to consecrate his dwelling as being sacred. Thus, the “glorious man”⁶⁷ must indeed have been Jesus Christ who, with a sword, “cuts right and left at the hearts and consciences of men!”⁶⁸ Spurgeon preached that, like the presence of “the ever victorious, the irresistible” Oliver Cromwell in the seventeenth-century,⁶⁹ the presence of Christ in any age encourages the faith of his beleaguered troops.

Similar to Spurgeon’s treatment of Christ’s appearance to Abraham, he also indicated in this passage that Joshua needed faith to see his Lord.⁷⁰ In the same way, Christians who seek fellowship with Christ, who by the instruction and power of the Holy Spirit seek union with God and strive to grow in the grace bestowed upon them, will be “likely to see him.”⁷¹ In his sermon “Joshua’s Vision,” Spurgeon spoke directly to Joshua’s Christophanical experience. “There He stands, Jesus, God over all, blessed forever, yet a man. Most surely God, but with equal certainty bone of our

66. *NPSP* 2:31.

67. *MTP* 14:89.

68. *Ibid.*, 88.

69. *Ibid.*, 89.

70. *MTP* 14:90. Spurgeon concluded, “I do not read that even Caleb saw this man with his sword drawn; only Joshua saw him, because Joshua was the most spiritual and the most active.”

71. *Ibid.*

bone, and flesh of our flesh.”⁷² One would be remiss to believe that, in this context, Spurgeon posited that Christ became incarnated in flesh and blood in the same way that he did upon his incarnation in Bethlehem. However, Spurgeon, who in this particular case leapt from the scriptural text to its intended application with little transition, seemed to indicate that Christ “is in the midst of his church”⁷³ in the same way that he was when he appeared to Joshua. Other examples exist in which Spurgeon spoke about post-resurrection Christophanical appearances. In his sermon “Taught That We May Teach,” he indicated that Christ manifested himself spiritually to many throughout the course of history:

There were more manifestations of Christ in Scotland among the heather and the hills in the days of bloody Claverhouse than there are now. There was more seen of Christ in France, I do believe, in the days of the Huguenots than ever is seen now. I fear me that our Master has come to be almost a stranger in the land in these days, compared with what he was once, when his people wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented; for then he was meeting them at every turn and corner. Let us hope that if days are gloomy now, and we ourselves are in trouble, our Beloved will come and manifest himself to us as he does not to the world.⁷⁴

Given Spurgeon’s biting remarks about the rise of Mormonism in his day and its teaching that Jesus Christ appeared in America,⁷⁵ it is obvious that a spiritual interpretation must be applied to the preceding paragraph. While Spurgeon did believe in post-resurrection Christological appearances, as is discussed later in this

72. *Ibid.*, 88.

73. *Ibid.*

74. *MTP* 27:39.

75. *NPSP*, vol. 2, 182. Concerning the Book of Mormon, Spurgeon said, “There never could be a delusion more transparent, or a counterfeit less skillful, and more lying upon the very surface.” See also *MTP* 37:45, in which Spurgeon described Mormonism as “one of the most modern pretenders to inspiration. . . . I could not blame you should you laugh outright while I read aloud a page from that farrago.”

chapter, he would not have had his listeners believe in post-apostolic, physical manifestations of Christ, for “at this moment Christ is in heaven pleading for us.”⁷⁶

The fourth and final Christophany to which Spurgeon alluded occurs in the third chapter of the book of Daniel in which Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who would not worship the golden image created by King Nebuchadnezzar, are thrown into a fiery furnace. Unique in this instance is the fact that Nebuchadnezzar, who did not have faith in the God of the Jews, sees the appearance of Christ standing in the furnace. Given his previous statements, the burden of proof to explain this event rested on Spurgeon’s shoulders. “Nebuchadnezzar was not far from the kingdom,”⁷⁷ he argued. Daniel had interpreted his dreams, and he even acknowledged that God, Jehovah, was the greatest god of all.⁷⁸ However, not only did King Nebuchadnezzar see Christ standing in the furnace, but Nebuchadnezzar’s imperial tyrant, who likely did not know of the God Jehovah, also declared, “Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?”⁷⁹ In his case, faith was not required to see Christ.

According to Spurgeon, when Christ saw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego standing in the fiery furnace, he might have said to himself, “Brave, brave men! I will leave the throne of God in heaven to go and stand by their side.”⁸⁰ Then Spurgeon articulated the manner in which Christ descended—“invisibly.”⁸¹ Elsewhere, Spurgeon explained this invisible descent and the manner in which these

76. *MTP* 12:366.

77. *MTP* 37:421.

78. *Ibid.*

79. *MTP* 11:666.

80. *MTP* 37:431.

81. *Ibid.*

three men saw Christ. “These brave men dared the rage of an infuriated tyrant because they saw him who is invisible.”⁸² Is it the case that great faith was needed to encounter Christ in the Old Testament? Provided that Nebuchadnezzar and his imperial guard also saw Christ standing in the furnace, one may conclude that Spurgeon understood Daniel’s Christophany as having “won the admiration”⁸³ of Nebuchadnezzar and his imperial guard, but their ability to see this appearance of Christ was not dependent on their faith. Not only did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego win the favor of their earthly king, but Spurgeon also noted that they “had won the admiration and the sympathy of the Son of God, who left heaven itself, that he might come and stand side by side with them.”⁸⁴ Here, Spurgeon demonstrated that Christ’s salvific involvement with his elect occurred before the grand work of his atonement commenced in Bethlehem.

Spurgeon also expounded upon additional Old Testament Christophanies. Such instances include the occasions when Christ told Isaac to “fear not;” when the Lord, who looked like bronze, holding a linen cord and a measuring rod, appeared to Ezekiel; when Solomon dialogued with Christ concerning the building of the temple;⁸⁵ and when Moses encountered Christ at the burning bush.⁸⁶ Two New Testament pre-incarnation Christophanies in Spurgeon’s theology include Zacharias’s encounter in Luke 1 with the heavenly visitor and the occasion when Christ, who was

82. *MTP* 32:630.

83. *MTP* 37:431.

84. *Ibid.*

85. *MTP* 26:229; *MTP* 27:37-44; *MTP* 35:25-36.

86. Spurgeon seemingly confused *Theophanies* and *Christophanies* in this passage. See *MTP* 27:38 and *MTP* 45:600 for Spurgeon’s declaration that the burning bush was the manifestation of Jesus Christ. In *NPSP* 3:332 and *MTP* 40:367, the burning bush was a manifestation of God the Father.

about to be conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary, appeared to Joseph in a dream.⁸⁷ Spurgeon also expounded upon post-resurrection Christophanies such as the cases of Jesus's appearances to the two men who were traveling on the road to Emmaus, to Mary in the garden, to the disciples in the upper room, and to Peter on the shores of Galilee.⁸⁸

For Spurgeon, post-resurrection Christophanies differed from pre-incarnation Christophanies in that Christ had already assumed flesh. Prior to his condescension in Bethlehem, Christ pre-figured himself only in accordance with who he would become. However, after his resurrection, Christ needed only to retain what he had already become. Additionally, in the case of Saul on the road to Damascus, who "heard a voice but saw no man,"⁸⁹ Spurgeon believed that a physical manifestation of Christ was not necessary for Saul since Jesus had already identified himself verbally.⁹⁰ However, in being "caught up to the third heaven" in 2 Cor. 12:2, Paul did see and hear Christ, as did John on the isle of Patmos when he encountered Christ both visually and audibly.⁹¹

Concerning post-apostolic Christophanies, Spurgeon's statements such as "Hath Christ appeared to thee?"⁹² and "the Lord appeared to each one of us"⁹³ should be taken in their spiritualized meanings. However, Spurgeon speculated, "if Christ

87. *MTP* 62:27; Spurgeon, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 14.

88. *MTP* 15:477; *MTP* 51:481-92; *MTP* 62:577-88; *NPSP* 3:81-88.

89. *MTP* 11:496.

90. *MTP* 55:42. Spurgeon noted, "When our Lord met Paul on the road to Damascus, he *said* to him, 'I am Jesus;'" emphasis added.

91. *MTP* 42:402; *MTP* 47:152; *MTP* 18:3; *MTP* 15:3. See also *MTP* 29:182.

92. *MTP* 51:376.

93. *MTP* 36:327.

appeared to his servants in the olden time, and manifested himself to them as bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, in all their trials and their troubles, he will do no less to thee to-day.”⁹⁴ He believed that Christ appeared, whether spiritually or physically, to others, as they are “on record in the biographies of good men.”⁹⁵ For example, John Flavel, “one of the most temperate of the Puritans, and one not at all given to anything like fanaticism,”⁹⁶ was once traveling on horseback and found himself encountering Christ with such intensity that he began to bleed and was forced to wash his face in a brook. Also, in the case of a Mr. Tennant, “one of the most earnest and seraphic men who ever proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ,”⁹⁷ he regularly encountered Christ so palpably before he preached that he had to be carried into the pulpit.⁹⁸

Spurgeon himself testified to encountering a Christophanical mystical experience in Cambridge while walking through Midsummer Common. As he contemplated “the joys of scholarship”⁹⁹ and “was seeking to go to college, to leave my poor people in the wilderness that I might become something great,”¹⁰⁰ he heard “what seemed [to be] a loud voice” quoting Jer. 45:5: “‘Seekest thou great things for thyself, Seek them not!’”¹⁰¹ In some retellings of this experience, Spurgeon

94. *MTP* 7:2.

95. *MTP* 8:346.

96. *Ibid.*

97. *MTP* 46:86.

98. *MTP* 8:346.

99. *Ibid.*, 101.

100. *NPSP* 4:408.

101. *ST* 1:125.

emphasized that he heard “very distinctly” these words, whereas in other accounts, “that text came to [his] heart.”¹⁰² Spurgeon’s remembrance of this episode in his life may also have been influenced by his reading of John Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* in which Bunyan recalled, “As I was travelling into the country, and musing on the wickedness and blasphemy of my heart, and considering the enmity that was in me to God, that scripture came into my mind, *He hath made peace by the blood of his cross.*”¹⁰³ Regardless, this instance and others show that Spurgeon was not inclined to disregard audible or visual manifestations of the Christ who actively involves himself with the creation, sustentation, and redemption of his chosen people.

New Testament

The functional Christology of Charles Spurgeon did not develop in isolation from the theological movements in his day. Therefore, any study of his doctrine of Christ must take into account the authors, writings, and theological trends with which he engaged. Spurgeon, who read both his Bible and his newspaper,¹⁰⁴ kept apprised of the theological advances in Britain and elsewhere and recorded his thoughts, criticisms, and book reviews in his magazine, *The Sword and the Trowel*. By doing so, Spurgeon revealed his awareness of and interaction with the popular authors in his day, and he allowed the observer to see his engagement with his culture. In this

102. *Autobiography* 1:424; *MTP* 8:101.

103. John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, vol. 1 of *The Words of That Eminent Servant of Christ, John Bunyan, Minister of the Gospel and Formerly Pastor of a Congregation at Bedford in Two Volumes* (Philadelphia: T. W. Lord, 1834), 19; italics in the original.

104. See C. H. Spurgeon, *The Bible and the Newspaper* (Albany, OR: Ages Library, 1998).

section, Spurgeon's reaction to two highly influential nineteenth-century works is contextualized and analyzed briefly.

One year after Spurgeon's birth, David Friedrich Strauss published *Das Leben Jesu* in Germany. According to Timothy Larson, this book, even more than Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, contributed to the Victorian "crisis of faith"¹⁰⁵ in that it caused much unrest in evangelical churches by challenging the notion of plenary inspiration and also by doubting Christ's miracles as they are recorded in the Gospel narratives. Moreover, by jettisoning historical presuppositions about the Scriptures, Strauss attempted to unshackle Christianity from its medieval, supernaturalistic constraints.¹⁰⁶ Like Thomas Paine in the late eighteenth century,¹⁰⁷ Strauss sought the "collapse of the historical record"¹⁰⁸ and challenged the literal historical presuppositions of Scripture. The Gospels were laced with mythic narratives, Strauss maintained, and thus, he believed he should de-mythologize their content so that a more accurate reading of Scripture might ensue. Stephen Neill notes, "by the time Strauss had finished this work, there [was] very little in the Gospel records that [had] not yielded to the mythical disintegration."¹⁰⁹ Whereas nineteenth-century non-conservative denominations such as the Unitarians embraced the intellectualism that Strauss espoused, a typical conservative response can be seen from one Athanase

105. Larson, *Contested Christianity*, 43.

106. Chadwick 1:531.

107. See Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason: In Two Parts* (New York: G. N. Devries, 1827).

108. Anthony C. Thiselton, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: The Collected Works and New Essays of Anthony Thiselton* in *Ashgate Contemporary Thinkers on Religion: Collected Works* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 115.

109. Stephen Neill, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1961: The Fifth Lectures, 1962* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 15.

Coquerel who, in 1848, wrote, “The name of Dr. Strauss is surrounded amongst us with a kind of satanic halo—a sort of odour of blasphemy exhales from it; his work excites alarm, and is looked upon as an inspiration of him who is called the *Father of Lies*. . . . It is almost a sin to read these volumes.”¹¹⁰

Spurgeon, who believed that “each generation seems to bring forth its own set of men who set themselves to oppose God’s truth from some fresh point,”¹¹¹ did not possess a robust understanding of the German language and depended solely upon George Elliot’s 1846 translation.¹¹² In direct protest against Strauss, he discouraged his congregation from reading *Das Leben Jesu* and instead recommended that they should read the Gospel accounts of Christ’s life, for in them is found the genuine recording of Christ. “I advise you all frequently to read the life of Christ as it is recorded by the four Evangelists; that is the best ‘Life of Christ’ that ever was written, or ever will be; and all the rest of the ‘Lives of Christ’ might as well be burnt; for you can get a better idea of Christ’s life from the four Gospels than from all other books put together.”¹¹³ One must acknowledge, however, that Spurgeon also recommended to his students other books in addition to the Scriptures, including Philip Schaff’s *The Person of Christ* and J. A. W. Neander’s *The Life of Jesus Christ in Its Historical Development*. He intended these two works to supplement the Gospel narratives, even

110. Athanase Coquerel, *An Answer to Dr. Strauss’ Life of Christ* (London: Arthur Hall & Co., 1848), 1; italics in the original.

111. *MTP* 23:677.

112. Chadwick 1:532. George Eliot was the pseudonym of Marian Evans, an “ex-evangelical Warwickshire girl of 27.” See also *MTP* 38:267.

113. *MTP* 47:138.

though he considered the latter “unsatisfactory from the standpoint of evangelical theology.”¹¹⁴

An examination of Spurgeon’s attitude toward New Testament higher critical scholarship reveals an embattled posture.¹¹⁵ Gone were the golden days of Puritanism when the Holy Scripture enjoyed generations of divines who expounded its truth. Dead were the Owens and Baxters who delighted in Christ instead of attacking his work. Spurgeon found himself trapped in the midst of a generation in which “nothing appears to be more popular, at this present time, than the casting of doubts upon everything that is sacred.”¹¹⁶ When Spurgeon compared nineteenth-century England to Bunyan’s allegorical landscape, he offered the claim that churches suffered from “lying down on the settles of Lukewarmness in the Arbors of the Enchanted Ground.”¹¹⁷ Indeed, “not even Doubting Castle with all its host of bones can show so many who have been slain there.”¹¹⁸ Spurgeon’s interest in delivering pilgrims both from slumber in the Enchanted Ground and skepticism in the Doubting Castle forced him to resist the ever-moving currents of the higher critical movement of his day.

Spurgeon’s relentless front against skepticism likely would have been more substantial had he possessed a greater knowledge of the German language. In fact, it may be the case that Spurgeon’s deficiency in German prevented any scholarly or credible engagement with German theologians altogether. He admitted, “I have

114. *ST* 6 34; *Commenting*, 154; *Lectures* 2:51.

115. *MTP* 24:465. Spurgeon maintained, “The gentlemen of the higher criticism . . . and all the other braggers of this marvellously enlightened nineteenth century are up in arms against the believers in Jesus.”

116. *MTP* 48:208.

117. *NPSP* 2:81.

118. *Ibid.*

sometimes tried to muddle my way through chapters of Germany neology. . . . It is too hard and difficult for any intellects, except they happen to be of the German type, to be able to find a way through its labyrinths.”¹¹⁹ Although he attempted to extract what he could from the latest writers of German theology,¹²⁰ Spurgeon’s reliance on E. T. Gibson’s translations reveals his linguistic incompetency in that it allowed only for interactions with translated German sources. Spurgeon’s perusal of German theological works and the tremendous difficulty he experienced in such endeavors is seen best in a statement in his sermon “The Moral of a Miracle”:

If you have ever read the history of sceptical thought in Germany—not that I recommend you to do so, for it is a sore labour and a weariness of spirit—but if you have ever waded through any of these histories of philosophy as I have myself, you will doubtless have observed a thought rising up like a cloud full of portents, and covering the Fatherland with its fantastic shadows till the people are led to see everything in a new light, or under a fresh colouring.¹²¹

In this way, Julius Hare’s desire—“We need the weapons of Germany to defeat the Germans”¹²²—could not be fulfilled in Spurgeon. Theologians more competent than Spurgeon, and more interested in combating German ideology, would be needed to engage and disarm skeptical scholars. Nevertheless, the resistance of London’s most popular pastor, and eventually the world’s most popular preacher, against higher critical scholarship served as a stabilizing role in preserving the orthodox Christian principles inherent to Baptist identity in nineteenth-century England.

Spurgeon used the images of clouds, fog, and smoke to represent the theological skepticism coming out of Germany. “Scepticism is a smoking map,” he

119. *MTP* 18:58.

120. *ST* 6:104.

121. *MTP* 24:644.

122. Julius Hare, *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor*, (1849) 47-50, quoted in Chadwick 1:544.

said, “which, while it gives no light, loads the atmosphere with a thick darkness, if not with a stench.”¹²³ Additionally, Spurgeon remarked that “German smoke has hail a good deal to do with ‘*modern theology*.’”¹²⁴ Since higher criticism clouded orthodox biblical truth and shrouded the believer from adopting a childlike faith in Christ, one is not surprised that, in light of Delitzsch’s praise of A. F. Tholuck’s commentary on Hebrews, Spurgeon commented, “We understand the Epistle better without *Tholuck* than with him. Clouds of smoke and volleys of hard words destroy our equanimity.”¹²⁵ Heretical doctrines were “excessively cloudy and smoky”¹²⁶ in that they disguised a traditional understanding of Christ, resulting in a “ballooning in theology” that might benefit intellectuals and professors but “is of no use to poor souls down here below.”¹²⁷

In contrast to what was perceived as the hazy transmission of doctrine, Spurgeon preached a simple gospel grounded in Puritan teachings.¹²⁸ Theological ballooning simply would not do since, after all, “he is safest who keeps on the ground.”¹²⁹ Skepticism had no home in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, nor did Spurgeon’s Pastors’ College entertain its heretical presuppositions. Indeed, Spurgeon anchored the College not in trendy theologies, but rather in seventeenth-century Puritan teachings that exalted God’s Word as divinely inspired and embraced the

123. *ST* 7:259.

124. Spurgeon, *Salt-Cellars* 1:214; italics in the original.

125. *Commenting*, 189; italics in the original.

126. *MTP* 53:398.

127. *MTP* 33:705.

128. *ST* 3:43. See also “Use Plain Anglo-Saxon,” *ST* 8:54.

129. *MTP* 22:358.

miracles of Christ's public ministry. Spurgeon believed that Puritan teachings would best equip students to combat the doubt and skepticism fostered by German thinkers, writers, and theologians. "This is a Working Men's College of the Christian order," he explained, "and will, we trust, prevent many from seeking mental culture in regions where modern doubt and masked infidelity mingle with the instruction."¹³⁰

Spurgeon's literal, historical interpretation of Christ's life demanded defense against Germany's Strauss and also against England's "home-bred heresy-spinners, such as Maurice and Huxley" who were "very great at anything metaphysical, geological, anthropological, or any other ology, except theology."¹³¹ His sentiment is preserved in his sermon "The Simplicity and Sublimity of Salvation," preached two years before his death. "You are to believe on *the Christ as he is revealed in the Scriptures*. You are to take him as you find him here, not as Renan, not as Strauss, or anybody else."¹³² According to Spurgeon, the century had been "befooled by its statesmen and philosophers."¹³³

Not only did Strauss's work threaten the fabric of Nonconformity, but in Spurgeon's estimation, the 1860 publication of *Essays and Reviews*¹³⁴ further advanced unevangelical leanings. Published shortly after the release of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, *Essays and Reviews* was written by churchmen, and one layman, who worked independently to create a volume that they intended to liberate Christian religion from "the repetition of conventional language, and from traditional methods

130. *ST* 4:480.

131. *ST* 3:45.

132. *MTP* 38:267; italics in the original.

133. *MTP* 24:465.

134. *Essays and Reviews*, 7th ed. (London: Savill and Edwards, 1861).

of treatment.”¹³⁵ Though it did not initially find success, as Bernard Reardon observes, *Essays and Reviews* eventually became quite influential.¹³⁶

As one might expect, Spurgeon offered no leniency to the authors of this “heap of worthless muck which has polluted the church, and defiled the souls of men.”¹³⁷ He lamented,

We have lived to see what we scarcely ever dreamed to be possible—clergymen of the Church of England themselves denying the truths which they swore they would defend, and in their “Essays and Reviews” seeking to cast down those spiritual things which once they professed to have understood when they claimed to have received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of their bishop.¹³⁸

Comparing *Essays and Reviews* to a hurricane that would eventually blow over, Spurgeon believed that “what was in reality nothing more than a storm in a teacup has been exaggerated until all the sea of Christendom is tossed with tempest.”¹³⁹

Insomuch as these essays used arithmetic against revelation, Spurgeon observed that they challenged traditional views concerning the dating of Old Testament events and, ultimately, the veritability and credibility of canonical writings. “Many sceptics almost screamed with delight,” submitted Spurgeon, “when they discovered that now, now, now, there was some excuse for not obeying God.”¹⁴⁰ Intolerable were their conclusion, criminal their presuppositions.¹⁴¹ In Spurgeon’s mind, these heretics were

135. Ibid., “To the Reader.”

136. Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age: A Survey from Coleridge to Gore* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1980), 321.

137. *MTP* 20:454.

138. *MTP* 7:474.

139. *MTP* 9:61.

140. *MTP* 14:342-43.

141. Spurgeon, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 87.

conduits for ungodliness and, like a virus, their ideas plagued the churches of Spurgeon's London.

The drift away from Chalcedonian Christological teachings toward an anti-supernaturalism that became prevalent in nineteenth-century scholarship reduced Jesus Christ to little more than a "good man," stripped Christ "not only of his halo but of his otherness,"¹⁴² and found unwavering resistance from Spurgeon, who continually pleaded for the church to return to the *radix* of truth.¹⁴³ The statements Spurgeon offered in his exposition of Matt. 22:25-28, in which the Sadducees confronted Jesus with the story of seven men, also may be applied allegorically to the seven men who contributed to *Essays and Reviews*. "When the light of God's Word was poured upon their seven men of straw," Spurgeon observed, "they vanished into thin air."¹⁴⁴ Although deeming his century to be in crisis,¹⁴⁵ Spurgeon maintained that God "still reigns as universal King and Lord notwithstanding all the efforts of the Pope, the Devil, and *Essays and Reviews*."¹⁴⁶

The nineteenth-century historical critical movement challenged two primary theological teachings, namely the inspired Word of God, that is the Scripture, and also the revealed Word of God, that is, the incarnated person of Jesus Christ. J. R. H. Moorman helpfully observes that during this age of criticism, ecclesial sources of authority must be taken into consideration. The Anglo-Catholics held to the institution of the church for their final authority; the liberals to their scientifically enlightened

142. Chadwick 2:61.

143. *Lectures* 3:49.

144. Spurgeon, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 316.

145. *MTP* 53:450.

146. *Ibid.*; italics in the original.

perception of truth.¹⁴⁷ The evangelicals, however, believed that the Holy Scripture was the ultimate source of authority. Products of the Reformation, evangelicals of nineteenth-century Britain were confident in the truthfulness of God's Word and, in keeping with the Westminster Confession, they declared that the Holy Scripture "ought to be believed and obeyed."¹⁴⁸ For those for whom *ad fontes* was the aim, an assault against the integrity of the Scriptures would leave them without a fountain from which to drink. When the Scriptures came under attack, suddenly the content of the inspired Word demanded defense. "Everything now seemed threatened," notes Moorman. "Not only Creation and the Fall, but the Incarnation and even the Love of God."¹⁴⁹ Reardon observes that in the opening essay of *Essays and Reviews*, "The Education of the World," Frederick Temple argued that the maturity of modernity required a more sophisticated, "adult-like" study of the Scriptures to replace the adolescent naivety of the past.¹⁵⁰ In this way, Spurgeon's conviction that a believer must obtain child-like obedience and faith in Christ stood in radical opposition to the critical nineteenth-century zeitgeist.¹⁵¹ Colquitt is correct in noting that Spurgeon was "more dogmatic than polemical in his conclusion. He hated controversy, and accepted in child-like faith great truths which could not be comprehended in their entirety."¹⁵²

Benjamin Jowett's essay, "On the Interpretation of Scripture," challenged the Alexandrian interpretation of Scripture that Spurgeon practiced, stating, "Where there

147. Moorman, 376.

148. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, "Of the Holy Scripture" (1646), ch. 1, IV.

149. Moorman, 377.

150. Reardon, 323.

151. *NPSP* 6:169.

152. Colquitt, 17.

is no critical interpretation of Scripture, there will be a mystical or rhetorical one.”¹⁵³ Likewise, the “flippant and contemptuous tone”¹⁵⁴ of Rowland Williams toward the Scripture in his essay, “Bunsen’s Biblical Researches,”¹⁵⁵ would also have engendered animadversion from Spurgeon. In *Commenting and Commentaries*, Spurgeon ridiculed Philip Desprez’s *Daniel* for being of the same school as *Essays and Reviews* in its treatment of Daniel’s prophecy of Christ.¹⁵⁶ Since “the author cannot see the Messiah in Daniel,” the work was “worse than useless.”¹⁵⁷ The New Testament did not “fare any better than the Old at the hands of these invaders.”¹⁵⁸ The miraculous and supernatural claims about the life of Christ were deconstructed to the point that the authors of *Essays and Reviews* accused the narrators of Scripture of lying.¹⁵⁹

The person of Jesus Christ, so fundamental to the evangelical believer, also found assault during this time. His miracles were discredited; his miraculous incarnation, resurrection, and ascension disbelieved; and his God-hood came into question. To many scholars, Jesus Christ was nothing more than a man who, though exceptional, remained merely man.¹⁶⁰ The quest to discover the historical Jesus occupied the minds of self-conscious intellectual individuals. B. G. Worrall notes that

153. Benjamin Jowett, “On the Interpretation of Scripture” in *Essays and Reviews*, 371-72.

154. Bowen, 168.

155. Rowland Williams, “Bunsen’s Biblical Researches,” in *Essays and Reviews*, 50-93.

156. *Commenting*, 127; *Essays and Reviews*, 76-77.

157. *Commenting*, 127.

158. Arthur Mursell, quoted in *Lectures* 3:50.

159. Chadwick 1:530.

160. B. G. Worrall, *The Making of the Modern Church: Christianity in England since 1800*, Rev. ed. (London: SPCK, 1993; repr., 2001), 117.

the phrase *Jesus of history* represented this movement in that scholars sought to liberate Jesus from certain doctrines such as his divinity and his work of atonement.¹⁶¹

In staunch opposition to this movement, Spurgeon believed in the historical reliability of the life of Christ as found in the Gospels. Since Jesus was God, in Spurgeon's mind, miracles and supernatural accomplishments were not only easily believable, but anticipated. Had Jesus not proven himself through mighty acts of power, his divinity might have been questioned. This teaching proved fundamental to Spurgeon's understanding of Christology, and salvation in general, for without a God-man who physically became incarnate in time, space, and history, who physically died at the hands of the Roman soldiers, who physically rose from the dead, and who physically ascended from earth to sit on his throne at the right hand of the Father, Christianity would lose its life-saving power. Thus, in Spurgeon's belief, both the inspired and revealed Words are essential to the Christian faith, for "Christ and his Word must go together."¹⁶² To remove Christ from Scripture would be to burglarize the Word of its power. Likewise, to remove Scripture from Christ would be to rob the very prophecy which Christ fulfills. In his sermon "Three Important Precepts," Spurgeon reflected on his commitment to both the inspired and revealed Words. "I have believed this Bible to be God's Word; and after all the destructive criticism which I have heard, I still believe it. I have believed Christ to be my Savior; and after all the doubts of his Deity and atonement lately vented and invented, I still believe it."¹⁶³

161. Worrall, 118.

162. *MTP* 34:110.

163. *MTP* 36:366.

This comment prompts the question, How well did Spurgeon understand the force of such criticisms? Though Spurgeon interacted with higher criticism to a certain degree, he tended to reject immediately anything that appeared to question the authority of Scripture, the veritability of the miracles, the traditional dating of the canonical books, and any other tenet of orthodox Christianity. In the instance that Spurgeon deemed a book unacceptable for orthodox belief, his interaction with it ceased, for the agenda of higher criticism, as he interpreted it, threatened the advance of holiness and faith in the life of a believer. A spiritualized Jesus who lived only in the imagination of the Gospel writers could not save anyone, and an untrustworthy Scripture that was teeming with errors, contradictions, and propaganda was not worth reading. “Let us believe in the real Jesus as he is revealed in the Scriptures,”¹⁶⁴ Spurgeon concluded, for through the real person of Jesus Christ, about whom the Scriptures truthfully testify, salvation is attainable. In a clever conclusion to his address at the Pastors’ College in March of 1874, Spurgeon summarized the contribution he sought to make to the age of the Victorians:

It is quite certain, dear friends, that now or never we must be decided, because the age is manifestly drifting. You cannot watch for twelve months without seeing how it is going down the tide; the anchors are pulled up, and the vessel is floating to destruction. It is drifting now, as near as I can tell you, south-east, and is nearing Cape Vatican, and if it drives much further in that direction it will be on the rocks of the Roman reef. We must get aboard her, and connect her with the glorious steam-tug of gospel truth, and drag her back. I should be glad if I could take her round by Cape Calvin, right up into the Bay of Calvary, and anchor her in the fair haven which is close over by the cross. God grant us grace to do it. We must have a strong hand, and have our steam well up, and defy the current; and so by God’s grace we shall both save this age and the generations yet to come.¹⁶⁵

164. *MTP* 29:315.

165. *ST* 4:43.

Against the flow of society, Spurgeon sought to reform the church of God by ushering souls from “Cape Calvin” to “Cape Calvary.” As long as souls were perishing to hell, no time could be wasted arguing with skeptics. “Preach Christ or nothing,” he told his students. “Don’t dispute or discuss except with your eye on the cross.”¹⁶⁶

Spurgeon’s blatant disregard for “modern thought” is perceivable in his writings and sermons throughout his ministry in London. While the majority of his time and energy involved exegeting, preaching, and teaching the Scriptures, and fulfilling his obligations as pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, president of the Pastors’ College, and executive administrator of a host of other ministries in London, Spurgeon could not pretend to be uninvolved with the theological landscape of his day. Statements such as, “We who have contended with horses are not to be wearied by footmen,”¹⁶⁷ “Brethren worse difficulties have occurred to us than any that have ever been penned by the most notorious infidels,”¹⁶⁸ and “Whenever I hear the sceptic’s stale attacks upon the Word of God, I smile within myself, and think, ‘Why, you simpleton!’”¹⁶⁹ only reveal his engagement all the more. In Spurgeon’s resistance to such skepticism lies his contribution.

In order for Spurgeon’s doctrine of the life of Christ to become clearer, it must be analyzed against the background of the relevant nineteenth-century higher critical literature that Spurgeon engaged. In the following sections, Spurgeon’s theology of

166. *Lectures* 3:93.

167. *Ibid.*, 48.

168. *MTP* 22:435.

169. *Lectures* 3:48.

the key moments in the life of Christ will be examined in light of his theology in general.

Birth

According to avowed atheist Richard Dawkins, the nineteenth-century “was the last time when it was possible for an educated person to admit to believing in miracles like the virgin birth without embarrassment.”¹⁷⁰ While Dawkins’s statement is understandable in that there were some, like Charles Spurgeon, who maintained a robust doctrine of the virgin birth without embarrassment, in actuality the vast majority of scholars, buttressed by a tradition of eighteenth-century scientific enquiry, could not admit to such beliefs in polite company.¹⁷¹ Indeed, the doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ became a source of ridicule in nineteenth-century theology and resulted in division, disputes, and crisis.

Historical critical scholarship and its mockery of supernaturalism questioned the credibility of the four Gospels in transmitting an accurate portrayal of the life of Christ. Strauss, who could not reconcile the miraculous events he encountered in Scripture with historical reality, dismissed a doctrine like the miraculous virgin birth as scientifically improbable and superstitious. Other scholars believed that this doctrine represented the ecclesial propaganda that had blinded pre-enlightened theologians throughout the ages. It was nothing less than “primitive ignorance”¹⁷² to

170. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Great Britain: Bantam Press, 2006), 187.

171. C. G. Berkouwer, *The Work of Christ*, in *Studies in Dogmatics*, trans. Cornelius Lambregtse (Kampen, The Netherlands: J. H. Kok, n.d.; repr., Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 123.

172. Stanley J. Tambiah, *Edmund Leach: An Anthropological Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 269.

believe that Jesus Christ was born in the absence of human sperm, for the very historical humanity of Christ depended on his conception by a human male.¹⁷³

The veritability of Scripture, once assumed by orthodox Christians, was now openly interrogated and challenged. It had become fashionable to posit, as did German theologian Paul Wilhelm Schmiedel, that the story of the virgin birth was manufactured by Gentile mythologies and therefore had no actual basis in historical reality.¹⁷⁴ Victorians of all classes, denominations, and creeds were now given permission to question their faith with the highest degree of scholarship backing their inquisition. Equipped with newly laid railways, late nineteenth-century travelers also questioned the uniqueness of their Christian belief when, to their astonishment, they discovered similar miraculous birth and crucifixion “myths” in other religious traditions.¹⁷⁵ The Gospel myths, then, became as effortless to dismiss as the myths of non-British cultures. Thus, the Gospel narratives were de-mythologized. “Embarrassing birth legends”¹⁷⁶ were replaced with more “advanced” interpretations of history.

Spurgeon had little patience for such thinking. In his mind, as “ladies take to croquet or archery,”¹⁷⁷ so the modern skeptic played with sacred truth.¹⁷⁸ Unable to

173. William E. Phipps, *Supernaturalism in Christianity: Its Growth and Cure* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2008), 18.

174. Henry Clay Sheldon, *Unbelief in the Nineteenth Century: A Critical History* (London: Robert Culley, 1907; repr., Elibron Classics Series by Adamant Media Corporation, 2004), 364.

175. J. M. Robertson, *History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 2 (London: Watts & Co., n.d.), 366.

176. William R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem: A Critical Analysis* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1976), 42.

177. *ST* 4:42.

178. *Ibid.*

bow to Scripture as God's graciously given revelation, these professing infidels were wicked and sarcastic.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, Spurgeon remarked that their "capital [was] on a steamboat somewhere between Unitarianism and Pantheism."¹⁸⁰ On the one hand Spurgeon considered them deceitful foxes, fostering doubt in the hearts of God's holy people by puzzling them with all sorts of riddles and questions.¹⁸¹ However, on the other hand they were "human jellyfish" that changed their creed as often as they changed their appearance.¹⁸²

Ironically, though higher critics created what was, in Spurgeon's estimation, an age of "dolls and comedy,"¹⁸³ he believed that they were the ones who were doomed to "laugh on the other side of thy face one of these days."¹⁸⁴ Spurgeon gave no sympathy to those who amalgamated ignorance with arrogance.¹⁸⁵ His attitude is best encapsulated in a story he told to his students at the Pastors' College. Once, when openly challenged by a skeptic who confessed, "I cannot pin my faith to a book or a history; I want to see present facts,"¹⁸⁶ Spurgeon replied, "*You* cannot see them, because your eyes are blinded; but the facts are there none the less."¹⁸⁷ Spurgeon had no interest in standing toe-to-toe with Strauss, Renan, or any of the other academic

179. *MTP* 18:58; *MTP* 58:615; *MTP* 53:235; *MTP* 43:183.

180. Spurgeon, *Bible and Newspaper*, 98.

181. Spurgeon, *Salt-Cellars* 2:328; *Lectures* 3:94.

182. Spurgeon, *Bible and Newspaper*, 98.

183. *ST* 4:42.

184. *MTP* 55:195.

185. *MTP* 60:496.

186. *Lectures* 3:2.

187. *Ibid.*, 3:2; italics in the original.

scholars. He was a preacher, not a debater,¹⁸⁸ and though the threat from higher criticism was not reciprocated other than through derogatory comments offered in his sermons and in *The Sword and the Trowel*, Spurgeon did in fact keep apprised of “heretical” Christological developments in order to debunk them for his congregation.

Spurgeon never entertained the presumption that canonical writers invented stories to prove the veritability of the Christian faith, nor did he believe the doctrine of Christ’s virgin birth to be fabricated in the tradition of Gentile myths. Spurgeon’s *Puritan Catechism* recorded that Jesus Christ, who from the foundation of the world intended to become incarnate, “became man by taking to himself a true body, (Hebrews 2:14) and a reasonable soul, (Matthew 26:38; Hebrews 4:15) being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary, and born of her, (Luke 1:31,35) yet without sin. (Hebrews 7:26).”¹⁸⁹

For Spurgeon, the event of the virgin birth occurred precisely as the Old Testament writers and prophets predicted. According to Spurgeon, the entirety of the covenant of grace is condensed into Gen. 3:15, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”¹⁹⁰ Spurgeon speculated that Eve likely assumed that she would give birth to the Deliver since she said, ““I have gotten a man, the Lord.””¹⁹¹

Symmetrical in his theology of redemption, Spurgeon maintained that since sin first entered humanity through a woman, the agent of deliverance from sin also came

188. Ibid., 94.

189. Spurgeon, *Puritan Catechism*, 11.

190. C. H. Spurgeon, *Faith’s Checkbook* (Rio, WI: Ages Library, 2006), 6.

191. *MTP* 32:508. Spurgeon did not reveal the version of Scripture he used to quote Genesis 4:1 in this context. He simply said, “according to some readings.” In the KJV, Gen. 4:1 reads, “I have gotten a man *from* the Lord;” emphasis added.

through a woman. “God hath destroyed death by the death of Christ,” he preached, “destroyed sin by the great sin-bearer, yea he has destroyed the dragon by the seed of a woman.”¹⁹² A descendent of Abraham, Jacob, Jesse, and David,¹⁹³ Jesus Christ entered the world according to Isaiah’s prophecy, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.”¹⁹⁴ When the time had come, ““that holy thing””¹⁹⁵ was born of Mary.

Concerning the virginity of Mary, Spurgeon expounded upon the aforementioned passage in Isaiah with the commentary, “The Greek word and the Hebrew are both very expressive of the true and real virginity of the mother, to show us that Jesus Christ was born of woman, and not of man.”¹⁹⁶ In this way, Spurgeon emphasized the sinlessness of Christ. In Spurgeon’s estimation, if Christ had been born of man, he would have inherited a sinful nature, for ““that which is born of the flesh is flesh.””¹⁹⁷ This argument has its holes, of course, for Mary herself was indeed flesh; Joseph bore no more sinful nature in his substance than did Mary. Nevertheless, since Mary was overshadowed by the Spirit and not by man,¹⁹⁸ Spurgeon believed that the innocence of Christ was successfully perpetuated, and he relished the fascinating juxtaposition of divinity and humanity. “Oh, marvelous sight! Let us stand and look at it. A child of a virgin, what a mixture! There is the finite and the infinite,

192. *MTP* 9:106.

193. Spurgeon, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 1; *MTP* 59:97-108; *MTP* 23:639; *Treasury* 3:107.

194. Isa. 7:14; *MTP* 36:493.

195. *MTP* 47:50.

196. *MTP* 40:603-4.

197. *Ibid.*, 604.

198. *MTP* 10:110.

there is the mortal and the immortal, corruption and incorruption, the manhood and the Godhead, time married to eternity, God linked with a creature.”¹⁹⁹

While Spurgeon marveled at this reality, he also acknowledged that any effort to elevate Mary beyond her role as the virgin mother of Jesus Christ should be considered anathema. In 1866, Spurgeon published several quotes in *The Sword and the Trowel* from prominent “Papist”²⁰⁰ statements about the legitimacy of Marian devotion. Though Spurgeon believed E. B. Pusey’s work on the Minor Prophets to be “invaluable,”²⁰¹ and that to his commentary on Daniel “writers must be deeply indebted,”²⁰² he strongly differed on Pusey’s belief that salvation is impossible without acknowledging Mary. He also disagreed with Frederick William Faber who posited that in England, Mary was not preached enough and “the shortcomings of English Roman Catholics are owing to the inadequacy of devotion to her.”²⁰³ The doctrine of Mary that Spurgeon reacted against, though not formal Catholic dogma, was the notion that she was the “Mediatrice with the Redeemer,” the “Co-redemptress” of the world, and “Authoress of everlasting salvation.”²⁰⁴ Even worse for Spurgeon was the Catholic belief that Mary shared a “co-presence” with Christ in the Eucharistic elements. In Spurgeon’s estimation, “one who would receive this must be ready to admit a co-penetration of the body of Christ and of that of the Virgin in the

199. *MTP* 40:604.

200. *ST* 1:160-62.

201. *Autobiography* 4:303. Susannah recorded that her husband inscribed the word “invaluable” in his copy of Pusey’s *The Minor Prophets*.

202. *Commenting*, 129.

203. *ST* 1:160.

204. *Ibid.*, 1:161.

same portion of space i.e. under the sacred species.”²⁰⁵ Spurgeon concluded his summary of this Catholic practice with, “Enough! Enough! . . . ‘For this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.’”²⁰⁶

Spurgeon’s attitude against Catholicism was ubiquitous in his day. Desmond Bowen correctly suggests that according to the vast majority of Englishmen, “it was an adjective of opprobrium which was attached to the title Roman.”²⁰⁷ In Victorian Britain, “Catholicism was perceived as the antithesis of true religion, sapping the manliness of the nation and undermining it politically through its extraterritorial connections with the papacy.”²⁰⁸ A disdain for the veneration of Mary, and for Catholicism in general, had deep roots in England, for if King James II had brought Catholicism back into vogue, as some believed he might, both the Church of England and also separatist Nonconformity would have been severely threatened.²⁰⁹ John Wolffe explains nineteenth-century Catholic sentiment in that the long-anticipated conversion of England was a “promise of the restored destiny as part of the Church universal.”²¹⁰

In this way, the threat of political uprising was always present in nineteenth-century Britain. Five years before Spurgeon’s birth, the Roman Catholic Relief Act of

205. *Ibid.*, 162.

206. *Ibid.*

207. Bowen, 57.

208. John Wolffe, ed., *Religion in Victorian Britain: vol. 5, Culture and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 15.

209. Gordon Rupp, Henry and Owen Chadwick, eds., *Oxford History of the Christian Church: Religion in England 1688-1791* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 180.

210. John Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland 1843-1945* (London: Routledge, 1994), 163.

1829 invited large numbers of Irish immigrants to flock to London. Pope Pius VIII praised King George IV and “told him that nothing could equal the gratitude which he felt.”²¹¹ Chadwick records that the fear of Catholic uprising resulted in the forcing of these immigrants to sign an oath swearing, “I do hereby disclaim, disavow, and solemnly adjure any intention to subvert the present church establishment as settled by law within this realm.”²¹²

However, the threat of political uprising did not find opposition from Spurgeon; rather, a theology that elevated anyone or anything to the status of Christ came under suspicion. For this reason, Spurgeon believed that pictures and icons of the Virgin Mary were best reserved for fire, or to be “dashed in pieces, or in some way destroyed,” for “that is the very best thing to do with anything that ever has been worshipped of mortal man.”²¹³

Spurgeon’s doctrine of the virgin birth developed in reaction to the Catholic and high-church Anglican dependency on Mary. Ian Sellers notes that this over-reaction to Catholic theology was not uncommon to Nonconformity.²¹⁴ During Spurgeon’s first year as a pastor in London, the Roman Catholic Church pronounced that the Virgin Mary was, like Jesus, immaculately conceived.²¹⁵ In no small way did this reality influence Spurgeon’s treatment of Mary. However, Spurgeon

211. Chadwick 1:7.

212. *Ibid.*, 1:21, 1n.

213. *MTP* 40:84.

214. Ian Sellers, *Nineteenth-century Nonconformity* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1977), 24.

215. Hans Joachim Hillerbrand, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Protestantism*, vol. 3 (New York and London, 2004), 1174.

acknowledged the reactionary nature of his doctrine of Christ's virginal conception. In his sermon "The Birth of Christ," he admitted that

because woman Catholics pay too much respect to the Virgin Mary, and offer prayer to her, we are too apt to speak of her in a slighting manner, she ought not to be placed under the ban of contempt, for she could truly sing, "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." I suppose Protestant generations are amongst the "all generations" who ought to call her blessed.²¹⁶

Spurgeon did not hesitate to call Mary blessed.²¹⁷ In his sermon "The Key Note of a Choice Sonnet," he lauded Mary for having been awarded "a wonderful intimation from heaven"²¹⁸ and for responding with the prayer, "'Be it unto me according to thy word."²¹⁹ He added that Mary knew that she was going to be famous in history, for she declared, "'All generations shall come and call me blessed."²²⁰

However, for Spurgeon, Mary's fame must be balanced with "another fame,"²²¹ that is, the fame and glory of Jesus Christ. Mary received honor for being the vessel through which Jesus Christ entered the world, yet instead of harboring the honor for herself, she instead "lays it at his feet" with the words, "'Holy is his name, and his mercy is on them that fear him."²²² Applicably, if the Lord bestows honor upon his servants, Spurgeon believed that robbery resulted from an unreciprocated response. "For robbery here will be fatal," claimed Spurgeon, "he will not give his

216. *MTP* 40:605.

217. *Ibid.*, 486.

218. *MTP* 26:25.

219. *Ibid.*

220. *Ibid.*, 30.

221. *Ibid.*

222. *Ibid.*

glory to another.”²²³ This sentiment is preserved in his sermon title “Believers as Blessed as the Blessed Virgin,”²²⁴ for it encapsulates his anti-Catholic, Puritan sentiments.

Miracles

As the baptism of Jesus Christ has already been treated in chapter 3 with regard to the anointing of the Son by the Father, this analysis of Spurgeon’s Christology now turns to an examination of his beliefs concerning Jesus’s miracles. Born into an age of optimism and growth, Spurgeon saw the Industrial Revolution, fueled by limitless scientific advances, expand the horizons not only of Britain, but also of Europe. All things were possible in this age; all things were explainable. W. J. Reader suggests, “England had a spirit of self confidence, hope and belief in the future, which at its worst might degenerate into smugness but at its best refused to regard any problem as insoluble.”²²⁵ In his homily on Exod. 24:15b, “Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward,” Baptist preacher and beloved friend of Spurgeon, Hugh Stowell Brown,²²⁶ reflected the optimism of the age:

There is a secular sense in which this motto may be understood and very usefully employed, as expressive of the desire and determination to make progress in the world, to achieve success in business, to grapple with and overcome every obstacle that stands in the way of such advancement. And to this application of the motto, I am so far from entertaining any objection, that I

223. Ibid.

224. *MTP* 32:505-16.

225. W. J. Reader, *Victorian England* (London: William Clowes and Sons, Ltd., 1974), 20.

226. *ST* 6:187. Spurgeon invited Brown to preach at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1861. His sermon, “Christian Baptism,” can be found in *MTP* 7:265-72.

wish it were far more than it is the rule approved, adopted and carried out by every man.²²⁷

However healthy the ego of nineteenth-century Britain might have been, skepticism, cynicism, and doubt fostered crisis in the life of evangelical churches, for with the advance of knowledge came the challenge to antiquated understandings of truth. On the grounds of reason, scholars confronted the veritability of Scripture. All the mythical fabrications and supernaturalisms therein contained were subjected to numerous rationalistic and scientific assaults. In his rather idiosyncratic *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth-Century*, Karl Barth reveals that this assault did not constitute a new line of thinking, for the developing skepticism of the eighteenth-century gave birth to a nineteenth-century that extended Enlightenment mentalities.²²⁸ Nevertheless, Meredith is correct in that “dogmas which had traditionally been held to be above criticism were being severely challenged.”²²⁹ The question of the historical accuracies of the miracles, inevitable since the dawning of the Enlightenment, came under attack by rational, scientifically tethered scholars who were prone to dismiss the unexplainable as unbelievable. Not only were miracles transmitted through unreliable canonical witnesses, in these scholars’ eyes, but the scientific probability of their historical actuality also came under question. In a society of unrestrained progress, the faith of the traditionalist gradually acquiesced to the reason of the scholar.

However, the rationalistic challenge to the miracles did not originate with nineteenth-century skepticism. Long before Strauss wrote *Das Leben Jesu*, in the

227. High Stowell Brown, *Manliness and Other Sermons* (1889), 357-62 as quoted in John Briggs and Ian Sellers, eds., *Victorian Nonconformity in Documents of Modern History*, ed. A. G. Dickens and Alun Davies (London: Edward Arnold, 1973), 21.

228. Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth-Century: Its Background and History*, Rev. ed., trans. Brian Cozens and John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1972), 341.

229. Meredith, 194.

seventeenth century Baruch Spinoza attempted to discredit the miracles of Christ's life with his assertion that they not only "breached of natural law and of the universal intelligibility of nature," but were also invented by Jewish writers to "refute or impress the neighbouring Gentiles."²³⁰ German naturalistic deist Hermann Samuel Reimarus, who also believed that miracles could not be reconciled with reason, debunked them on grounds of "*contradiction and consistency*."²³¹ Miracles that appeared contradictory to one another among the four Gospel accounts were as nullified in his thinking as the miracles that were inconsistent with the laws of nature governing the context in which they were performed.²³² Other skeptics such as John Eichorn may be added to this list, along with, as Paul Klose helpfully notes, "DeWette, Vatke, Reuss, Graf, Kuenen, Wellhausen, Baur, and Ritsch, just to name a few."²³³

Nineteenth-century scholarship added its own unique *positivistic* observation to the discrediting of miracles,²³⁴ chiefly that the unscientific first-century attributed "to supernatural causes things we can now satisfactorily explain on a natural basis."²³⁵ In a society that relished inventions, be they scientific, industrial, or religious, the neologist skeptic, reverent toward his newly developed achievements, scoffed at

230. Richard Mason, *The God of Spinoza: A Philosophical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; repr., 2001), 127.

231. James D. G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 30; italics in the original.

232. *Ibid.*

233. Klose, 96.

234. The term *positive* describes the nineteenth-century Christological trend that excludes metaphysical, supernatural, and speculative questions about Christ on the basis that they are not historically or scientifically answerable. See John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 251.

235. Harrison, *Short Life of Christ*, 110.

evangelicals who dismissed “advanced” interpretative methods in favor of “‘the gospel’ with no milk and water modern modifications.”²³⁶ In this context, Spurgeon’s dogged adherence to supernatural doctrine threatened the optimism and progress of the age and, thus, needed to be discredited. Spurgeon’s recommendation of R. C. Trench’s *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, “a work of highest merit,”²³⁷ represented the sort of belligerent ignorance that modern scholars ridiculed in public and despised in secret. Spurgeon’s antiquated religious piety drew its strength from the Puritan past instead of the skeptical present, and for this reason, many have looked upon him as a man behind his times.

Baden Powell’s essay, “On the Study of the Evidences of Christianity,” in *Essays and Reviews* reveals the opinion of many nineteenth-century thinkers that miracles were the “principle obstacles”²³⁸ to religion:

In an evidential point of view it has been admitted by some of the most candid divines, that the appeal to miracles, however important in the early stages of the Gospel, has become less material in later times, and others have even expressly pointed to this as the reason why they have been withdrawn; whilst at the present day the most earnest advocates of evangelical faith admit that outward marvels are needless to spiritual conviction, and triumph in the greater moral miracle of a converted and regenerate soul.²³⁹

Spurgeon, who admitted to feeling “a stiff breeze caused by certain ‘Essays and Reviews,’”²⁴⁰ believed that few people are brought to salvation via belief in the signs and wonders performed by Christ. He confessed, “I doubt not that even to minds

236. McLeod, 70.

237. *Commenting*, 155.

238. Basil Wiley, *More Nineteenth Century Studies: A Group of Honest Doubters* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1980), 145.

239. Baden Powell, “On the Study of the Evidences of Christianity” in *Essays and Reviews*, 141.

240. *MTP* 9:61.

seriously vexed with unbelief, the miracles, instead of being helps to belief, have been trials of faith.”²⁴¹ Even in Christ’s day, Spurgeon noted, this skepticism prevailed. However, Spurgeon used this opinion concerning the role of miracles in conversion to reinforce his single-minded insistence that childlike faith is a necessary ingredient in the obtaining of salvation.

Spurgeon had no tolerance for “*Freethinkers*”²⁴² or Unitarian skeptics who dismissed the viability of miracles because they could not fathom them rationally. Nor did he entertain doubting infidels of “modern thought,” which was “a more evil thing than downright atheism,”²⁴³ because he estimated that in their hearts they disbelieved the same Christ that they revered with their lips. In his *Commenting and Commentaries*, Spurgeon recommended Steinmeyer’s *The Miracles of Our Lord in Relation to Modern Criticism* as an antidote to rationalist unbelief.²⁴⁴ Even though he considered Steinmeyer’s work “useful to those whose heads have been muddled by other Germans,”²⁴⁵ Spurgeon admitted to being “weary of Teutonic answers to Teutonic scepticisms.”²⁴⁶ However, he concluded that “it was needful to hunt down the rationalists, for farmers hunt down rats, but the game does not pay for the trouble.”²⁴⁷

241. *MTP* 8:242.

242. *MTP* 46:362; italics in the original.

243. *MTP* 30:149.

244. *Commenting*, 155.

245. *Ibid.*

246. *Ibid.*

247. *Ibid.*

Spurgeon challenged the salvation of those who would not accept basic Christological miracles.²⁴⁸ To him, they were no better than “the foul sinners of the accursed Sodom” who would have been spared “had they beheld the miracles of Christ.”²⁴⁹ Spurgeon did not, however, advocate an uncritical acceptance of all miracles, for he did not believe that all miracles were of God. He qualified the alleged Roman Catholic miracles such as the headless, one thousand mile pilgrimage of Saint Dennis.²⁵⁰ “The dear man might as well have saved himself and his head the unsightly pilgrimage!” said Spurgeon. “The God of the Scriptures has no hand in such miracles.”²⁵¹ Nevertheless, concerning the acts of Christ as recorded in Scripture, Spurgeon followed the logic that if the miracles could not be embraced because they could not be explained, salvation itself—the greatest miracle of all—must also be brought into question. In this paradigm, belief in the miraculous represented nothing less than belief in the power of God to achieve his salvific purpose. Spurgeon believed that the supernatural accomplishments that were fully realized in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ must be protected against nineteenth-century hostility. He lamented,

Oh! how many people go up and down among us professing to be members of a Protestant Church, and believers in the Scripture, who yet will not acknowledge the miracles of Christ to be authentic, wrought in token of his own personal authority, bearing the witness of his Father, and conveying a clear proof that he was the Son of God! The Lord have mercy upon those who in this respect pierce our dear Redeemer afresh. If any of us have been guilty of this sin, may we be converted from our dangerous error, and led to avow him, like Thomas, “My Lord and my God.”²⁵²

248. *MTP* 26:644 and *MTP* 19:104.

249. Spurgeon, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 82.

250. *MTP* 29:596.

251. *Ibid.*

252. *MTP* 63:171.

For the modern critics, as for the Pharisees in the time of Jesus,²⁵³ Spurgeon offered two options: repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, or skepticism and eternity in hell. “I bring you to that awful place where the two roads meet,” Spurgeon concluded, “—the right, the left—to heaven, to hell—to righteousness, to sin—to God, to fiends! There stand you.”²⁵⁴

For Christians, belief in miracles tests faith, Spurgeon believed; for skeptics, though, signs and wonders were stumbling blocks.²⁵⁵ However, the purpose of miracles extended far beyond a human’s ability to believe in them, he noted. “He [Christ] was a man sent of God, and the wondrous things that he did proved that God was with him.”²⁵⁶ Supernatural acts of power and mercy proved that Christ was not merely a man who claimed to be God; indeed, they proved his divinity.²⁵⁷ On this point, Spurgeon raised the question, “How would men know that he was the very Christ, if they never heard that the sick were healed?”²⁵⁸ He added,

We cannot see how the Lord could be on earth and Lazarus not be raised from the dead when the grief of Martha and Mary had told its tale. We cannot see how the disciples could have been tempest tossed on the Lake of Galilee and the Christ not walk on the water to deliver them. Wonders of power are expected parts of the narrative where Jesus is.²⁵⁹

253. *MTP* 55:503.

254. *MTP* 9:72.

255. *MTP* 8:193.

256. *MTP* 34:221.

257. *MTP* 57:342.

258. *MTP* 34:221.

259. *MTP* 32:231.

Miracles were never conducted without a purpose, in Spurgeon's understanding.

As in the paragraph cited above, a strong teleological emphasis also exists in the following statement: "The miracles of Christ were never unnecessary. They are not freaks of power; they are displays of power it is true, but they all of them have a practical end."²⁶⁰ With the exception of the cursing of the fig tree in Mark 11:12-14, Spurgeon believed the miracles of Christ were benevolent expressions of his love toward humanity; they were, as Spurgeon called them, "pilgrimages of mercy."²⁶¹ In this way, Christ journeyed from village to village, bestowing compassion and mercy on those in need. Spurgeon preached, "The raising of the dead, the feeding of the multitude, the stilling of the tempest, the healing of diseases—what were all these but displays of the lovingkindness of God?"²⁶² The outcasts of society, the lepers, the blind, the poor—for Spurgeon, these were the recipients of the gracious mercy of Christ who healed them, cleansed them, restored them, and forgave them.

Some people, like the leper in Matt. 8:2, approached Jesus. However, Spurgeon noted that for those who could not come to Jesus on their own power, "the Lord went to them where they were, on their beds, or waiting at the pool."²⁶³ Herein lies the active love of God, Spurgeon believed. When humanity failed to approach God on its own, God approached humanity and accomplished what humanity was unable to perform. To this end, the "sick touched his garment and were restored, and

260. *NPSP* 5:209.

261. *Ibid.*, 93.

262. *MTP* 10:97.

263. *MTP* 36:482.

those who were possessed of devils were healed.”²⁶⁴ All along, God was in Christ, ushering a kingdom of light and hope into a society of darkness and despair.

Not only did these signs and wonders confirm Christ’s divinity and display God’s love to God’s people, but for Spurgeon, they were also catechetical tools used to enlighten the minds of Christ’s followers.²⁶⁵ Miracles were “acted sermons fraught with holy doctrine, set forth to us more vividly than it could have been in words.”²⁶⁶ Spurgeon, who understood the usefulness of illustration,²⁶⁷ found in Jesus’s miracles “pictures of a volume of which his sermons are the letterpress.”²⁶⁸ Whereas the parables illustrated the teachings of Christ, the miracles illustrated the parables of Christ in that they were not only stories *about* the kingdom of God, but instead were the very thing itself. In Christ’s miracles, Spurgeon believed that the redemption of God’s elect that had been planned from before the foundation of the world.

Transfiguration

According to Spurgeon, the moment of Christ’s transfiguration should not be classified as a miracle, for “it is according to the nature of Christ that his face should shine.”²⁶⁹ In the transfiguration, Christ, who had “veiled himself in the form of man” lifted the veil “a little”²⁷⁰ and spoke with Moses and Elijah on the mountain. Spurgeon

264. *MTP* 27:98.

265. *MTP* 29:577.

266. *MTP* 8:193.

267. *Lectures* 2:48.

268. *MTP* 34:221.

269. *MTP* 47:263.

270. *MTP* 46:397.

reminded his congregation of Luke's account of the story. "And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening."²⁷¹

Spurgeon observed, "it is worthy of note that he was transfigured while he was praying."²⁷² Jesus Christ had been praying for several hours prior to his changing, he speculated, for his disciples had fallen asleep. If a looser definition of *transfiguration* is applied to this context, one might assume, from Spurgeon's commentary, that every Christian is capable of being transfigured in the same sense that Jesus was, for Spurgeon petitioned, "Wouldst thou glow and glisten in the brightness and glory of the holiness of God? Then, be much in prayer, as Jesus was."²⁷³ In another instance, he continued this appeal. "May you get a call from the Master, 'Follow me unto the Mount of Transfiguration to see my glory, and share in it, and abide with me in sacred, rapt, secret fellowship which the world knoweth nothing of.'"²⁷⁴ Spurgeon concluded, "The recognized presence of God will make a garret as glorious as the Mount of Transfiguration,"²⁷⁵ and in this way, the act of transfiguration could possibly speak to the spiritual maturity of a believer that is attainable through prayerful intimacy with Christ.

However, in his sermon "Waking to See Christ's Glory," Spurgeon applied a strict definition to Christ's transfiguration, noting that Peter was awake when he

271. Luke 9:28-29; *MTP* 56:6.

272. *MTP* 46:25.

273. *MTP* 56:6.

274. *MTP* 12:419.

275. *MTP* 33:407.

beheld his Lord's literal, physical change on the mountain. "It was not something painted by fancy upon their eyeballs, and which had no actual existence," he reported, "but it was a real meeting between their Lord and Moses and Elias."²⁷⁶ No mirage or "phantasm"²⁷⁷ did the disciples witness on that mountain; the transfiguration was not a figment of their imagination. Indeed, it was the "real glory which streamed from the Savior's face,"²⁷⁸ a glory that did not require one to be "fanatical or frenzied"²⁷⁹ to behold.

"Sub-Wesleyan" fanaticism often stigmatized nineteenth-century Nonconformist dissent and its close linkage to the revivalist movement.²⁸⁰ In 1859, enthusiastic expressions of religion, corresponding to the success of American evangelists Charles Finney and James Caughey, swept Britain, particularly North Ireland.²⁸¹ Many understood these forms of enthusiasm to be a "kind of madness" or a "sort of twisting of the mind."²⁸² Others believed that the Second Great Awakening was to blame for the evils of society, for enthusiastic religion often included intense emotional experiences and dissociative behavioral practices such as barking, howling, jumping, fainting, jerking, and dancing.²⁸³ John Wolffe even submits that many

276. *MTP* 46:27.

277. *Ibid.*, 28.

278. *Ibid.*

279. *Ibid.*

280. Briggs and Sellers in Dickens and Davies, 142.

281. *Ibid.*; L. E. Elliott-Binns, *Religion in the Victorian Era*, 2nd ed. (London: Lutterworth Press, 1946; repr., 1953), 212.

282. *MTP* 27:219.

283. Thomas Chalmers, *The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns*, vol. 1 of "The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine" (London: T. Cordeux, 1822), 41; Paul F. Bradshaw, ed., *The New SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* (London: SCM Press, 2002), 90.

current historians assert that nineteenth-century revivalism should be only understood in terms of Edward Thompson's coined phrase, "psychic masturbation," that relieved the physical and emotional stress of the Industrial age.²⁸⁴

Regardless of society's perception of fanaticism, Spurgeon, who believed that society did not have the spiritual faculty to distinguish between emotion and true, fervent worship,²⁸⁵ criticized those who did not evangelize due to a fear that "it might involvement excitement, and they are so proper that they dread anything of that sort."²⁸⁶ Christianity was not to be merely intellectual, believed Spurgeon. Since Christ sought to possess the whole person, including the heart, limiting emotions in preaching was to limit the work of the Spirit. Spurgeon instructed his students to employ all manner of emotions and strategies in their preaching, "from the sledge-hammer to the puff-ball. Be as gentle as a zephyr and as furious as a tornado."²⁸⁷ On the one hand, "the furious energy of unbridled fanaticism the Lord does not use;"²⁸⁸ however, on the other, Spurgeon believed that a passionate urgency for salvation benefitted the conversion of souls.

In his thesis, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon's Theory and Practice of Preaching," Nelson speaks to the earnestness of Spurgeon's homiletic in that "most of his sermons are dominated by the persuasion and exhortative aims."²⁸⁹ Never hesitating to give an emotional appeal for salvation, Spurgeon understood the importance of knowing

284. Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain*, 28.

285. *ST* 7:173.

286. *MTP* 28:545.

287. *Lectures* 1:126.

288. *MTP* 28:377.

289. Nelson, 46.

Christ sympathetically. “God deliver us from a marble heart, cold and hard,”²⁹⁰ he beseeched. Like the Chinese, who painted terrifying faces on their shields before going into battle, so Spurgeon believed society stigmatized him with the image of a *sensationalist*.²⁹¹ “Never mind that terrible word,” he assured his congregation. “It will hurt no one.”²⁹² Just as Meredith is correct in his questioning of Spurgeon’s stereotype as a “fundamentalist,”²⁹³ so Spurgeon’s title as a fanatic must also be questioned. Spurgeon taunted those who labeled him as such,²⁹⁴ for he believed that, according to their definition, fanaticism was “nothing but a true faith in the living God.”²⁹⁵ He likened his opponents to darkness that “does not understand or love the light.”²⁹⁶

When the disciples witnessed the brilliant light that enshrouded Christ, no human-engendered fanaticism could be found. Spurgeon explained,

It was necessary, first, *that Christ’s transfiguration might be known to be a fact,—not a dream, nor a piece of imagination, which had no real existence: “When they were awake, they saw his glory.”* It was a literal matter of fact to them. As surely as Christ was born at Bethlehem, as certainly as he toiled in the carpenter’s shop at Nazareth, as truly as his blessed feet trudged over the holy fields of Judaea, as truly as he healed the sick and preached the gospel wherever he went, and as really as he did actually die upon the cross of Calvary, so it is a matter of plain fact that Jesus Christ did, on a certain mountain—what mountain we do not know,—undergo a wonderful Change, for the time being, in which his glory was marvellously and distinctly displayed so that his three disciples could see it.²⁹⁷

290. *MTP* 24:248.

291. *MTP* 28:545; emphasis added.

292. *Ibid.*

293. Meredith, 233-39.

294. *MTP* 28:648. Spurgeon declared, “Let men be provoked to charge us with fanaticism.”

295. *Ibid.*

296. *MTP* 27:219.

297. *MTP* 46:27; italics in the original.

Spurgeon maintained that in no way did Christ's "wonderful Change" contradict his immutability; the temporary altering of Christ occurred in his appearance, not in his being. Common to being human is the gradual changing of appearance. Jesus, who was fully human, appeared differently as a boy than he did as a teenager and eventually as a man. In the same way, Spurgeon believed that while the transfiguration altered the likeness of Christ with regard to his physical appearance, in his essential being, that is, in the *locus* of his substance, he remained fundamentally unaltered and unchanged.

What kind of change, then, did Spurgeon believe Christ's physical appearance underwent? He argued that the brilliance radiating from Christ was not the invisible "essential glory of Christ's Godhead"²⁹⁸ that existed before time among the three persons of the Trinity. Mortal eyes could not perceive so ancient a glory. Nor was it the "secret spiritual glory"²⁹⁹ that faithful hearts perceive when they locate Christ contemplatively in the Scriptures. Rather, the disciples were "spiritual enough"³⁰⁰ to know that the glorious glow emanating from Christ was a temporary shining that was "shed upon his humanity."³⁰¹ Even more radiant than Moses's face after he descended from Mount Sinai was Christ's glory that "shown with supernatural splendor."³⁰²

298. *Ibid.*, 28.

299. *Ibid.*

300. *Ibid.*

301. *Ibid.*

302. *MTP* 42:107.

Whereas Moses's face merely reflected the glory of God and thereafter glowed, in the face of Christ was shown the primary source of his glorious brilliance.³⁰³

Spurgeon allegorized the story of the transfiguration by saying that Christ's "whole career is the transfiguration of humanity: a wonderful display of how poor human nature's garments can be made whiter."³⁰⁴ To know Christ personally and to enjoy sacred fellowship with God is to be transfigured from sin to grace, from darkness to light, from damnation to salvation. Such was Spurgeon's application of Christ's transfiguration, a sight that gives hope and assurance to all those who witness it. "When we see Jesus save another," he wrote, "and see that marvelous transfiguration which passes over the face of the sacred one, our own faith is greatly confirmed."³⁰⁵ Spurgeon advanced this thought further by comparing the transfiguration of Christ to the glorified state of the believer. "Not Jesus in his transfiguration shall be more complete and perfect than we shall be in ours."³⁰⁶

Crucifixion

For Spurgeon, the crucifixion of Christ found greater significance than his transfiguration.³⁰⁷ So great was the anticipation of Christ's upcoming crucifixion that when Jesus was speaking with Moses and Elijah on the mountain of transfiguration, he thought and spoke of his suffering. Even when he descended from their company,

303. For a comparison of Moses's transfiguration with that of Christ's see *ME*, 26 August, Evening.

304. *MTP* 22:297.

305. *ST* 6:559-60.

306. *NPSP* 6:184.

307. *MTP* 35:404.

noted Spurgeon, “he [was] in a sense undergoing his passion.”³⁰⁸ This insight is typical of Spurgeon, who evidenced a crucicentric fixation, to some degree, in virtually all of his sermons.

In her thesis, “Suffering and Character Formation in the Life and Sermons of Charles Haddon Spurgeon 1834-1892,” Hazra helpfully demonstrates how the theme of Christ’s suffering, and suffering in general, influenced Spurgeon’s understanding of the crucifixion of Christ. Where possible, this section avoids overlapping with Hazra’s research by outlining and analyzing Spurgeon’s doctrine of the cross with particular attention given to the rhetoric Spurgeon used to describe Christ’s work of atonement. Although Spurgeon’s doctrine of the atonement has been investigated unsympathetically by Joseph Archibald Cooper and briefly by Hopkins, thus far, Colquitt presents the best study of this doctrine.³⁰⁹ As the atonement and the crucifixion are intrinsically linked, this section expands upon Colquitt’s research.

Two factors are necessary for answering the question, Why did Spurgeon elevate the passion of Christ to so prominent a place in his Christology? First, Spurgeon’s doctrine of the cross was fashioned by the doctrines of the English Puritans. As the crucifixion influenced the theologies of Richard Baxter, John Owen,

308. *MTP* 42:107.

309. Joseph Archibald Cooper, “The Doctrine of Sin according to Charles Spurgeon and Phillips Brooke” (master’s thesis, University of Chicago, 1917). Cooper explores Spurgeon’s atonement through an investigation into his doctrine of sin. His tendentious presentation of Spurgeon’s doctrine of sin is representative of his synopsis of Spurgeon’s doctrine of atonement. To him, Spurgeon was an unsympathetic preacher who is interested in nothing more than the “penalties which the unrepentant guilt would have to suffer in the world to come,” 13. He adds, “His pictures of the tortures awaiting those who are unsaved are among the most terrible we have ever read,” 13. He is correct in that Spurgeon used the horror of eternal future punishment to convince his congregation of the necessity of embracing the doctrine of the atonement; however, Spurgeon also used other means that Cooper overlooks in his critique; *Nonconformity’s Romantic Generation*, 146-47; Colquitt, 54-106.

John Flavel, and other writers familiar to Spurgeon, it also influenced his own Christological development.

Bullock is right in his assessment that Calvin's theology provided the basis for Spurgeon's theology, as did that of the English Puritans, who "sought to change the Church of England according to Calvinistic thinking in church polity and theology."³¹⁰ In Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, these two traditions intersect. In this work, the cross represents a pivotal turning point for Christian, the protagonist of the narrative, for "just as Christian came up with the cross, his burdens loosed from off his shoulders and fell from off his back."³¹¹ In Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, Spurgeon discovered the application of this allegory in Bunyan's observation, "God and my soul were friends by his blood; yea, I saw that the justice of God and my sinful souls could embrace and kiss each other through his blood."³¹² Puritan conversion experiences of this kind were slowly baked into Spurgeon's consciousness as he, from childhood, poured over the pages of the Puritan works in his grandfather's attic.

Secondly, Spurgeon elevated the passion narrative in his preaching because of the significant role of the crucifixion in his own conversion experience. Dewey D. Wallace notes that seventeenth-century English Puritans, who offered no new doctrines, "intensified the new birth as an individual experience."³¹³ This is evidenced both in the conversion experience of Bunyan and also that of his character. Like

310. Bullock, 67.

311. Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 50.

312. Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, 19.

313. Dewey D. Wallace, *The Spirituality of the Later English Puritans* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), xv.

Christian toting a cumbersome burden, Spurgeon, too, wrestled beneath the weight of his sin. “Read John Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding*,” wrote Spurgeon in his autobiography, “if you would understand what I mean.”³¹⁴ With Bunyan, Spurgeon could say, “All my sense and feeling was against me: and I saw I had a heart that would sin, and that lay under a law that would condemn.”³¹⁵ In his own words, he described, his early experience of sin:

When but young in years, I felt with much sorrow the evil of sin. My bones waxed old with my roaring all the day long. Day and night God’s hand was heavy upon me. I hungered for deliverance, for my soul fainted within me. I feared lest the very skies should fall upon me, and crush my guilty soul. God’s law had laid hold upon me, and was showing me my sins. If I slept at night, I dreamed of the bottomless pit; and when I awoke, I seemed to feel the misery I had dreamed.³¹⁶

However, like Christian, who found relief from his sin at the cross when his burden fell from his shoulders and rolled “to the mouth of the sepulcher, where it fell in and [he] saw it no more,”³¹⁷ Spurgeon likewise spoke fondly of his conversion experience in the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Colchester. “The revealed Word awakened me; but it was the preached Word that saved me.”³¹⁸ He added,

I know, when I first read *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, and saw in it the woodcut of Christian carrying the burden on his back, I felt so interested in the poor fellow, that I thought I should jump with joy when, after he had carried his heavy load so long, he at last got rid of it; and that was how I felt when the burden of guilt, which I had borne so long, was forever rolled away from my shoulders and my heart.³¹⁹

314. *Autobiography* 1:86.

315. Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, 16.

316. *Autobiography* 1:79.

317. Bunyan, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, 51.

318. *Autobiography* 1:104.

319. *Ibid.*, 103.

This episode in Spurgeon's life shaped the direction of his later ministry, for he sought to extend to others the same experience he himself encountered in 1850.

"Except ye be converted ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven," he preached. "May God grant you such a turn as this, and to this end do you pray, 'Turn me, and I shall be turned.'"³²⁰ In a midnight service on 31 December 1855, Spurgeon's prayer for his people summarized the intensity of his passion for their conversion: "O God, save my people! Save my people!"³²¹

For Spurgeon, conversion required crucifixion. Not only must Christ be crucified, but the sinner's sinful nature must also be laid in the tomb. Spurgeon proclaimed, "These hearts of ours, these depraved affections must be slain; they must be crucified with Christ, they must be conquered, put down, stamped out, or how can we be where Jesus is?"³²² For Spurgeon, works never merit salvation; however, insofar as believers follow Christ's example in crucifixion, they evidence the salvation that God bestowed upon them. Spurgeon is not to be misunderstood on this point. Salvation solely is an act of God for, as Spurgeon confessed, "I never would have been saved if I could have helped it."³²³ Comforting to crucified believers, however, is the fact that their crosses are weighted to the strength of those being crucified. "So too, believer, remember that your Lord sends you *a cross but not a crush*. It is meant to bear you down, but not to break you and grind you in the dust."³²⁴ In this way, a believer's crucifixion is intended to slay half of the person, not

320. *MTP* 22:153.

321. *NPSP* 2:44.

322. *MTP* 13:58.

323. *Autobiography* 1:91.

324. *MTP* 15:272; italics in the original.

the whole. Whereas two natures existed at the moment of conversion—the old nature and the new—, Spurgeon believed that the act of mortification, or being crucified daily with Christ, gradually whittles one nature away. Over time, the sinful nature and its evil desires fade into the background and loose control over the believer. The new nature, on the other hand, takes prominence in a believer's life in that it governs a person's thoughts, words, and deeds. In this way, Spurgeon believed that crucifixion of the sinful nature plays a central role not in salvation, but rather in sanctification, for it is a sign of spiritual maturity to be able to declare with John the Baptist, "He must increase, but I must decrease."³²⁵

Spurgeon's emphasis on the crucifixion and suffering of Christ spanned the entirety of his ministry.³²⁶ David Gillet notes that the doctrine of the atonement was, for Spurgeon, the "touchstone of all Christian doctrine."³²⁷ Consistent in his thinking,

325. John 3:30.

326. The following is a selection of sermons of the crucifixion of Christ, spanning the entirety of Spurgeon's ministry in London. Though not exhaustive, these sermons will help provide a basis for understanding Spurgeon's doctrine of the crucifixion. "Christ Crucified" (*MTP* 46:205-16), "Christ's Death and Ours" (*MTP* 53:49-60), "Death and Life in Christ" (*MTP* 9:193-204), "The Death of Christ for His People" (*MTP* 46:1-12), "The Death of Christ" (*NPSP* 4:65-72), "The Object of Christ's Death" (*MTP* 42:445-56), "The Father's Love to His Dying Son" (*MTP* 35:649-60), "The Disowned" (*MTP* 48:577-88), "The Final Separation" (*MTP* 21:277-88), "God's Strange Choice" (*MTP* 10:485-98), "The Bitterness of the Cross" (*MTP* 46:325-66), "The Determination of Christ to Suffer for His People" (*MTP* 41:589-600), "Our Lord's Heroic Endurance" (*MTP* 58:529-40), "The Overflowing Cup" (*MTP* 21:145-56), "The Weakened Christ Strengthened" (*MTP* 48:109-20), "Suffering and Reigning with Jesus" (*MTP* 10:1-12), "The Suffering Christ Satisfied" (*MTP* 61:301-12), "The Suffering Saviour's Sympathy" (*MTP* 33:409-20), "Unparalleled Suffering" (*MTP* 44:265-76), "The Crown of Thorns" (*MTP* 20:217-28), "A Gross Indignity" (*MTP* 60:205-16), "Christ's Glory Turned to Shame" (*MTP* 57:541-52), "Majesty in Misery" (*MTP* 51:157-68), "The Man of Sorrows" (*MTP* 19:121-32), "Our Lord in the Valley of Humiliation" (*MTP* 38:529-40), "The Living Care of the Dying Christ" (*MTP* 40:313-24), "The Saviour's Thirst" (*MTP* 59:601-12), "On the Cross After Death" (*MTP* 33:193-204), "The Dying Thief in a New Light" (*MTP* 32:49-60), "A Plea from the Cross" (*MTP* 63:157-68), "The Saddest Cry from the Cross" (*MTP* 48:517-28), "Christ's Dying Word for His Church" (*MTP* 40:25-36), "The Last Words of Christ on the Cross" (*MTP* 45:493-504), "Christ's Plea for Ignorant Sinners" (*MTP* 38:313-24), "Cries from the Cross" (*MTP* 44:146-49), "Christ—Our Substitute" (*NPSP* 6:189-96), "Jesus, the Substitute for His People" (*MTP* 21:157-63), and "The Cross our Glory" (*MTP* 31:493-504).

327. D. K. Gillet, *Trust and Obey: Explorations in Evangelical Spirituality* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1993), 68-73, as quoted in Peter J. Morden, "The Lord's Supper and the

preaching, and teaching was the God who, from before the foundation of the world, elected Christ to be the literal substitution for sin. Spurgeon preached, “Christ does not merely bear the punishment of his people, but their iniquities, too! There is a literal substitution of Christ in the place of his people, and a most distinct imputation of their sin to him, and of his righteousness to them.”³²⁸ He added, “Christ stood in the sinner’s place, and suffered what was due to the sinner, even the curse of God, and the wrath of God.”³²⁹ If ever there was a theme so precious, a subject so grand, a story so compelling, it was this—the “keystone of the Gospel arch.”³³⁰ By taking on the cross, Spurgeon believed that Christ took upon sin, and that through the power of his blood, he atoned for that which humans could not. Through his blood, Christ purchased that for which humanity would have had to pay—its rebellion against God. It is here that Spurgeon’s earthy vernacular shines, for he believed that the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world was not merely slain for sin; indeed, the lamb was roasted. Spurgeon indicated as much in the following paragraph:

Crucifixion has in it the shedding of blood—the hands and feet were pierced. It has in it the idea of roasting, for roasting signifies a long torment; and as the lamb was for a long time before the fire, so Christ, in crucifixion, was for a long time exposed to a broiling sun, and all the other pains which crucifixion engenders.³³¹

Throughout Spurgeon’s sermons, the theme of *roasting* or *burning* can be found frequently in relation to Christ’s atoning work. As Jesus endured the tree, “you see the

Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon,” in Anthony R. Cross and Philip E. Thompson, *Baptist Sacramentalism 2*, vol. 25 of *Studies in Baptist History and Thought* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 179, 23n.

328. *MTP* 49:348.

329. *MTP* 53:51-52.

330. *MTP* 21:484.

331. *NPSP* 2:5.

fire of divine wrath consuming the sin offering.”³³² Isaac, a type of Christ, carried the wood for his burning up the mountain. It was there that he asked his father, Abraham, “But where is the lamb?”³³³ In his context, the wrath of the Father against the wickedness of humanity is satisfied in the sacrifice of the Son, for “he tastes his sacrifice”³³⁴ and is made content.

Modern criticism rejected this interpretation of Scripture. In his essay “On Atonement and Satisfaction,” classical scholar Benjamin Jowett argued that Christ’s atoning sacrifice proved morally repulsive in that God the Father found satisfaction in the anguish of his Son.³³⁵ B. G. Worrall speaks to the growing ubiquity of this sentiment in nineteenth-century culture by claiming that because the doctrine of substitutionary atonement was immoral, “it was therefore a moral duty to reject them.”³³⁶ A God who needed blood in order to be satisfied became unpleasant to Victorian sensibilities.

In contrast to this sentiment, Spurgeon never hesitated in subscribing to the doctrine of atonement, for in it he saw not a draconian God bent on hatred and vengeance, but instead a God who, after much longsuffering, sent his Son into the world to rescue the world from utter destruction. While Spurgeon did not shy away from speaking of the justice of God, he balanced God’s wrath with God’s love. According to Spurgeon, the Father loved his people so tremendously that he, himself,

332. *MTP* 13:143.

333. *MTP* 62:363.

334. *MTP* 21:197.

335. Reardon, 334.

336. Worrall, 96.

came to redeem them. Instead of receiving the luxury of an instantaneous death, God in Christ absorbed and became sin for sinners on the cross.

For Spurgeon, the agony that Christ suffered had been compounding since his experiences in the garden of Gethsemane³³⁷ where, in the olive-press—sandwiched between “gnarled and twisted”³³⁸ trees—Christ’s humanity and divinity were under equal assault. As man, the dread of Roman execution and all its trappings caused great drops of blood to fall like sweat down his brow; however, as God, the dread of being separated from himself, from being separated from the Father with whom he had enjoyed an eternity of fellowship, also lurked on the horizon. On this point, Spurgeon quoted eighteenth-century Calvinist hymn writer Joseph Hart by saying, “Bore all incarnate God could bear/With strength enough, and none to spare.”³³⁹ Even worse than separation from his Father, though, was the punishment of God on the Son for the sins of the world that would supply fresh anguish to his unmitigated agony. Spurgeon noted, “The entire mass rested upon him with infinite intensity when he was nailed to the cross, and so forced from him the agonizing cry, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’”³⁴⁰ In this moment Christ’s suffering reached its apex.³⁴¹

In his sermon “Unparalleled Suffering,” Spurgeon applied his question-based sermonic structure to Christ’s agony: When did Christ suffer? What did Christ suffer?

337. *MTP* 56:146. “He was to bear the full weight of it [sin] upon the cross,” said Spurgeon, “but I feel persuaded that the passion began in Gethsemane.”

338. *Ibid.*, 147.

339. *MTP* 44:269.

340. *MTP* 56:146.

341. *MTP* 36:133.

Where did Christ suffer? and From whom did Christ suffer?³⁴² Spurgeon believed that Jesus Christ suffered not only on the cross, but also throughout his earthly life, for “His life was, in a sense, a life of suffering.”³⁴³ The response to the question “What did Christ suffer” found relevance in another question: “—what was there that he did not suffer in body, in mind, and in spirit?”³⁴⁴ Spurgeon continued, “What of pain,—what of shame,—what of loss,—what of hatred,—what of derision? He suffered from hell, from earth, from heaven.”³⁴⁵ Interestingly, Spurgeon caught himself and remarked, “I was going to say,—from time and from eternity; for there was a certain sense in which eternal pangs passed through the heart of Christ, and spent themselves upon him.”³⁴⁶

In this way, Christ’s anticipation of his incarnation produced sufferings long before he was first laid in the manger. Indeed, from the very foundation of the world, Christ suffered by longing for the redemption of his people. To the question “Where did Christ suffer?” Spurgeon simply answered, Everywhere: “Wherever he was, still, was Christ enduring that great burden which he came into the world to bear till he should carry it away, and it should, be lost for ever.”³⁴⁷ The last question, “From whom did Christ suffer?” led Spurgeon to say that Christ suffered from those around him. Not only did he receive persecution from evil Pharisees and those who wanted to

342. *MTP* 44:268-69.

343. *Ibid.*, 268.

344. *Ibid.*

345. *MTP* 44:268.

346. *Ibid.*

347. *Ibid.*

kill him, but also from “good men” such that “the best of his disciples cost him many pangs, and sometimes made his heart ache.”³⁴⁸

Spurgeon commented that on the cross, when depravity converged with divinity, Jesus Christ did not have the “blessed presence of God”³⁴⁹ that God bestowed upon one fortunate martyr, as recorded in Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*. After having been burned for his Christian convictions, “that poor black carcass open its mouth, and two words came out of it. . . . ‘Sweet Jesus!’”³⁵⁰ Instead, Christ endured his agony alone such that “His Father’s countenance was hidden from him”³⁵¹ and he shouted, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.”³⁵² Indeed, for Spurgeon this proved to be “majesty in misery,”³⁵³ “*omnipotence held captive*.”³⁵⁴ Spurgeon supposed that artists, however skilled in rendering portraits, could not portray accurately Christ in such anguish, for “the most skillful hand grows unsteady in the presence of One so glorious in his griefs.”³⁵⁵

However, for Spurgeon, nothing short of Calvary could save God’s people. “Really clean”³⁵⁶ in the eyes of God, he reasoned, are the believers for whose sin Christ has atoned. There was no room in Spurgeon’s thinking for a righteousness that

348. *Ibid.*, 269.

349. *Ibid.*, 270.

350. *Ibid.*

351. *MTP* 44:270.

352. *MTP* 33:414.

353. *MTP* 49:158.

354. *Ibid.*, 159; italics in the original.

355. *Ibid.*, 158.

356. *MTP* 32:542.

is *infused* or injected into the believer upon reception of the sacraments. A Catholic theology of atonement, so alien to Spurgeon's Puritan instincts, had no place in his grace-based system of salvation. Spurgeon believed that justification occurred instantaneously to the end that the righteousness of Christ is credited, or *imputed*, to believers at the moment of their conversion, resulting in the washing, renewing, and reforming of the soul. "Once black as night," he described, "we are so purged that we shall walk with him in white, for we are worthy."³⁵⁷ For Spurgeon, no after-death purgatory was needed to purge lingering sins from transitioning souls; rather, in one divine transaction between Father and Son, "a clean sweep was made of sin."³⁵⁸

Spurgeon's theology of atonement differed from Catholic doctrine, and in his estimation, it would have been easier for an Arminian to get into heaven than a professing papist.³⁵⁹ Nevertheless, his relentless emphasis on the cross does not appear altogether dissimilar to that of those "Romish crows"³⁶⁰ who nested in England in the nineteenth century. Few comparisons can be made between Spurgeon and Rome, of course, for Spurgeon claimed the proud lineage of those who protested the theology and practice of the papacy to the fullest. Frequently attacking Catholicism in his sermons, Spurgeon believed that "titled perverts"³⁶¹ and "imported monks and nuns"³⁶² were to blame for much of England's idolatry,³⁶³ along with Puseyism, "which is not only Puseyism, but Church-of-Englandism."³⁶⁴

357. *Ibid.*, 543.

358. *MTP* 32:544.

359. *MTP* 7:297.

360. *ST* 2:54.

361. *MTP* 10:322.

362. *Ibid.*

However, Spurgeon's catholicity may be understood accurately in terms of emphasis, not of doctrine. Doctrinally, he stood far from Rome, protesting the perceived corruption of papal theology. However, inasmuch as Spurgeon untiringly emphasized the broken body and spilled blood of Christ on the cross, he shared an emphasis with his Catholic Eucharistic counterpart.³⁶⁵ Inasmuch as he obsessed on the suffering, crucifixion, and death of Christ, he shared a common interest with medieval theologians and monks who never lost sight of Christ's agonies. Like medieval processions that raised the crucifix from the sepulcher as the choir sang "Christus Resurgens,"³⁶⁶ so Spurgeon's Christocentric convictions urged him to preach, "If my lying in the dust would elevate Christ one inch higher, I would say, 'O let me remain, for it is sweet! to be here for the Lord.'"³⁶⁷ Spurgeon never experienced the stigmata of Francis of Assisi, but nevertheless he maintained, "Let us, as it were, carry his [Christ's] name upon the palms of our hands."³⁶⁸ The language of Teresa of Ávila's ecstasy may not appear in his work, but Spurgeon asserted that

363. *MTP* 10:322-23. Spurgeon pronounced, "Among Dissenters you see a veneration for structures, a modified belief in the sacredness of places, which is idolatry; for to believe in the sacredness of anything but of God and of his own Word, is to idolize, whether it is to believe in the sacredness of the men, the priests, or in the sacredness of the bricks and mortar, or of the fine linen, or what not, which you may use in the worship of God."

364. *Ibid.*, 322.

365. *MTP* 43:363. Concerning the Eucharist, Spurgeon did not believe in transubstantiation. Nevertheless, he did maintain that "as a man himself receives food into himself, to become part of himself, so must you and I receive the Lord Jesus into ourselves, for ourselves, to be interwoven with ourselves, so that we twain shall be one." For more on Spurgeon's doctrine of the Lord's Supper, see Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 165-88.

366. Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-c. 1580*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 30.

367. *NPSP* 1:358.

368. *MTP* 46:201.

believers could participate in the “fellowship of intercourse”³⁶⁹ with Christ, for he observed that “this world is like an arid desert where there is no water except as we maintain our intercourse with Christ.”³⁷⁰

Eamon Duffy, in his significant work *The Stripping of the Altars*, reveals a late medieval tradition called “creeping to the cross” in which, on Good Friday, the entirety of the book of John was read in place of the Mass, prayers were uttered, and a crucifix was unveiled.³⁷¹ “Clergy and people then crept barefoot and on their knees to kiss the foot of the cross, held by two ministers.”³⁷² The Reformed tradition that Spurgeon inherited targeted this medieval practice,³⁷³ as evidenced by Spurgeon’s recount of his observation of the practice at St. John Lateran Church in Rome. “It was a mournful spectacle to look up and see poor human nature so degraded as to be crawling up a staircase with the view of reaching heaven.”³⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Spurgeon appropriated, in a spiritual sense, the same impulse that drove this pilgrimage of penitent humility to the cross. In urging his congregation to “creep to the cross, clasp it to your heart, hide yourselves there,” and in saying, “I could scarcely wish you any better joy than this,—to go home, and creep to the cross-foot, and lie there, sorrowing over your sin against such a Savior, yet rejoicing that it is all forgiven,”³⁷⁵ Spurgeon actually appeared more Catholic than he would have readily admitted. No other topic

369. *MTP* 44:254. See also 255.

370. *MTP* 50:32.

371. Duffy, 29.

372. *Ibid.*

373. *Ibid.*

374. *ST* 4:2.

375. *MTP* 46:320 and 432.

in Spurgeon's writings, lectures, or sermons is more exhausted, well developed, or used in application than the suffering, crucifixion, and death of Jesus Christ.

Resurrection and Ascension

Having made perfect atonement for the sins of his people through his death, the body of Jesus Christ arrived at the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.³⁷⁶ However, Spurgeon believed that his body could not be left there.³⁷⁷ When the Father had found satisfaction in the sacrifice of his Son, no more punishment was necessary. The sentence had been carried out; the lamb had been slain. According to Spurgeon, Christ was "the Hostage for our debt; but when the debt was paid, who could keep him in durance vile?"³⁷⁸ He continued, "It is not well to think of Jesus as for ever on the cross or in the tomb,"³⁷⁹ for Jesus Christ must rise; the Son who was despised and rejected by the Father must conquer death by being raised from the dead or else the skeptics would have been right in that Christianity, in large degree, would be based on mythic legends.

"I came, I saw, I conquered."³⁸⁰ Initially coined by a renowned warrior who wrote home following a victory on the battlefield, this phrase, quoted by Spurgeon, best represented, in Spurgeon's estimation, Christ's post-resurrected, pre-ascended attitude. For Spurgeon, the legitimacy of the resurrection legitimizes Christianity, for if the remains of Christ's body were discovered in Jerusalem, Spurgeon's faith would

376. *MTP* 18:10.

377. *MTP* 61:155.

378. *MTP* 47:51.

379. *MTP* 30:586.

380. *MTP* 32:602.

have been unsubstantiated. Even moreso, Christ's divinity depended on his resurrection. Here, Spurgeon showed how functional Christology depends on its ontological counterpart. "It would not be unreasonable to doubt his deity if he had not risen,"³⁸¹ he argued. If Christ could not rise miraculously from the dead, he would have remained only a man. Likewise, the resurrection validated the sovereignty of Christ.³⁸² A conquered Christ who cannot defeat death also cannot ensure that his people are justified, regenerated, and resurrected.³⁸³ According to Spurgeon, "it would not be difficult to enlarge this catalogue."³⁸⁴

Although Jesus Christ "did a great deal besides dying,"³⁸⁵ Spurgeon taught that the *real* death of Christ must be believed without a shade of doubt. On the evidence of the historical witness, he argued that Christ really died, as evidenced by the flowing of blood and water from his wound when the spear was thrust into his side.³⁸⁶ Had Christ still retained breath, he further reasoned, the guards would not have removed him from the cross.³⁸⁷ Skeptical Strauss, who believed that either "Jesus was not really dead, or he did not really rise again,"³⁸⁸ discredited the

381. *ME*, 10 May, Morning.

382. *MTP* 8:219.

383. *ME*, 10 May, Morning; *MTP* 8:219; *ME*, 10 May, Morning.

384. *MTP* 8:275.

385. *MTP* 20:494.

386. *Ibid.*

387. *Ibid.*

388. David F. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet*, vol. 2 (Tübingen, 3rd edition, 1838), 676-79, quoted in Alister E. McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology: From the Enlightenment to Pannenberg* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 37.

“swooning theory,”³⁸⁹ that is, the belief that Jesus fainted or swooned on the cross and was, consequently, buried alive.

Unbelief in the resurrection did not originate in the nineteenth century; indeed, Spurgeon noted that even in the first century, the disciples of Christ were filled with unbelief as they wept when Mary Magdalene found them. “It was the last thing they should have done, to be weeping,”³⁹⁰ Spurgeon preached. All of heaven celebrated the resurrection of its maker, and yet the disciples, whom Christ had known personally and loved, were mourning. Such was the unbelief of doubting Thomas, who required physical proof of Christ’s resurrection in order to believe. Spurgeon believed that each age concealed a doubting Thomas.³⁹¹

In the eighteenth century, Thomas Paine believed that the writers of the Gospels “brought him into the world in a supernatural manner” and thus were “obliged to take him out again in the same manner.”³⁹² In his *Age of Reason*, Paine identified with doubting Thomas, who would not believe in the resurrection of Christ “without having ocular and manual demonstration himself. So neither will I,” Paine declared, “and the reason is equally as good for me, and for every other person, as for Thomas.”³⁹³

389. David F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus for the People*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1879), 412. Strauss writes, “It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening, and indulgence, and who still at last yielded to his sufferings, could have given the disciples the impression that he was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of life, an impression that would lay at the bottom of their future ministry.”

390. *MTP* 61:150.

471. *MTP* 24:570.

392. Paine, 10.

393. *Ibid.*, 11.

Renan's statement, "For the historian, the life of Jesus finishes with his last sigh,"³⁹⁴ could not have been further from Spurgeon's sentiment. According to Spurgeon's contemporary, zealous sects living in Israel manufactured the myth of the resurrection. In Renan's mind, Mary Magdalene's "strong imagination"³⁹⁵ did not help, either. In a footnote to this thought, he discredits Mary's testimony with the reminder that "she had been possessed by seven demons."³⁹⁶ Subsequently, the invented myth of the living Christ "produced an extreme fermentation from one end of the Jewish world to the other."³⁹⁷

Spurgeon entertained these heresies not even a little. In the throes of the Downgrade Controversy, when "the Atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Spirit is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into fiction, and the resurrection into a myth,"³⁹⁸ Spurgeon held his ground without conceding a single doctrine. Christ could not lie "paralysed in the tomb."³⁹⁹ Upon the fact of the resurrection stood the proof of faith, the legitimacy of salvation, and the hope of the afterlife. "The stone is rolled away," Spurgeon insisted. "Our Lord's precious body is not there, for Christ has risen from the dead."⁴⁰⁰

394. Renan, 455.

395. Ibid.

396. Ibid., 1n.

397. Ibid., 106.

398. Spurgeon, *Down Grade Controversy*, 23.

399. *MTP* 61:148.

400. *MTP* 40:577.

The resurrection of Christ was not, as Ludwig Feuerbach suggested, a “realised wish.”⁴⁰¹ A Christ “reanimated” in accordance with the needs of Christian communities⁴⁰² also proved heretical to Spurgeon. In his belief, Jesus did not rise metaphorically; he did not exit the tomb only in the wild imaginations of his followers. Instead, Christ *physically* emptied the tomb of its substance. Spurgeon offered trustworthy historical evidence to buttress this claim, including the fact that many people saw the risen Christ and testified to his post-resurrected stature,⁴⁰³ along with his conclusion that Christ, who ate broiled fish and honeycomb in the presence of his disciples, could not have been a ghost.⁴⁰⁴ Furthermore, Thomas touched Jesus.⁴⁰⁵ These “infallible proofs,”⁴⁰⁶ and others, are scattered throughout Spurgeon’s sermons. He preached,

We have often asserted, and we affirm it yet again, that no fact in history is better attested than the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The common mass of facts accepted by all men as historical are not one-tenth as certainly assured to us as this fact is. It must not be denied by any who are willing to pay the slightest respect to the testimony of their fellow-men, that Jesus, who died upon the cross, and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, did literally rise again from the dead.⁴⁰⁷

401. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. Marion Evans (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., Ltd., 1890), 136.

402. Dolf Te Velde, *Paths beyond Tracing Out: The Connection of Method and Content in the Doctrine of God, Examined in Reformed Orthodoxy, Karl Barth, and the Utrecht School* (Uitgeverij: Eburon, 2010), 451.

403. *MTP* 33:218.

404. *MTP* 55:65.

405. *MTP* 36:242.

406. *MTP* 33:217.

407. *Ibid.*, 218-19.

Spurgeon indicated that after the resurrection, Christ's body "in a sense" underwent glorification.⁴⁰⁸ He admitted that perhaps the body of the post-resurrected, pre-ascended Christ would undergo further undisclosed changes when Christ arrived in heaven, but while he remained on earth, his body was "so far veiled as to its new condition that it retained its former likeness."⁴⁰⁹

Here, Spurgeon's proved his impulse to spiritualize. His mind, always looking for "practical theology," quickly transitioned from exegesis to application, from pulpit to pew. His preaching about the resurrection of Christ followed suit in that just as believers are crucified with Christ in baptism, so also are they raised to walk in the newness of life. The best way to see Christ rise from the dead, he believed, is to be spiritually risen with him in the new nature.⁴¹⁰

According to Spurgeon, the crucifixion of Christ depended on the validity of his resurrection, for the cross is triumphant only inasmuch as the tomb is empty. If the tomb retained the body of Christ, the skeptics would have been correct in their belief in an imagined resurrection. However, if the resurrection did occur, and if, as Spurgeon believed, there is divine power in Christ's deliverance from death,⁴¹¹ then believers also will be raised from the dead in future glory. Belief in the afterlife can be grounded in historical evidence, for "it is clear at the outset that the resurrection of

408. *Ibid.*, 221.

409. *Ibid.*

410. *ME*, 22 November, Evening.

411. *MTP* 61:154.

our Lord was a tangible proof that there is another life.”⁴¹² In this way, Spurgeon encouraged his congregation to “rise, for the Lord is risen.”⁴¹³

For Spurgeon, Christ’s pilgrimage from hell back to earth became one of many doctrinal links in the chain of authentic Christianity.⁴¹⁴ The ascension of Christ, that is, his pilgrimage from earth to heaven, also found importance to Spurgeon’s orthodoxy. He preached,

Our Lord did not gradually melt away from sight as a phantom, or dissolve into thin air as a mere apparition: the Savior did not disappear in that way at all, but he rose, and they saw that it was his very self that was so rising. His own body, the materialism in which he had veiled himself, actually, distinctly, and literally, rose to heaven before their eyes. I repeat, the Lord did not dissolve, and disappear like a vision of the night, but he evidently rose till the cloud intervened so that they could see him no more.⁴¹⁵

Spurgeon’s doctrine of the ascension must be understood in terms of symmetry, for the same Christ who sank into the “lower parts” and made a home in the “bowels of the earth,”⁴¹⁶ also sojourned up from the grave and, eventually, traveled further into the clouds and out of the disciples’ sight.

Christ’s descending and ascending pilgrimages prove significant in Spurgeon’s Christology, for in them lie not only the power of God to complete his work of redemption, but also the finesse of Christ in the way he brought about the fulfillment of his task. After completing the mission the Father sent him to

412. *MTP* 28:196.

413. *ME*, 22 November, Evening.

414. *MTP* 61:149.

415. *MTP* 31:17.

416. *MTP* 17:171.

accomplish, the Christ who miraculously condescended to earth also triumphantly traveled to heaven where he presently sits at the right hand of his Father.⁴¹⁷

Spurgeon also speaks to the geographical location of Christ's return travel to heaven. He found it pleasingly symmetrical that Christ ascended into the clouds on the same Mount of Olives where he had suffered the agonies of Gethsemane. "It is sweet to think that he ascended to his glory from the place of his agony and bloody sweat,"⁴¹⁸ posited Spurgeon. It was also on that mountain that Christ, who eventually found himself separated from the fellowship of his Father, also became separated the presence of his disciples.

Spurgeon's ability to depart from literal readings of the text in favor of spiritual interpretations of the passage comes to light when observing his descriptions of Christ's pilgrimage to heaven. This medieval tendency, so impulsive in his homiletics, manifested in what may be called a "sanctified speculation," that is, a tendency to imagine the details of a passage that are not supplied in the text. Spurgeon commonly used words and phrases like "Imagine," "I conceive," "Think of the scene," and "Picture to your mind that moment when . . ." ⁴¹⁹ to signal the commencement of such imaginative textual readings. In his sermon "Our Lord's Attitude in Ascension," Spurgeon speculated that Christ sang a hymn before he levitated, and then, as he began to rise, "majesty flamed forth from him!"⁴²⁰ "Up he went," pictured Spurgeon, "slowly, majestically rising"⁴²¹ until they saw "a cloud

417. *MTP* 32:604.

418. *MTP* 51:399.

419. *MTP* 47:91; *NPSP* 2:402; *MTP* 51:399; *MTP* 46:416.

420. *MTP* 51:400.

421. *Ibid.*

float between himself and them”⁴²² and he disappeared from the disciples’ vision.

Even at this point, however, Spurgeon did not cease to eisegete imaginatively the scene. Instead, “imagination and faith [stepped] in, and [conceived] of him as rising beyond all regions known to us, far above all imaginable height”⁴²³ until Christ reached heaven’s outskirts⁴²⁴ and then finally arrived at his throne beside the Father.

The act of ascension did not escape Spurgeon’s love for theological symmetry, for inasmuch as Christ’s journey into the clouds raised the gaze of his disciples, so Spurgeon preached that believers should keep their eyes to the skies, awaiting his return. No posture better suits the Christian, he concluded. In the act of looking up, believers anticipate their own encounter with the Christ who judges every word and deed, and in this way, their own ascension to Christ becomes a motive for godliness. Spurgeon exhorted,

“Look up, and lift up your heads.” Let there be no looking down because the earth is quaking and shaking, but let there be a looking up because you are going to rise from it; no looking down because the graves are opening; why should you look down? You will quit the grave, never more to die. “Lift up your heads.” The time for you to hang your heads, like bulrushes, is over already, and will certainly be over when the Lord is coming, and your redemption draweth nigh. Wherefore, “look up, and lift up your heads.”⁴²⁵

Whereas the historical details of the remainder of Christ’s ascension are unknown and must be left to the imagination, Spurgeon posited that “his body is gone. . . . Jesus has carried with him his entire self, his whole humanity.”⁴²⁶ Christ loved humans so much, he believed, that before his incarnation, he appeared on earth

422. *MTP* 36:242.

423. *Ibid.*

424. *Ibid.*

425. *MTP* 42:607.

426. *MTP* 32:604.

as one of them to offer them comfort in times of need; after his ascension, he took his flesh—the substance of humanity—to heaven, where he anticipates reuniting with them in eternity. For this reason, Spurgeon believed that the doctrine of the assurance of salvation depends on the ascension, for if Christ is capable of taking humanity to heaven in his own person, he surely is capable of taking the humanity of others as well.

In this way, Spurgeon taught that Christ’s ascension undergirds the faith of the righteous. Christ could have ascended directly into heaven after the opening of his tomb, he speculated, but instead Christ chose to remain on earth for a brief duration. For what reason did Christ remain? Spurgeon preached that Jesus had been victorious over death, but he stayed in the world following his resurrection so that he could also be victorious over unbelief,⁴²⁷ one of the principle problems that he believed plagued his century. In Spurgeon’s estimation, forty days proved “a time sufficient for the establishment of his identity and the production of proof of the fact that he had truly risen.”⁴²⁸ After he conquered the doubt of his disciples, and the *veritas* of his resurrection had been “settled beyond question,”⁴²⁹ Christ was “no more seen of human eyes”⁴³⁰ so that the faith of the disciples could increase. After Christ departed, belief in Christ required faith, and thus it brings more glory to God than the evidential and corporeal faith that Thomas possessed. For this reason, Spurgeon preached, “our

427. *Ibid.*, 603. Spurgeon explained, “Our Savior would not go to heaven till he had settled the fact of his resurrection upon a basis which can never be shaken.”

428. *Ibid.*, 602.

429. *MTP* 36:242.

430. *MTP* 17:173.

faith is now the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”⁴³¹

To the end that the doctrine of the ascension fulfills the purposes of “comfort, edification, and soul profit,”⁴³² Spurgeon spoke of it as having direct significance to the believer’s spirituality.

To his followers, the risen Christ said, ““Upwards, my brethren, upwards from off this earth; away from this world to the glory land. I am gone, and you must be gone.””⁴³³ In this way, Spurgeon used the ascension of Christ to represent the believer’s physical ascension to heaven, but also the believer’s symbolic separation from the ways of the world. Here, Spurgeon’s Puritanism brightly shines in that distinction from the world preserves the identity of a Christian. The one who has been chosen by God from before the foundation of the world, who has been given, through the power of the Spirit, a life that is created and re-created, justified and sanctified, must evidence its new nature. The sinner whose rebellion against God has been absorbed by Christ through an imputed, alien righteousness, who stands as sinless as Christ in the eyes of the Father, has the privilege of walking with Christ in the newness of life. For these, Christ underwent incarnation, reprobation, resurrection, and ascension so that one day, they might be forever united in glory in perpetual fellowship. With depravity behind and glorification ahead, those whom Christ has purchased with the blood of his covenant bear the marks of the Spirit in whom they are sealed until the day when they will “ever rise to heaven and lay their hand on the

431. *Ibid.*, 171. See also 173.

432. *Ibid.*, 171.

433. *MTP* 32:604.

breast of the Savior.”⁴³⁴ Until then, Spurgeon believed that the people of God “pass through this world as men on pilgrimage.”⁴³⁵ Like travelers who cross the Atlantic Ocean on ship, “so do we speed over the waves of this ever-changing world to the Glory Land of the bright appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!”⁴³⁶

To conclude, in this chapter a synchronic perspective revealed that Charles Spurgeon did not develop independently of the movements and doctrines that developed in nineteenth-century Germany and Britain. Indeed, the authors, writings, and theological trends of his day underscored Spurgeon’s emphases on the doctrines of Christ’s virgin birth, miracles, and resurrection. Embattled in his posture, Spurgeon’s response to *Das Leben Jesu* and *Essays and Reviews* suggests a more robust adherence to literal historical presuppositions of Scripture. From before the foundation of the world, Spurgeon maintained that the Father elected Jesus Christ to redeem his elect from their sins. Since overtly Christophanical references abound throughout his sermons, this writer posits that Spurgeon may well be defined as a Christophanical preacher who saw both the Old and New Testaments through the lens of the life of Christ. Concerning Christ’s earthly pilgrimage, this chapter reveals Spurgeon’s emphasis on the four primary events of Christ’s journey, that are, his birth, death, resurrection, and ascension. Additional attention has been given to Spurgeon’s treatment of Christ’s eternal election, baptism, miracles, and transfiguration.

434. *NPSP* 2:118.

435. *MTP* 32:196.

436. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, the theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon has been explored through a critical analysis of his ontological, functional, and exegetical Christologies revealed in his sermons, writings, and lectures. That no scholarly work has previously examined such doctrines warranted the contribution of this study. In this conclusion, an analysis of Spurgeon's theological consistency and variation, and his use of the pilgrimage motif, are presented, followed by summary and synthesis of Spurgeon's Christology and an analysis of Spurgeon's contribution to scholarship.

Theological Consistency and Variation

Having analyzed Spurgeon's Christology, the consistency and degree of variation of his Christological doctrines may now be presented. Spurgeon posited that his theology remained fundamentally unaltered throughout the course of his ministry. After reviewing a selection of the sermons he preached at the beginning of his ministry, he wrote, "I was happy to find that I had no occasion to alter any of the doctrines which I preached in those early days of my ministry."¹ F. B. Meyer supported Spurgeon's auto-theological claim, as did his friend Robert Shindler, who maintained, "No change has come over Spurgeon, either as to his sentiments and the faith he has firmly held."² Recent scholars such as Hopkins also affirm belief in

1. *Autobiography* 2:158.

2. *The Freeman*, London, 5 February 1892, capitalization in the original.; Shindler, 271-22.

Spurgeon's doctrinal consistency.³ While recognizing such assertions, it is fruitful to confirm or deny these claims. This will be accomplished in this section by examining the ontological, functional, and exegetical Christological similarities and difference among three sermons that Spurgeon preached on the text, Heb. 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever."

Spurgeon preached the first sermon, "The Immutability of Christ," in 1858 at the outset of his ministry at the New Park Street Chapel; he preached the second sermon, "Jesus Christ Immutable," in 1869, during the middle years of his ministry; and he preached the third sermon, "The Unchangeable Christ," four years before his death in 1888 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. These three sermons reveal remarkably consistent doctrinal similarities. Soteriologically, the first sermon demonstrates Spurgeon's belief in the assurance of salvation that comes from the knowledge of Christ's immutability. "Come what may," he said, "thou art secure."⁴ In the second sermon, the birth, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, and Second Coming of Christ guarantee the certainty of God's saving accomplishments through his Son.⁵ And in the third sermon, the immutability of Christ's work provides assurance that God "never abandoned his purpose" to redeem a people from their sins.⁶ Not only do these sermons share similar soteriological aspects, but they also reflect similar doxological dimensions in that Christ's immutability resulted in worship, adoration,

3. Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, 145.

4. *NPS* 4:47.

5. *MTP* 15:2-3.

6. *MTP* 40:195-96.

and great rejoicing.⁷ Furthermore, an eschatological aspect is noted among them whereby Christ's promises to finish the salvation that he began before the foundation of the world could be believed.⁸

These three sermons additionally share ontological, functional, and exegetical Christological similarities, revealing Spurgeon's theological consistency. In 1858, an ontological emphasis is present in that "Christ's person never changes."⁹ From the foundation of the world, Jesus "is forever the same; pure, and never spotted; firm, and never changing,"¹⁰ preached Spurgeon. Wherein a functional Christological dimension surfaces in Spurgeon's discussion of Christ's advocating on behalf of his people, an exegetical emphasis also arises in Spurgeon's references to Christ's baptism, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension to support his arguments.¹¹

In 1869, Spurgeon's doctrine of Christ's immutability revealed an ontological emphasis in that Jesus "*was evermore to his people what he now is.*"¹² Nuancing this claim with a discussion of Christ's conditional and occupational changes in the incarnation, Spurgeon posited that "Jesus Christ is always Jesus Christ, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."¹³ Concerning functional Christological emphases, Spurgeon allocated a large section of this sermon to a discussion of Jesus Christ's three-fold

7. *NPSP* 4:47, *MTP* 15:12, and *MTP* 40:202.

8. *NPSP* 4:43, 46-47; *MTP* 15:10; and *MTP* 40:202.

9. *NPSP* 4:42.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*, 43.

12. *MTP* 15:8; italics in the original.

13. *Ibid.*

office as prophet, priest, and king. Furthermore, his numerous uses of Old and New Testament exegetical content highlighted exegetical Christological emphases.¹⁴

In the third sermon, preached in 1888, ontological Christological references abound. According to Spurgeon, Jesus Christ is the “complete revelation” and “the last, the highest, the grandest revelation of God”; he is the “express image of the Father’s person, and the brightness of his glory.”¹⁵ As to the function, or work of Christ, Spurgeon unraveled the hope that Christians can have in Jesus Christ’s saving accomplishments on the cross. He asserted, “When we get old and grey-headed . . . then will he say, ‘Even to hoar hairs will I carry you.’”¹⁶ Spurgeon added, “We may be huskier in voice, and heavier in body, and slower in moving our limbs, but his name has as much charm for us as ever it had.”¹⁷ Not only did Christ’s salvation of sinners remain unaltered, but the “*eternal results produced by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ are the same as they ever were.*”¹⁸ As in the case of the two previous sermons, Spurgeon provided exegetical emphases in having spoken to the scriptural accounts of Christ’s incarnation and crucifixion. Additionally, he expounded upon these two doctrines and Christ’s immutable determination never to “abandon his purpose”¹⁹ in the context of scriptural witness.

While Spurgeon’s ontological, functional, and exegetical Christologies flourish throughout these three sermons, the emphases on each are not equal in

14. Ibid., 2-7.

15. *MTP* 40:197.

16. Ibid., 196-7.

17. Ibid., 202.

18. Ibid., 197-98; italics in the original.

19. Ibid., 195.

distribution or rhetoric. Spurgeon preached his first sermon on the immutability of Christ in 1858, one year after the climax of the “media controversy”²⁰ in which he found himself to be the object of relentless criticism in the press. This sermon reflects a comparatively systematic and rigid ontological emphasis on the unchanging nature of the God who would cast into hell all those who “forget religion.”²¹ An embattled posture is found in the early Spurgeon, particularly in light of his defense of the “old gospel” that had come under attack.²² In the following statement, a justification of his defensive stance is felt:

Theology hath nothing new in it except that which is false. The preaching of Paul must be the preaching of the minister to-day. There is no advancement here. We may advance in our knowledge of it; but it stands the same, for this good reason, that it is perfect, and perfection cannot be any better. The old truth that Calvin preached, that Chrysostom preached that Paul preached, is the truth that I must preach to-day, or else be a liar to my conscience and my God. I cannot shape the truth. I know of no such thing as paring off the rough edges of a doctrine. John Knox’s gospel is my gospel. That which thundered through Scotland must thunder through England again.²³

Given this statement, one might be permitted to wonder what influence suffering and controversy played on the systematic and dogmatic presentation of Spurgeon’s Christology in this sermon. If Hazra is correct in that “Spurgeon’s theology was a happy marriage of propositional truth and practical experience,”²⁴ the question is then

20. Michael, “Effects of Controversy,” 108-9. From 1854 to 1857, a wave of controversy emerged in the media concerned Spurgeon’s vulgar, theatrical preaching style. Particularly harsh were the criticisms from *The Saturday Review*, the *Bristol Advertiser*, and *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*.

21. *NPSP* 4:48.

22. *Ibid.*, 44.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Hazra, 150.

raised, How did Spurgeon's practical experiences influence the presentation of his propositional theology in these three sermons?

While the significance of Spurgeon's ontological emphasis in this first sermon should not be blown out of proportion, a didactic, polemical presentation of truth does appear to correspond with the turbulent circumstances of Spurgeon's life at the time of preaching. This is particularly evidenced by Spurgeon's invention of "Mr. Incredulity," an antagonist who challenged Christ's immutability with the question, "How can that be true?"²⁵ Spurgeon bombarded Mr. Incredulity, the personification of nineteenth-century unbelief,²⁶ with exegetical arguments concerning Christ's faithfulness to his people. This response represents Spurgeon's resistance to the widespread "crisis of faith," a century that became exceedingly hostile to the theology that Spurgeon maintained throughout his ministry.²⁷

The third sermon on the immutability of Christ, preached in 1888, reveals a similarly embattled Spurgeon who found himself neck-deep in the Downgrade Controversy. The effects of Spurgeon's withdrawal from the Baptist Union in October of 1887, and his belief that "old" and "new" theologies could not be reconciled,²⁸ may have resulted in the stubborn dogmatism evidenced in such statements including, "There is an itching, nowadays, after originality. . . . Our Great Master never aimed at originality," and "If the old foundation shifted, if our faith was always changing, then we could not follow any of the saints who have gone before us."²⁹ While this sermon

25. *NPSP* 4:45.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Oliver, 341.

28. Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, 215 and 232.

29. *MTP* 15:194.

is consistent with Klose's observation that Spurgeon's later works demonstrate "careful planning and good balance,"³⁰ it also reveals the thought process of a beleaguered, isolated preacher who, having seen the invention of new theologies, or rather, the abandoning of old ones, became staunchly entrenched in the belief system that had endured throughout the course of his ministry.³¹

Furthermore, Spurgeon's use of familial analogies to speak of Christ as husband, brother, and friend in this sermon supplemented reflective confessions about his experiences with Christ to provide a distinctly personal and empathetic appeal.³² According to Hazra, this appeal evidences the significant role that suffering played in the remainder of Spurgeon's ministry.³³ Hazra's assertions are brought into perspective when, at the conclusion of this sermon, Spurgeon's eagerness in attaining the joys and comforts of the next life surface. Spurgeon preached,

Let us go forward, then, to the unchanging Saviour, through the changing things of time and sense; and we shall meet him soon in the glory, and he will be unchanged even there, as compassionate and loving to us when we shall get home to him, and see him in his splendour, as he was to his poor disciples when he himself had not where to lay his head, and was a sufferer amongst them.³⁴

Whereas the first and third sermons reflect ontological emphases that are dogmatic and defensive, a notable contrast in tone and content is observed in the second sermon, "Jesus Christ Immutable." From 1863 to 1866, Spurgeon became

30. Klose, 220.

31. Michael, *Effects of Controversy*, 251.

32. *MTP* 40:196 and 202. Spurgeon preached, "I leaned on him very hard at the first; but I lean harder now. Sometimes, I faint away in his arms; I have died into his life; I am lost in his fullness, he is my salvation and all my desire."

33. Hazra, 147.

34. *MTP* 40:202.

involved in the Baptist Missionary Society conflict;³⁵ however, in 1869, when this sermon was preached, Spurgeon enjoyed relative freedom from controversy. Highly narrative, exegetical, and positive, this sermon lacks the embattled and defensive tone that is evident in the other two sermons and focuses in large part on the joys of Christ's work as prophet, priest, and king.

In this sermon, a youthful energy, optimism, and "fresh light" are detected. Acknowledging his previous exegesis of Heb. 13:8, Spurgeon said, "Though the matter may be the same, there are ways of putting it in fresh light, so as to bring new joy to those who meditate upon it."³⁶ Statements such as, "There is always a freshness about gospel truth" and "Come we, then, to the old subject of this old text, and may the blessed Spirit give us new unction while we meditate upon it" reveal an unencumbered liberty to further illuminate this text for his congregation.³⁷ Additionally, an emphasis on triumph over tribulation is detected in this sermon in claims such as, "We see him [Christ] by his resurrection destroying death, breaking down the prison of the sepulchre," "He is a Saviour for us since he has vanquished the last enemy that shall be destroyed," and "He will not cast one of you away, nor suffer his little ones to perish."³⁸

While the similarities of these three sermons demonstrate the consistency of Spurgeon's doctrine of Christ throughout his ministry, the ontological, functional, and exegetical emphases, along with variegated intensities of the presentation of such

35. Michael, *Effects of Controversy*, 188.

36. *MTP* 15:1.

37. *Ibid.*, 1-2.

38. *Ibid.*, 3; *ibid.*; *ibid.*, 9.

doctrines, attest to the development and nuancing of his Christology. In this way, Spurgeon's claim, "I was happy to find that I had no occasion to alter any of the doctrines which I preached in those early days of my ministry,"³⁹ is validated. In the case of Spurgeon's sermons that bear dogmatic and defensive undertones, this researcher posits that suffering and controversy played significant roles in the rhetorical transmission of Spurgeon's Christology.

Spurgeon and the Pilgrim Motif

Drawing on Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Spurgeon adopted the motif of pilgrimage as an allegorical framework for understanding the person and work of Jesus Christ. Indeed, this theme became a driving mechanism behind his theology, a paradigm that helped him make sense of ontological, functional, and exegetical Christological realities. In this section, Spurgeon's use of the pilgrimage motif will be brought into focus and analyzed according to the evidence presented in this thesis.

Spurgeon believed that the incarnation of Jesus Christ initiated God's pilgrimage from heaven to earth. Using Abraham as a type of Christ, Spurgeon revealed how the journeys of Old Testament types foreshadowed Christ's pilgrimage of thirty-three years. In this way, pilgrimage became a lens through which Spurgeon perceived the full humanity of Christ. "Go after man where you will," he preached, "into scenes of sorrow of every hue, and you shall find traces of Jesus' pilgrimage there."⁴⁰ Using the image of "wayworn pilgrim,"⁴¹ Spurgeon spoke to Christ's

39. *Autobiography* 2:158.

40. *MTP* 9:699.

41. *NPSP* 1:11.

incarnational identification with humanity, an identity that allowed him to represent humanity before the Father.

Using a personal and familiar rhetoric that took full advantage of Christ's interest in identifying with humanity, Spurgeon recognized that without Christ's journey in the flesh, "we lose the sacrificial death, the resurrection, and all the rest."⁴² In his sermon "The Tomb of Jesus," Spurgeon used the motif of pilgrimage as an evangelistic tool to introduce his audience to a sojourning Savior who abandoned the comforts of heaven to journey through death and into hell for a people he had been sent to redeem.⁴³ In this sermon and others, Spurgeon used the pilgrim motif to illuminate the divine nature of Jesus Christ, for if Christ had remained in the tomb, he reasoned, the divinity of Christ would have been compromised. That Christ pilgrimized into hell and then journeyed back to earth⁴⁴ proved his status as fully God. Furthermore, Spurgeon reinforced his evangelistic appeal by preaching that like Jesus, who sojourned from death to life and from earth to heaven, the dead shall also be raised to heaven.

Not only did Spurgeon's ontological Christology make use of the pilgrim motif, his functional and exegetical Christologies also benefited from this theme. Believing that Christ's humble journey through the world revealed his rescue mission *for* the world, Spurgeon underscored the importance of Christ's pre-ordained pilgrimage to Calvary and the atoning accomplishments that he performed for his people. According to his understanding of Scripture, Spurgeon believed that before

42. *MTP* 32:592.

43. *NPSP* 1:133-40.

44. *MTP* 3:402, *MTP* 34:188.

the foundation of the world, the Father appointed the Son to sojourn to earth and to become the substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of his elect. He reinforced a belief in Christ's predestined purpose by exegeting Matt. 3:17 in light of the Son's eternal anointing, positing that at the moment of Christ's baptism, the Father declared his pre-determined satisfaction on his beloved Son and announced his pleasure to those in attendance.

Not only did Spurgeon structure the life of Christ around the pilgrimage motif, he also utilized this theme to illustrate the *munus triplex*. Through Christ's teaching and preaching ministry, Spurgeon believed that wayfaring pilgrims found the necessary catechesis that illuminated the path to heaven. Like Bunyan's Christian, who required instructions along the way to the Celestial City, Jesus Christ offers guidance and assistance to those on the road of salvation. Spurgeon also believed that Jesus Christ was the "sympathizing high priest"⁴⁵ who suffered with and for humanity, who wiped clean the sinful footprints of the redeemed, and who provided sinful sojourners with hope, healing, and faith in his substitutionary atonement. No matter how benevolent an action or altruistic a deed, Spurgeon maintained that human effort could not secure such divine gifts. Only faith in Jesus Christ's priestly sacrifice could provide an ultimate road away from the suffering in the world. In this way, Catholic pilgrimages and Roman requirements of penance did not impress Spurgeon who, like Luther and other Protestants, believed in "*scriptural* priestcraft," that is, the priesthood of every believer.⁴⁶

45. *MTP* 32:589.

46. *NPSP* 1:75; italics in the original.

Concerning the kingship of Jesus Christ, Spurgeon used the pilgrimage motif to underscore Christ's sovereign control over the world and his people. Like the wayfaring Israelites who encountered a Red Sea before them, Spurgeon revealed God's jurisdiction over nature by showing how God provided a means of escape for his people to continue on their pilgrimage to the Promised Land. In similar fashion, Spurgeon believed that Christ's reign over believers' lives would ensure their traveling safety. He is their prince, their watchful guide who protects his pilgrims from the hidden danger on the path and who walks beside them as they sojourn to the Celestial City.

In this thesis, Spurgeon's use of the pilgrimage motif is shown to appear in abundance throughout his sermons; however, Spurgeon's appropriation of the symbolism of pilgrimage remained fundamentally biblical and, for the most part, ignored cultural, religious, or practical teachings of this practice. For instance, in his most exhaustive presentation of pilgrimage, "The Singing Pilgrim," Spurgeon only spoke to the positive elements of pilgrimage and ignored Roman abuses of the practice. He gave no attention in this sermon to religious practices of Hebrew pilgrimage,⁴⁷ even though he took as his text Psalm 119, "Thy statutes have been my sons in the house of my pilgrimage." Although in "The Holy Road" Spurgeon said, "Pilgrimage to the holy place was an important part of Israel's religious life,"⁴⁸ he offered only minimal explanations of the significance of this practice. In other

47. According to the Mishnah, pilgrims gathered in local districts for the "Sukkot" festival, after which they spent the night and collectively traveled to Jerusalem the following morning behind an ox with "its horns overlaid with gold and its head adorned with a wreath of olive leaves," *Bikkurium* 3:2-5, quoted in Mark S. Smith, *The Pilgrimage Pattern in Exodus* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 58. Pre-exilic Hebrew pilgrimages occurred both on a regional and national level. For more information on Jewish pilgrimage festivals see. H. J. Kraus, *Worship in Israel: A Cultic History of the Old Testament* (trans. G. Buswell: Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1965), 208-18.

48. *MTP* 32:410.

sermons in which he used the theme of pilgrimage, such as “Crossing the Jordan” and “Shoes of Iron and Strength Sufficient—A New Year’s Promise,”⁴⁹ Spurgeon offered no encouragement for physical pilgrimages and instead allegorized the practice, as had sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Puritans. In this way, Spurgeon revealed his Puritanism all the more, for according to John Fox, hostility toward the practice of pilgrimage became a matter of identity for those protesting the corruptions of Roman papacy.⁵⁰ Like the Puritans who dismissed the practice of pilgrimage but employed the allegory of this theme, Spurgeon presented this motif fully in his homiletical *allegoresis* to the end that he could preach, “We are aliens, foreigners, strangers in this world.”⁵¹

Even though the allegory of pilgrimage became a lens through which Spurgeon understood theology, he evidenced little concern for recovering its historical significance. Throughout the centuries, the theme of pilgrimage had been critiqued and expounded upon by the Fathers,⁵² medieval theologians,⁵³ humanists,⁵⁴

49. *MTP* 34:457-68; *MTP* 35:1-12.

50. Morris and Roberts, 239.

51. *MTP* 28:182.

52. St. Augustine explored the theological reasons for taking pilgrimages to visit relics. He believed these relics were “earthly reminders of holy men . . . ‘temples of the faith’ whom Christians should venerate in order to ‘associate themselves with the merits of the martyrs that they may secure their intercession by prayer,’” St. Augustine, quoted in Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage: An Image of Mediaeval Religion* (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), 23. Gregory of Nyssa criticized this practice, writing to a friend in the mid-fourth century of the particular dangers facing women on pilgrimages (See the account of Isolda Prewastel of Bridgewater in W. H. Bliss, ed., *Papal Petitions to the Pope 1342-1419*, vol. 1 [London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1896], 512-13). Furthermore, Jerome, who traveled to Bethlehem on pilgrimage, argued that a holy life is more important than a Jerusalem venture, “Non Jerusolymis fuisse, sed Jerusolymis bene vixisse, laudandum est,” quoted in Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), section 89, “Pilgrimage and Procession.”

53. The Lollards, the followers of John Wycliffe, supplied a great deal of criticism toward the practice of pilgrimage in their *Twelve Conclusions* of 1395, stating, “The eighth conclusion needful to tell the people beguiled is the pilgrimage, prayers, and offerings made to blind roods and deaf images

Protestant Reformers such as Luther⁵⁵ and Calvin,⁵⁶ and sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Puritans.⁵⁷ However, Spurgeon rarely recognized the historic significance of this motif beyond that which the Puritans had offered.

of tree and stone be near kin to idolatry and far from alms deeds," *Twelve Conclusions* (1395), trans. from "The Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards," *English Historical Review*, 22 (1907): 292-304.

54. Erasmus's critique of pilgrimage did not involve the dissipation of the spiritual sense of the motif. He wrote, "All men, whether they recognise it or not, are strangers and pilgrims, though not all are pilgrims 'with God,'" quoted in Wes Williams, *Pilgrimage and Narrative in the French Renaissance: The Undiscovered Country* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1998), 18. Furthermore, Erasmus widened the usage of pilgrimage to include various meanings. According to Diana Webb, "Erasmus' metaphor of the householder going from room to room of his house attending to the welfare of his dependents and thus performing his pilgrimage exploited an underlying awareness that any movement from place to place, bodily or even mental, as in the practice of the armchair pilgrim, had the same possibilities," Diana Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage, c.700 - c.1500* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 171.

55. The medieval expression of pilgrimage, complete with indulgences and sacramental penance, was crippled by the quests of continental reformers like Luther and Calvin, who posited a grace-based righteousness over against what they perceived to be works-based expressions of righteousness. In his essay "Treatise on Good Works" (8 June 1520), Luther wrote, "The first commandment forbids us to have any other gods. This means we are to believe in one God, the true God with a firm faith, and with trust, confidence, hope, and love These are the only good works by which a man may have, honor, and hold the one God. . . . There is no need at all to make a distant pilgrimage or to see holy places." He also wrote, "To eradicate such false, seductive faith from the minds of simple Christian people and to restore a right understanding of good works, all pilgrimages should be dropped. There is no good in them. . . . If any man wants to go on a pilgrimage today . . . he should first show his reasons. . . . If it turns out that he wants to do it for the sake of good work, then let the priest or master put his foot down firmly. . . . But if he wishes to make the pilgrimage out of curiosity, to see other lands and cities, he may be allowed to do so," Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann and James Atkinson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) www.christian-travelers-guides.com/culture/pilgrim/reform.html, (accessed 26 February 2011).

56. Calvin took a stronger stance against the abuses of pilgrimages than did Martin Luther, believing that pilgrimages were "Faults Contravening the Reformation," J. K. S. Reid, ed., *Calvin: Theological Treatises* (London: S.C.M. Press, Ltd., 1954), 79. However, Calvin also appealed to the symbolism of the theme of pilgrimage as a way of understanding the Christian life. A prayer by Calvin evidences his allegorical understanding of this motif: "We should pray to God to renew us and to strengthen us by His Holy Spirit, and to increase His gifts in us more and more, so that in passing through this world, we may always aim at that mark, and be here simply as pilgrims, in order that our Lord may confess us as His children, and keep for us the heritage which He has promised us and bought so dearly for us by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ," John Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 1562 (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1998), 287.

57. N. H. Keeble comments on the Puritan distinction between true and false pilgrimage. "In early English Protestant writing this distinction between true and false pilgrimages became a distinction between the figurative and the literal, with the literal unexpectedly associated with the false . . . The 'godly and ghostly pilgrimage' of Protestantism is constructed precisely as an alternative to the Roman practice: the Christian's true pilgrim way is not literally from place to place but metaphorically from this world to the next," Morris and Roberts, 241.

To conclude, Spurgeon used the pilgrimage motif to explain Christ's person, nature, and work for three primary reasons. First, the paradigm of pilgrimage became a driving mechanism behind his understanding of Jesus Christ because Bunyan's allegory had become so thoroughly ingrained in his consciousness from his childhood. Spurgeon inherited and adopted a peripatetic mindset that simply could not abandon the theme of pilgrimage just because the Roman Church had been perceived to abuse its practice. In this way, Spurgeon continued the allegorization of pilgrimage that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Puritans transmitted.

Secondly, Spurgeon's Alexandrian hermeneutic fuelled an interpretation of Scripture that perceived the entirety of the canon through the lens of themes, allegories, and illustrations. For this reason, the allegory of pilgrimage became a convenient framework to help Spurgeon make sense not only of the world around him, but also of the next life that he believed marked the end of the journey. Though certainly upholding the literal sense of Scripture, Spurgeon's continuation of a tradition that appreciated deeper meanings in the text spurred him to locate underlying patterns throughout Scripture, including that of pilgrimage.

Finally, the motif of pilgrimage triumphed in Spurgeon's Christology because the theme provided him with a sympathetic point of contact with his listeners, a rhetorical commonality in which the sufferings he experienced and the sufferings his people experienced benefited from a common hope in the destination of the suffering journey. Always seeking techniques to help him identify with his congregation, Spurgeon used the motif of pilgrimage to illustrate a Christ who loved his people enough to travel with them and beside them. To the end that Spurgeon could attach the pilgrimage motif to Scripture, to Jesus Christ, and to his congregation, he

succeeded in buttressing the faith of his people. “Though our citizenship is in Heaven,” Spurgeon preached, “yet as we live on earth, we should seek to serve our generation while we pass as pilgrims to the better country.”⁵⁸

Summary and Contribution to Scholarship

As demonstrated in chapter 1, Charles Spurgeon became the most popular preacher in the late nineteenth-century—a “Prince” whose sermons were translated into over forty languages and at any given time could be found in the remotest corners of the world. Undergirding this widely influential homiletic ran a thoroughly appropriated Puritan Christology that re-animated the doctrine of Christ in an earthy, colloquial vernacular. While critical analyses of his theology have been largely overshadowed by hagiographic biographies and hero-worshipping writings that obscured his weaknesses and present an inadequate representation of Spurgeon’s theology, this researcher has attempted to construct a three-dimensional portrayal of Spurgeon that showcases not only his glowing homiletic abilities, of which there were many, but also his Christological and rhetoric vulnerabilities.

In this thesis, Spurgeon has been presented as inheriting and adopting the Baptist tradition, a movement that shaped his ecclesial and doctrinal thinking. However, this researcher has also demonstrated his wider congruency with wider Christological traditions. A diachronic examination of his ontological Christology revealed that Spurgeon’s doctrine of Christ’s humanity, divinity, and the hypostatic union aligned with that of Chalcedonian teachings. A study of the development of Chalcedonian Christology, and also of the Reformed appropriation of such teachings,

58. *MTP* 38:74.

resulted in an examination of the doctrine of *communicatio idiomata*. In contradistinction to Calvin's emphases on the separate and distinct natures of Christ, Spurgeon displayed a remarkably Lutheran emphasis in the union of such natures.

Although Spurgeon lectured, "It is not enough to be so plain that you can be understood, you must speak so that you cannot be misunderstood,"⁵⁹ at times, his experimental colloquialisms threatened the theological precision of his communication of doctrine. However, Spurgeon's ability to revive evangelical theology in a language that common Londoners could understand situated him in direct continuity with the reformational impulse to translate Scripture into the language of the common people. Strong in metaphor, rich in illustration, Spurgeon's linguistic abilities reveal an active allegoresis at play in his theology. While not seeking to undermine the historical-grammatical sense of Scripture, Spurgeon's return to Alexandrian and medieval hermeneutics and their beliefs in the spiritual sense of Scripture is reminiscent of the hermeneutical approaches of Origen, Clement, Cassian, and Bernard of Clairvaux. In that John Bunyan "fell suddenly into allegory,"⁶⁰ Spurgeon's unpublished sermon outline on Psalm 146:7 reveals that he, too, adopted Alexandrian, medieval, and Puritan hermeneutics. "We fall into an allegory," he scribbled.⁶¹

When Spurgeon's understanding of the acceptable parameters of the use of allegory came under investigation, this thesis confirmed the conclusions that Spurgeon's practice of allegoresis differed drastically from his instructional theory of allegorizing. Specific instances of Spurgeon's occasional hermeneutical hypocrisy

59. *Lectures* 2:28.

60. Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, xxix.

61. Unpublished sermon leaflet, Psalm 146:7, page 1, personal collection.

were exposed. Wherein Spurgeon criticized Gill's over-allegorization of Scripture, multiple instances were discovered in which Spurgeon exacted the same illegitimate use of allegory in the pulpit that he dismissed in the classroom. Furthermore, Spurgeon's justification for Bunyan's over-allegoresis proved inconsistent with the criteria he divulged to his students. Nevertheless, Spurgeon's use of allegory and evocative rhetoric served to condense theological abstractions into concrete images, metaphors, and illustrations that ordinary, lower-middle class commoners could comprehend. Spurgeon's highly developed metaphor of pilgrimage evidenced this "incarnation" of theology, proving significant not only because it served as a driving mechanism behind his doctrine of Christ, but also because it reveals the inherent tension at play between Spurgeon's Chalcedonian Christology and his Alexandrian hermeneutic.

Analysis of Spurgeon's functional Christology resulted in the discussion of the development of the doctrine of *munus triplex*. Whereas the Church Fathers presented this teaching in an unintegrated manner, medieval theologians such as Hugh of Saint Victor, Lombard, and Aquinas grounded this doctrine in penance, sacrament, and suffering. Furthermore, Protestant Reformers such as Luther and Calvin offered a more dynamic rendering of this doctrine that emphasized its soteriological implications. This *dunamis* manifested itself in the creeds, confessions, and catechisms of the Protestant Reformation, in sixteenth and seventeenth-century English Puritanism, and in the Baptist tradition that Spurgeon both inherited and adopted.

A recipient of the Baptist tradition, Charles Spurgeon communicated the doctrine of the three-fold office of Christ in such a way that revealed his familiarity

and use of Particular Baptist confessions. As did his predecessors, Spurgeon understood this doctrine to be an organizing principle through which other doctrines such as Scripture, the atonement, and eschatology could be arranged. Additionally, this research concluded that the way in which Spurgeon appropriated this doctrine proved his congruency with Reformed Christology. If the Protestant Reformers evidenced dynamic appropriations of the *munus triplex*, Spurgeon, through the use of rich, vivid, and homely rhetoric, offered an *ultra*-dynamic Christology that soteriologically rooted the doctrine of Christ's three-fold office.

This thesis also revealed that the Lutheran emphasis on the union of Christ's natures played an important role in Spurgeon's communication of the *munus triplex*. The same "penetrating" attributes at play in Christ's humanity and divinity also allowed for the simultaneous holding of Christ's prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices. Concerning these offices, Spurgeon's rhetorical struggle to achieve linguistic and theological clarity surfaces in instances in which his Alexandrian hermeneutic allowed for interpretative maneuverability. A further analysis of this doctrine revealed that while the Enlightenment emphasized the prophetic office of Christ, Luther emphasized the priestly office, and Calvin emphasized his kingly office, Spurgeon departed from Lutheran and Enlightenment thinking by underscoring the kingly office of Christ, particularly in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew. Nevertheless, Spurgeon's treatment of all three offices reveals his furthering of the systematization of the doctrine of *munus triplex* that had found clarity in Reformed, Lutheran, Puritan, and Baptist theologies, and his extension of the orthopraxical applications of this teaching in Christ-centered ministry.

Having answered the questions, Who is Christ? and What did/does Christ do? Spurgeon's exegetical Christology then came under investigation. His teachings of Jesus Christ in the Old and New Testaments resulted in the analysis of his doctrines of Christ's eternal election, virgin birth, baptism, miracles, transfiguration, death, resurrection, and ascension. A discussion of Spurgeon's Christophanical references necessitated the distinction between his understanding of Christophanies, in which the *physical* appearance of Christ was taught, and his understanding of typologies, in which the *symbolic* appearance of Christ was taught. On both accounts, Spurgeon upheld the belief in Old Testament pre-figurations of Christ and, when compared to Christophanical teachings of Owen, for instance, Spurgeon's Christology proved congruent with Puritan doctrine.

Given that the miracles of Christ were challenged by nineteenth-century higher critical scholarship, a *synchronic* examination of Spurgeon's Christology demonstrated that while his resistance to German neology did not occupy his primary concern, the impact of such publications as Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* and *Essays and Reviews* did affect the trajectory of Spurgeon's Christology. His response to such works, often polemical and incapable of perceiving anything positive, resulted in an embattled posture that sought to preserve the inspired and revealed word of God in the midst of skepticism, cynicism, and doubt, but that also served to bolster his adherence to a literal, historical interpretation of Scripture. When Spurgeon's doctrine of Christ's humanity came into focus, a similarity surfaced between his attempt to recover the full humanity of Christ and also the intent of higher critical scholars to make Christ's humanity accessible to the nineteenth-century British populace.

Though intentionally disentangling Christ's divine nature from his human nature, nineteenth-century scholars sought to recover the authentic personhood of Jesus Christ through the use of scientific enquiry and higher critical scholastic techniques. This tremendous emphasis on Christ's humanity is also seen in Spurgeon's sermons and writings. Due to the authoritative structure behind his theology, as Hopkins suggests, Spurgeon tended to reject anything that questioned the authority of Scripture, the veritability of the miracles, and the traditional dating of the canonical books.⁶² "Talk not to us of bodies of divinity," he preached, "—the only body of divinity is the person of Christ. As for theology, Christ is the true theology—the incarnate Word of God; and if you can comprehend him you have grasped all truth."⁶³ Bacon supports this claim, positing that Spurgeon "refused to be connected with men who taught error or half-truths or who, in his view, denied fundamental Bible doctrines."⁶⁴ However, while Spurgeon believed higher critical scholarship resulted in the truncation of Christ's divinity, and for this reason he could not have been less sympathetic to their cause, his desire to recover Christ's humanity paralleled the underlying intent of those he deemed theological opponents. The difference between Spurgeon's emphasis and that of his opponent is best understood as a difference of theological presuppositions and methodology.

While Strauss, in *Das Leben Jesu*, presupposed the historical implausibility of the supernatural elements of Christ's life and further sought to demythologize the Gospel narratives, Spurgeon upheld belief in miracles and exegeted the Scriptures

62. Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, 134.

63. *MTP* 9:711.

64. Bacon, 135.

according to his belief in Christ's divine nature. To him, a Christ who was fully man and not fully God was unacceptable, for Christ's divinity could not be extracted from his humanity. Any reduction of Christ's divine nature would result in heresy. Spurgeon's ontological Christology never remained merely intellectual. To him, the study of Christ's humanity necessarily transitioned from theology to doxology. Information that did not lead to reformation and transformation was disregarded, for, according to Spurgeon, the telos of the doctrine of Christ's humanity results in the soteriological application of such truth in the life of the individual.

Whereas London's well-educated denominations such as the Unitarians received from academic scholarship a demystified emphasis on Christ's humanity, Spurgeon's Chalcedonian and Reformed emphases on Christ's humanity found greatest reception in less educated circles such as those of the Baptist and Methodist denominations. In this way, Hopkins's observation that Spurgeon had "little to contribute" to the evangelical counter of biblical criticism is nuanced.⁶⁵ In sharing a common interest with higher critical scholarship in recovering the humanity of Jesus Christ, albeit it with presuppositions that stood in contradistinction to such movements, Spurgeon's theological contribution to nineteenth-century Christological development is better appreciated.

At the beginning of his ministry as a sixteen-year-old itinerate preacher in the villages surrounded Cambridge, Spurgeon preached a sermon entitled "The Fight." In this sermon, he offered the benediction, "The Spirit our Strength, Jesus Christ our Captain."⁶⁶ Forty years later, on 7 June 1891, Spurgeon's last sermon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle bore a similar benediction. "Young men, if you could see

65. Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, 163.

66. Sermon Outline Notebook, Vol. 1, K1.5, Spurgeon's College Archives, 37.

our Captain, you would down on your knees and beg him to let you enter the ranks of those who follow him.”⁶⁷ Spurgeon selected a hymn entitled “I will never leave thee” by James Grant to conclude the service. It reads,

O Zion, afflicted with wave upon wave,
Whom no man can comfort, whom no man can save; dismay’d,
With darkness surrounded, by terrors
In toiling and rowing thy strength is decay’d.
Loud roaring the billows now nigh overwhelm,
But skilful’s the Pilot who sits at the helm,
His wisdom conducts thee, His power thee defends,
In safety and quiet thy warfare He ends.⁶⁸

From the beginning to the end of his preaching ministry, Charles Spurgeon’s Christocentric theology permeated his sermons. “The old theme is always new, always fresh, always attractive,” he declared. “Preach Jesus Christ.”⁶⁹ To Spurgeon, Jesus Christ was the “most magnanimous of captains”⁷⁰ who guided pilgrims through the tempests of life and death. From the City of Destruction to the Celestial City via the valley of the shadow of the death, Spurgeon believed that Christ traveled before, behind, and beside his sojourning people. Ontologically, Christ became incarnate for them—fully God and fully man; functionally, he offered them salvation through sacrificing himself for their sins; and exegetically, he reminded them of his atoning accomplishments through the witness of Holy Scripture. For this reason, the Prince of Preachers lauded the “Prince of pilgrims”⁷¹ who, through his death and resurrection,

67. *MTP* 37:323.

68. Hymn 733, “I Will Never Leave Thee,” in C. H. Spurgeon, compiler, *Our Own Hymn-Book: A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for Public, Social, and Private Worship*, 1866, 2nd ed. (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 2002), 163.

69. *MTP* 29:233-34.

70. *MTP* 37:324.

71. *MTP* 28:191.

paved a path to heaven for those who followed in his footprints. Only this gospel, Spurgeon believed, could change individuals, cities, countries, and continents. “If I had preached any other than the doctrine of Christ crucified, I should years ago have scattered my audience to the winds of heaven.”⁷² He added,

If you leave out Christ, you have left the sun out of the day, and the moon out of the night, you have left the waters out of the sea, and the floods out of the river, you have left the harvest out of the year, the soul out of the body, you have left joy out of heaven, yea, you have robbed *all* of its all.⁷³

At the end of his ministry, Spurgeon reflected on this Christocentric conviction, saying, “These forty years and more have I served him. . . . I would be glad to continue yet another forty years in the same dear service here below if so it pleased him.”⁷⁴

This, however, would not be the case. At 11:05 pm on Sunday, 31 January 1892, Charles Spurgeon died at the Hôtel Beau Rivage in Mentone, France.⁷⁵ The suggestion offered by *The Islington Gazette* proved true: “Powerful and persuasive as his living voice was, the voice of his death may well be more so.”⁷⁶ The news of Spurgeon’s death elicited sympathetic responses from William Gladstone, the chief rabbi, the Prince of Wales, and bishops of the Church of England.⁷⁷ Over fifty-five thousand people passed by Spurgeon’s coffin at Norwood Cemetery,⁷⁸ and people of

72. *MTP* 29:233.

73. *MTP* 9:720; italics in the original.

74. *MTP* 37:324.

75. *Autobiography* 4:371.

76. *The Islington Gazette*, 11 February 1892.

77. *Autobiography* 4:358-59, 60-61.

78. *The Sussex Daily News*, Brighton, 11 February 1892.

virtually every denomination in England paid tribute to him. “There is no church, whether in Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Presbyterian, or Methodist fold, which has not been swayed by the influence of Charles Spurgeon,” reported one paper.⁷⁹ Even the Unitarians, who did not care for Spurgeon’s evangelical theology, “could not but admire the great preacher.”⁸⁰

Though Charles Spurgeon died in the midst of controversy, he once prophesied, “I do not look so much at what is to happen today, for these things relate to eternity. For my part, I am quite willing to be eaten of dogs for the next fifty years; but the more distant future will vindicate me.”⁸¹ Nearly one hundred twenty years have passed since his death, and while vindication has not been the interest of this present researcher, in attempting to resurrect Spurgeon from the deep waters of Victorianism, it soon became apparent that this bucket was much too small to contain so enormous a theological faculty. To the end that Charles Haddon Spurgeon, though being dead, continues to speak through his sermons, Helmut Thielicke is correct: “This bush from old London still burns and shows no signs of being consumed.”⁸²

79. *The Methodist Recorder*, London, 4 February 1892.

80. *The Southport Visitor*, 9 February 1892.

81. Spurgeon, *All-Round Ministry*, 360-61.

82. Thielicke, 4.

APPENDIX

SERMONS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CHRISTOLOGICAL PILGRIMAGE MOTIF

The following list of sermons, though by no means exhaustive, is representative of Spurgeon's ontological, functional, and exegetical Christological uses of the theme of pilgrimage in the corpus of his sermons. Descriptions of the pilgrimage motif as it relates to each category are offered through a brief examination of sample sermons.

A. Sermons directly related to Spurgeon's ontological Christology:

Charles Spurgeon expresses his ontological Christology through the use of the pilgrim motif throughout his sermons. For instance, in "The Singing Pilgrim," Spurgeon reveals that Jesus Christ is the "great Prince of pilgrims"¹ who, in his being, assumed human flesh so that through the trials and tribulations of his earthly pilgrimage, a relationship might be restored between God and humans. Christ's pre-ordained, ontological status as "pilgrim" preceded his incarnation, as Spurgeon makes clear in this sermon.

Spurgeon advances this thought in "The Vanguard and Rear-Guard of the Church" by underscoring that as a pilgrim, Christ acted in accordance with his nature in becoming man. That is to say, the incarnation was an expression of Christ's pre-existent status as pilgrim, and, in accordance to human nature, Christ "has trod the road before. . . . The way of God's people in Providence is the exact track of Christ Himself."² In this way, Jesus's identity as a fully human pilgrim is transmitted to his people who, themselves, sojourn in his steps. In the following list of sermons, Spurgeon uses the pilgrim motif to explain the ontology of Jesus Christ:

- "The Singing Pilgrim" (*MTP* 28:182)
- "Christ Precious to Believers" (*NPSP* 5:137-44)
- "His Own Funeral Sermon" (*MTP* 38:73-84)
- "The Obedience of Faith" (*MTP* 37:157-68)
- "My Times Are in Thy Hand" (*MTP* 37:277-88)
- "A Clarion Call to Saints and Sinners" (*MTP* 37:517-28)
- "Heaven Above, and Heaven Below" (*MTP* 36:73-84)
- "Three Important Precepts" (*MTP* 36:361-72)
- "Faith's Firm Resolve" (*MTP* 36:505-16)

1. *MTP* 28:185.

2. *NPSP* 5:46.

- “Shoes of Iron, and Strength Sufficient: A New Year’s Promise” (*MTP* 35:1-12)
- “Two Essential Things” (*MTP* 35:121-32)
- “Man Unknown to Man” (*MTP* 35:193-204)
- “The Unchanging God Cheering Jacob in His Change of Dwelling-place” (*MTP* 35:637-48)
- “No Compromise” (*MTP* 34:553-64)
- “A Paradox” (*MTP* 34:589-600)
- “Idols Found Wanting, but Jehovah Found Faithful” (*MTP* 34:661-72)
- “The Breaker and the Flock” (*MTP* 33:169-80)
- “Why They Leave Us” (*MTP* 32:169-80)
- “Holding Fast Our Profession” (*MTP* 32:229-40)
- “The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted” (*MTP* 31:325-36)
- “He Shall Be Great” (*MTP* 30:25-36)
- “The Rocky Fortress and Its Inhabitants” (*MTP* 30:73-84)
- “A Heavenly Pattern for Our Earthly Life” (*MTP* 30:241-52)
- “Return, Return, O Shulamite; Return, Return!” (*MTP* 30:433-44)
- “Glory!” (*MTP* 29:277-88)
- “Supposing Him to Have Been in the Company” (*MTP* 29:313-24)
- “Mourners, Inquirers, Covenanters” (*MTP* 29:649-60)
- “A Home Question and a Right Answer” (*MTP* 28:109-20)
- “My Hourly Prayer” (*MTP* 28:241-52)
- “One Lion: Two Lions: No Lion at All” (*MTP* 28:397-408)
- “Without Carefulness” (*MTP* 28:661-72)
- “The Throne of God and of the Lamb” (*MTP* 27:13-24)
- “Holy Longings” (*MTP* 36:349-60)
- “The Believer’s Deathday Better Than His Birthday” (*MTP* 27:145-56)
- “The Vanguard and Rearward of the Church” (*NPS* 5:41-48)

B. Sermons directly related to Spurgeon’s functional Christology:

Spurgeon also makes sense of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection through use of the pilgrim motif. In “Our Sympathizing High Priest,” Spurgeon emphasizes not only the full significance of Christ’s pilgrimage to Calvary, but also his participation in the “rough places of our pilgrimage.”³ Given the reality of human depravity, Christ’s pilgrimage from life to death and from death to life proved suitable as a substitute for humanity’s transgression. It is precisely the peripatetic actions of Christ that offer assurance for the believer, for “If he [Christ] has never traveled in the night, himself, how can he whisper consolation to us in our darkest hours?”⁴ asked Spurgeon.

In his sermon “The Tomb of Jesus,” Spurgeon achieves greater clarity in articulating Christ’s function as pilgrim in connection to his death. It was a “pious pilgrimage,” a “weary pilgrimage,” that Christ undertook in traveling from the manger in Bethlehem to the cross in Jerusalem.⁵ Indeed, the suffering that Christ

3. *MTP* 32:588.

4. *MTP* 32:589.

5. *NPS* 1:134.

endured in his life foreshadowed his great pilgrimage as the sacrificial lamb that traveled on foot to the altar to be slain. In the following sermons, Spurgeon's functional Christology continues to take form through the metaphor of Christ as pilgrim:

- “Our Sympathizing High Priest” (*MTP* 32:589-600)
- “The Tomb of Jesus” (*NPSP* 1:133-40)
- “God’s Will about the Future” (*MTP* 38:61-72)
- “Our Expectation” (*MTP* 37:51-60)
- “God Rejoicing in the New Creation” (*MTP* 37:349-60)
- “An Urgent Request for an Immediate Answer” (*MTP* 37:589-600)
- “The Best Donation” (*MTP* 37:625-36)
- “Something Done for Jesus” (*MTP* 36:49-60)
- “The Warnings and the Rewards of the Word of God” (*MTP* 36:157-68)
- “The Shank-bone Sermon; or, The True Believers and Their Helpers” (*MTP* 36:193-204)
- “Grace for Grace” (*MTP* 35:289-300)
- “The Inner Side of Conversion” (*MTP* 35:493-504)
- “To the Saddest of the Sad” (*MTP* 34:301-12)
- “The Rule of the Race” (*MTP* 34:433-44)
- “Crossing the Jordan” (*MTP* 34:457-68)
- “A Life-long Occupation” (*MTP* 34:565-76)
- “Shaven and Shorn, but Not Beyond Hope” (*MTP* 33:13-24)
- “The Hedge of Thorns and the Plain Way” (*MTP* 33:97-108)
- “Pleading Prayer” (*MTP* 33:349-60)
- “The Blood Shed for Many” (*MTP* 33:373-84)
- “The Covenant” (*MTP* 33:421-32)
- “The Child of Light Walking in Darkness” (*MTP* 33:541-52)
- “The Child of Light Walking in Light” (*MTP* 33:553-64)
- “Sweet Peace for Tried Believers” (*MTP* 33:649-60)
- “How to Meet the Doctrine of Election” (*MTP* 30:469-80)
- “On Laying Foundations” (*MTP* 29:49-60)
- “Knock!” (*MTP* 29:301-12)
- “Beginning at Jerusalem” (*MTP* 29:373-84)
- “The Devil’s Last Throw” (*MTP* 29:577-88)
- “The Voice Behind Thee” (*MTP* 28:421-32)
- “Hearken and Look; or, Encouragement for Believers” (*MTP* 27:241-56)
- “They Were Tempted” (*MTP* 26:169-80)
- “Prayer Answered, Love Nourished” (*NPSP* 5:121-28)
- “Weak Hands and Feeble Knees” (*NPSP* 5:145-52)
- “Israel at the Red Sea,” (*NPSP* 2:145-52)
- “Till We Meet Again” (*MTP* 27:629-36)

C. Sermons directly related to Spurgeon’s exegetical Christology:

Spurgeon speaks to Christ’s role as pilgrim not only through an examination of the being and work of Christ, but also through an analysis of the earthly life of Christ as recorded in the gospel narratives. By bringing attention to Christ’s “pilgrimages of

mercy” in his sermon “The Shameful Sufferer,”⁶ among others, Spurgeon uses the pilgrim motif to illustrate the events that unfolded in Christ’s ministry. Such pilgrimages brought healing not to himself, but rather to those to whom he had been sent by the Father to minister. The entirety of Christ’s earthly pilgrimages, even his last great pilgrimage to the cross, found sole impetus in the redemption of his people. To this end, even the angels, Spurgeon mused in his sermon “The Wounds of Jesus,” “watched [Christ] through his pilgrimage” and testified to his acts of kindness.⁷ The following sermons reflect Spurgeon’s understanding, development, and use of the pilgrim motif as it relates to the life of Christ as evidenced in the canon of Scripture:

- “The Shameful Sufferer” (*MTP* 5:155-167)
- “The Wounds of Jesus” (*MTP* 5:401-412)
- “Jehovah-Shammah: A Glorious Name for the New Year” (*MTP* 37:1-12)
- “Bit and Bridle: How to Escape Them” (*MTP* 37:97-108)
- “The Best Strengthening Medicine” (*MTP* 37:325-36)
- “The Lad’s Loaves in the Lord’s Hands” (*MTP* 37:409-20)
- “The Shining of the Face of Moses” (*MTP* 36:253-64)
- “Patient Job, and the Baffled Enemy” (*MTP* 36:603-12)
- “Zedekiah; or, The Man Who Cannot Say ‘No’” (*MTP* 36:673-84)
- “Filling with the Spirit, and Drunkenness with Wine” (*MTP* 35:577-88)
- “Abram’s Call; or, Half-way and All the Way” (*MTP* 34:121-32)
- “Nathanael; or, The Ready Believer and His Reward” (*MTP* 34:241-52)
- “The Charge of the Angel” (*MTP* 34:373-84)
- “A Bit of History for Old and Young” (*MTP* 33:385-96)
- “The Sermon of the Seasons” (*MTP* 32:157-68)
- “The Two Appearings and the Discipline of Grace” (*MTP* 32:193-204)
- “Washed to Greater Foulness” (*MTP* 32:361-72)
- “Shut In or Shut Out” (*MTP* 27:449-60)
- “Departed Saints yet Living” (*MTP* 31:541-52)
- “The New Year’s Guest” (*MTP* 30:1-6)
- “The First Fruit of the Spirit” (*MTP* 30:289-300)
- “Hands Full of Honey” (*MTP* 29:61-72)
- “All Joy in All Trials” (*MTP* 29:73-84)
- “The Tent Dissolved and the Mansion Entered” (*MTP* 29:253-64)
- “The First Setting Up of the Brazen Serpent” (*MTP* 29:289-300)
- “Out of Egypt” (*MTP* 28:457-68)
- “With the Disciples on the Lake of Galilee” (*MTP* 28:589-600)
- “Sarah and Her Daughters” (*MTP* 27:677-88)
- “The Enchanted Ground” (*NPSP* 2:81-88)

6. *MTP* 5:157.

7. *MTP* 5:401.

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