

Spurgeon a New Biography #6

by C.H. Spurgeon

This sermon explores the life and writings of Charles H. Spurgeon, highlighting his success as an author, his ability to simplify complex truths, and the impact of his writing on his readers.

Duration: 1:36:13

Scripture: Galatians 1:6

Topics: "Christian Preaching", "Jesus Christ"

Description

The video is a summary of sermon transcripts about the preaching of two renowned preachers, Joseph Parker and Spurgeon. Joseph Parker's sermon was described as commanding, descriptive, and animated, with a scriptural message that captivated the congregation. Spurgeon's sermon, on the other hand, took place in a larger building with a bigger congregation. His voice was more expressive and his oratory superior. However, despite the impressive aspects of both preachers, the congregation ultimately found themselves praising Jesus Christ as the wonderful Savior.

Transcript

He was warned against doing so by a very worthy friend, Dr. John Campbell. Dr. Campbell had retired from the pastorate of the Whitfield Tabernacle and had become the editor of a religious paper, the British Banner. He was a warm-hearted evangelical and a capable writer, and he had used his magazine in Spurgeon's favor, commending his actions and defending him from his attackers.

But Campbell was convinced that no one was likely to succeed at both preaching and writing, and that Mr. Spurgeon had better stick solely to the former and drop the latter. We think it will be wise in Mr. Spurgeon, he wrote, to moderate his expectations in this quarter. The number of those, either in past or present times, who have attained to eminence both with tongue and pen is small.

The Greeks produced none, the Romans only one, and Great Britain has hardly been more successful. Dr. Campbell went on to urge Spurgeon not to try to be an author, and since Spurgeon thought so highly of him, he could not but have felt the force of his warning. Moreover, the task of writing did not come as easily to Spurgeon as did that of preaching.

Writing is to me the work of a slave. It is a delight to talk out my thoughts in words that flash upon the mind at the instant when they are required, but it is poor drudgery to sit still and groan for thoughts and words without obtaining them. Well may a man's books be called his works, if for every mind were constituted as

mine is, it would be work indeed to produce a quarto volume.

But despite Campbell's warning and the drudgery he experienced in writing, Spurgeon had strong reason to use the printed page. His sermons, when preached, had been remarkably blessed of God, and the same had proved true when they were published. The weekly issue and the yearly volumes had brought letters in abundance telling of the conversion of sinners and the comforting of saints, and in view of the results he had no thought but to continue to present his message in print.

Spurgeon became as successful as an author as he was as a preacher. In 1855 he began editing a sermon every Monday and having it come forth from the press every Thursday. He continued that week by week without fail till his death in 1892.

This was in itself a remarkable achievement. It is recognized that in general few people bothered to read printed sermons. Scores of the great men of God have published a volume of their sermons and after being read, usually no more than once, and in general by other preachers, these books have been forgotten.

But Spurgeon's sermons were read, not only by numerous ministers, but also by a host of people in all walks of life, and the demand was so sustained that it increased steadily throughout his whole lifetime. Indeed, thousands of people in various countries looked forward excitedly each week to the arrival of the new sermon. These discourses were sold on the streets of London and other English cities.

They went forth in the mail throughout Britain and to other lands, and they were carried by the coal porters in their visits to villages and to rural homes. The circulation in Scotland was especially large, and in America, after the opposition to Spurgeon's declamation against slavery had died down, they were bought in larger numbers than ever in Britain. Several foreign translations appeared.

The first was in Welsh, and a new sermon was published in that land each month. Spurgeon was loved in Holland, and his sermons were translated regularly. The Queen was one of the readers, and when Spurgeon was in her country, she requested that he call on her.

In Germany, a score or more of publishers issued versions. The sermons in Swedish circulated largely among the upper classes, and the translator informed Spurgeon that there had been cases of conversion among several of noble and even of royal birth. Other languages into which the sermons had been translated include Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Bulgarian, Castilian, Chinese, Congo, Czech, Estonian, French, Gaelic, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Kafir, Karen, Lettish, Maori, Norwegian, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Syriac, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.

Some sermons were also prepared in Moon and Braille type for the use of the blind. Several persons lent their aid to the distribution of the sermons. One man gave away no fewer than a quarter of a million copies.

Some of them were made into volumes of 42 discourses and expensively bound, and those he sent to all the crowned heads of Europe. Another man submitted several sermons translated into Russian to the Orthodox Church and was granted permission to circulate them, with that church's seal of approval stamped upon the cover. Bearing this mark, a million sermons went forth in that land.

In many countries where people lived at a distance from a church, groups of people gathered each Lord's Day to hear the reading of one of Spurgeon's sermons. He tells, for instance, of hearing from such a

company in some remote district of England. The letter stated that approximately 200 persons had been converted in such a gathering, and they wanted a minister to come and form them into a church.

Likewise, there were out-of-the-way areas in Scotland where people had no idea who was the Prime Minister of Great Britain, but they all knew about Spurgeon through the reading of his sermons. A Quaker advertised the sermons in several papers stating they could be obtained from his place of business. Not only did he sell thousands, but he also brought the sermons in general to the attention of the public of his area.

An Australian regularly printed the sermons as advertisements in several newspapers, and Spurgeon says, that cost the man week by week a sum which I scarcely dare to mention, lest it should not be believed. There is no possible means of estimating the number of copies of Spurgeon's sermons that have been issued. But an English author writing in 1903 declared, The total number of Spurgeon's sermons issued in print during half a century must be between two and three hundred millions.

A vast number had been produced since that date. The yearly volumes containing sermons he had prepared for the press, but had not published, were printed after his death in 1892, and that continued until it was brought to a stop in 1917, not by a lack of further sermons, but because of a wartime paper shortage. A total of 62 volumes, each containing some 480 pages, were thus produced.

The collection constitutes an immense theological and homiletical library. Numerous sermons in volume form have been, since, reprinted by several publishers in both Britain and America. Single sermons have been published on numerous occasions in magazines and papers, and how many have thus been produced cannot be known.

Of late years, however, a still greater work of republishing Spurgeon has been accomplished. During the early 1970s, the Banner of Truth Trust of Edinburgh reprinted several of the yearly volumes of sermons, and they were readily received. At the same time, Pilgrim Publications of Pasadena, Texas, undertook the same heavy task and photocopied the entire 62 volumes together with a complete set of the sword and the trowel.

With those, Pilgrim produced also some five or six smaller works about Spurgeon and the tabernacle. The whole keeps Spurgeon in prominence before the Christian public and makes a knowledge of his preaching, his doctrine, and his general activities readily available. Of course, the question arises as to what there is about these sermons that has caused this extraordinary interest.

First is the reality of Spurgeon's preaching. Most people who heard him were struck by his earnestness, the realization that the things of God were vitally real to him. As one reads his sermons, it is evident the great matters with which he dealt were not mere theories, as with many preachers, but they were to him assured truths, and he delivered them as being directly commissioned of God to do so.

Their simplicity is also appealing. Spurgeon dealt with some of the grandest and deepest matters known to the human mind. God, man, sin, atonement, judgment, eternity.

But in his discourses he gave those vast truths a simplification that rendered them grippingly understandable to the common man. The years of his ministry in the Surrey Gardens Music Hall were particularly notable in this regard, for his congregation there was composed to a large extent of persons with little education, and though he still preached on the greater doctrines of the scriptures, he more than

ever spoke in a manner that would not be above the grasp of the very unlearned. And the simplification that marked the sermons when preached is equally evident in them in their printed form.

Spurgeon possessed a rare combination of gifts, but his ability to make himself understood by ordinary mankind is one of the rarest and most important of all. Nevertheless, Spurgeon's sermons appeal also to persons of learning. Members of Parliament, judges, university personnel, important figures in the literary world, and industrial magnates frequently had their place in his congregation, and numerous persons of similar standing have long enjoyed and profited from the reading of his sermons.

As Sir William Robertson Nicol stated in 1803, Spurgeon was a great and trained theologian, master in every part of his own system. And furthermore, Charles Ray notes, The sermons preached fifty years ago are a living message today, and one dares to prophesy they will not be out of date when this twentieth century is drawing to its close. While the sermons came out singly each week, and in volume form each year, Spurgeon also produced his magazine, *The Sword and the Trowel*, each month.

It contained news of the religious world in general with his comments upon it, but especially of the tabernacle and its associated organizations. There were also biblical expositions and warm spiritual articles and exhortations to Christian zeal. One of its most remarkable features was a series of book reviews.

These were virtually all written by Spurgeon himself, and they manifest something of the vast extent of his reading, and of his ability to express an all-covering opinion in a few words. Besides the sermons and the monthly *Sword and the Trowel*, Spurgeon produced also a large number of books, more than one hundred and forty separate titles. The chief of these was a seven-volume work, a commentary on the Psalms, entitled *The Treasury of David*.

It contained an original exposition of the book, a collection of illustrative extracts from the whole range of literature, a series of homiletical hints upon almost every verse, and a list of writers upon each psalm. A secretary, J. L. Keyes, assisted in the research for these volumes, but the writing was done by Spurgeon himself, and more than twenty years elapsed from the date he started till the time he finished. Nearly one hundred forty-eight thousand volumes sold during his lifetime, and the set has since been reprinted several times.

It is regarded as one of the greatest works on the Psalms ever written. Another work that deserves particular mention is Spurgeon's *Commenting and Commentaries*. He says that in writing this work, quote, I have toiled and read much and passed on to review some three or four thousand volumes, end quote, and of this large number of books he chose one thousand four hundred thirty-seven on which he expressed his opinion.

His treatment of these works reveals something of his extraordinary ability, for not only was he able to weigh each of them, extolling their merits or pointing out their faults, but he did so in a remarkable manner. In other hands, this subject could have been dry and boring, but in his it becomes alive and attractive, and is even marked by much humor. But from those writings that manifest a vast extent of learning, Spurgeon could go to the opposite extreme and write of the simplest things of everyday life.

His *John Plowman's Talk* and *John Plowman's Pictures*, in the most down-to-earth manner, represented a series of brief parables or proverbs and applied them to everyday life. By 1900, the *Talk* had sold four hundred ten thousand copies, and the *Pictures* more than one hundred fifty thousand, and those figures

have since greatly increased. Mention must also be made of his Morning by Morning and Evening by Evening, devotional readings with which to begin and close the day.

These two little volumes are characterized by Spurgeon's rare ability to put deep truths into simple language, and to do so in a rich, warm, spiritual tone. Both books have been reprinted several times, and since by the year of his death some two hundred thirty thousand had been sold, we must assume that the circulation by now is at least a half a million. Much more might be said about the other productions of Spurgeon's pen.

Of the total one hundred forty, twenty-one are listed in the bibliography of this book, and those are sufficient to indicate something of the extent of his thinking and the versatility of his mind. So great was the output of his books that it kept the Passmore and Alabaster firm constantly busy, and in order to meet these requirements they moved to new and much larger premises. He once jokingly said to Mr. Passmore, Do I work for you, or do you work for me? And between the two men there was a warm and lasting friendship.

The business arrangement was considerably profitable for each. It thoroughly established the publishers, and likewise provided an excellent income for Spurgeon, allowing him to live without accepting any salary from his church, and enabling him to contribute extensively to his various enterprises. Spurgeon had also a measure of poetic ability.

We have seen some verses that he wrote to his wife, and there are several occasions when he thus addressed her in rhythmic sentences. When he compiled our own hymn book, he included metrical versions that he had written of certain of the Psalms. Some of his hymns, particularly Sweetly the Holy Hymn, Breaks o'er the Morning Air, and The Holy Ghost is Here, Where Saints in Prayer Agree, are widely known and frequently used.

But his most popular production is his Communion Hymn. Amidst us our Beloved stands, And bids us view His pierced hands. Points to His wounded feet and side, Blessed emblems of the crucified.

What food luxurious loads the board, When at His table sits the Lord! The wine how rich, the bread how sweet, When Jesus deigns His guests to meet. If now with eyes defiled and dim We see the signs, but see not Him, O may His love the scales displace, And bid us view Him face to face. Our former transports we recount, When with Him in the holy mount These cause our souls to thirst anew, His marred but lovely face to view.

Thou glorious Bridegroom of our hearts, Thy present smile a heaven imparts. O lift the veil, if veil there be, Let every saint Thy glory see. Spurgeon placed great emphasis on the communion service.

He made it a time of remembering Christ, especially Christ in His death, and as he spoke of His suffering and endeavored to understand something more of His atonement, he was often so moved that he could barely speak. His voice was rich with emotion, and his eyes flowed plentifully with tears. We can imagine the great congregation at such an hour singing Montgomery's according to that gracious word, or Watts' How sweet and awful is this place, or this hymn from his own pen, undoubtedly with many in the audience as overcome as he was himself with a love for the Lord Jesus and with fresh desires to go forth to serve Him.

It has been mentioned that Spurgeon wrote about 500 letters every week. They were not dictated to a secretary, but were the product of his own hand and were written with a pen that had to be dipped every few seconds into an ink bottle. Moreover, his hand was so swollen from his arthritic condition that he could scarcely hold a pen, and then the writing, which was normally so well formed and readable, became irregular and rough.

Most of his letters were written either to comfort a saint or to plead with some sinner to receive Christ, and the pain of moving the hand could not be allowed to hinder so important a responsibility. Spurgeon proved as capable as an author as he was as a preacher. He constantly received letters from almost every country on earth telling of blessing he had been brought through his printed works.

He learned of miracles of grace of men and women being converted and turned from the bondage of sin to the glories of the Christian life. For instance, a condemned murderer about to be executed in South America wrote to say a copy of one of the sermons had been given to him some months earlier. He had read it repeatedly and now had believed on Christ and was facing his approaching death in peace.

Spurgeon mentions a bed-ridden woman in England who wrote to say, Nine years I was dark and blind and unthinking, but my husband brought me one of your sermons. I read it, and God blessed it to the opening of my eyes. He converted my soul by it, and now, all glory to him, I love his name.

Each Sabbath morning I wait for your sermon. I will live on it all the week. It is marrow and fatness to my spirit.

Toward the end of his life, Spurgeon stated, For many years seldom has a day passed, and certainly never a week, without letters reaching me from all sorts of places, even at the utmost ends of the earth, telling me of the salvation of souls by means of one or other of the sermons. Professor James Stalker summed up what he called Spurgeon's power to express himself in writing. He said, We have scores of ministers who are ambitious of writing for the world of the cultivated, but a book frankly and successfully addressing the average man in language which he can understand is one of the rarest products of the press.

It really requires very exceptional power. It requires knowledge of human nature and knowledge of life. It requires common sense.

It requires wit and humor. And it requires command of simple and powerful Saxon. Whatever the requirements may be, Mr. Spurgeon had them in an unexampled degree.

And now the concluding part of this book, The Final Years, labeled 1887 to 1892. The Final Years now. And it begins with chapter 19, earnestly contending for the faith.

Before we begin chapter 19, here is a quote from Galatians 1, verses 6 through 9. I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you out into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another, but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

And now chapter 19, earnestly contending for the faith. The Metropolitan Tabernacle was a member of the Baptist Union of England. As is normal in Baptist practice, the union had no authority over the churches,

and it served only as a means of fellowship, information, and missionary cooperation.

But as is not normal in Baptist practice, it had no doctrinal statement and required simply the belief that the immersion of the believer is the only Christian baptism. The presumption was that all such churches were thoroughly evangelical, and for years that had been almost entirely true. Spurgeon had proved a strong help to the union.

From the time of his coming to London, the public recognition of the fact that he was a Baptist had gradually brought the denomination into a prominence greater than it had ever known. Under his influence, huge attendances were drawn to the union's annual meetings, and the union's financial receipts were much increased. He also founded the London Baptist Association and did much to assist in the construction of new Baptist churches, especially those under the ministry of his students.

During the early 1860s, Spurgeon foresaw a large future prosperity for the Baptists of England. He stated that in view of their zeal and the exceptional blessing they were experiencing, their numbers would undoubtedly double within the next ten years, and he even went so far as to suggest they might one day become the country's major denomination. At that time, not only were the Baptists especially active, but there was much zeal among other Christians too.

The revival taking place in 1859 was marked by considerable evangelism in other denominations, and all gave evidence of a new fervor and witnessed many professions of faith. The prospects were especially bright, and well would it have been if they had stayed that way. But at the same time, forces of an entirely opposite nature were working against Christianity and were doing so with strong effect.

This opposition to evangelical truth sprang first from the publication in 1859 of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Teaching that life had originated not by divine creation, but by blind chance, it directly contradicted the scriptures and obviated the very idea of the existence of God. Second, the Christian foundations were undermined by what was called higher criticism.

This was an attempt to reconsider the sources of the books of the Bible, and it brought new ideas as to the identities and the dates of the writers. It led to attempts to explain away the miracles of the Bible and to reduce the inspired word to the level of a merely human book. This new concept of the Bible was taught in many university classrooms.

Moreover, during the 1860s, it was given a friendly ear in certain ministerial training schools, and in the 1870s, it could be heard from several pulpits. Certain men felt themselves courageous in denying the truths their fathers had believed, and in contradicting ideas they considered to be no more than ancient myths. They called their teaching the New Theology or New Thought, and declared they were leading the people out of bondage and into liberty.

By 1880, much of England was stirred by the change that was thus being made in Christian beliefs. The new ideas were reported in both the secular and the religious press, and several books appeared propounding them. The evolutionary theory was propagated by a number of very able men.

Several ministers likewise supported it and also endorsed the claims of the higher critics. This departure from the fundamentals of Christianity was evident in every denomination, and to some extent was to be found in various men of the Baptist Union. Spurgeon's attitude toward the situation was immediately one of militant opposition.

From the beginning of his ministry, he had met instances of unbelief and had raised his voice against it. But now matters were much worse, and although he was so often in ill health, he nevertheless determined to take a clear stand in favor of the scriptures and to do everything in his power to contradict the teachings of the New Theology. Several people throughout Britain wrote to Spurgeon, telling him of instances of departure from the faith among Baptist ministers in their part of the country.

Moreover, Dr. S. H. Booth, the Secretary of the Baptist Union, both met with him and corresponded with him, giving him the names and statements of certain men in the Union who no longer believed the fundamentals of the faith. Booth asked his advice as to how best such a situation could be handled. In replying to Booth and in his dealings with the officials of the Union, Spurgeon declared the Union must make its position clearly known.

He urged that it adopt a statement of faith, one that plainly enunciated the evangelical position, and that acceptance of it be the basis on which membership of a church or a person in the Union would be continued. The earnestness of Spurgeon's efforts to get the Union to take action is evident in many of his statements. For instance, he spoke of my private remonstrances to officials and my repeated appeals to the whole body.

I have repeatedly spoken, he wrote, to the Secretary upon the subject, as he will willingly admit. He said he had also taken the matter up with Booth's assistant, Mr. Baines, asserting, But Spurgeon's request that the Union adopt a statement of faith was rejected. When the Union met, it was voted down on the argument that Baptists had always believed in the liberty of every man to state his beliefs in his own way, and that so long as a person held to the doctrine of baptism by immersion, no more was necessary.

Realizing an ever-increasing measure, the fact that unbelief was spreading rapidly, and knowing he could expect no action to be taken by the Union, Spurgeon took action himself. He published an article entitled The Downgrade in his magazine, and it opened with a statement, Read those papers which represent the broad school of dissent, and ask yourself, how much farther could they go? What doctrine remains to be abandoned? What other truth is to be the object of contempt? A new religion has been originated which is no more Christianity than chalk is cheese. And this religion, being destitute of moral honesty, palms itself off as the old faith with slight improvements, and on this plea, usurps pulpits which were erected for gospel preaching.

... is scouted, the inspiration of scripture is derided, the Holy Ghost is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into a fiction, and the resurrection into a myth, and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them brethren, and maintain a confederacy with them. At the back of the doctrinal falsehood comes the natural decline of spiritual life, evidenced by a taste for questionable amusements, and a weariness of devotional meetings. Are churches in a right condition when they have only one meeting for prayer in a week, and that a mere skeleton? The fact is that many would like to unite the church and the stage, cards and the prayer, dancing and sacraments.

When the old faith is gone, and enthusiasm for the gospel is extinct, it is no wonder that people seek something else in the way of delight." Spurgeon continued at some length, describing in words of this nature the apostasy of the times, and the spiritual deadness it was causing in numerous churches. He expressed his deep sorrow over such a situation, and then went on to deal with the question of a Christian's remaining in association with men who deny the word of God. His statement is of importance for our day as much as for his.

It now becomes a serious question how far those who abide by the faith, once delivered to the saints, should fraternize with those who have turned aside to another gospel. Christian love has its claims, and divisions are to be shunned as grievous evils. But how far are we justified in being in confederacy with those who are departing from the truth? It is a difficult question to answer so as to keep the balance of the duties.

For the present, it behooves believers to be cautious, lest they lend their support and countenance to the betrayers of the Lord. It is one thing to overlap all boundaries of denominational restriction for the truth's sake. This we hope all godly men will do, more and more.

It is quite another policy which would urge us to subordinate the maintenance of truth to denominational prosperity and unity. Numbers of easy-minded people wink at error so long as it is committed by a clever man and a good-natured brother who has so many fine points about him. Let each believer judge for himself.

But for our part, we have put on a few fresh bolts to the door, and we have given orders to keep the chain up. For under color of begging the friendship of the servant, there are those about who aim at robbing the master. This article caused a severe commotion throughout the Baptists of Britain.

A large number of persons entirely agreed with Spurgeon and let him know of their warm allegiance. But numerous others just as heartily disagreed, and in homes and churches everywhere in the land, his statements were vigorously discussed and debated. Likewise, the press, both secular and religious, took up the matter, some declaring their favor of his stand and others voicing their firm opposition.

Spurgeon's article appeared in the August 1887 issue of *The Sword and the Trowel*, and in the next three issues he published further articles. First came his reply to sundry critics. Then the case proved.

And finally, a fragment on the downgrade controversy. In these, he carried his case further, giving strong proof that he was not, as his opposers declared, merely spreading unfounded suspicions. He wrote not with the least joy in that he had shown his accusers to be wrong, but with deep sorrow that such apostasy had come about in the land.

Moreover, during the weeks in which he wrote these later articles, Spurgeon answered in his own mind the question as to whether he was giving aid to those who denied the Lord by remaining in association with them. He reasoned out the whole matter, and as he came to the concluding paragraph of his third article, he stated, quote, One thing is clear to us. We cannot be expected to meet in any union which comprehends those whose teaching upon fundamental points is exactly the reverse of that which we hold dear.

With deep regret, we abstain from assembling with those whom we dearly love and heartily respect, since it would involve us in a confederacy with those with whom we can have no fellowship in the Lord. End quote. Dear friend, I beg to intimate to you as the Secretary of the Baptist Union that I must withdraw from the Society.

I do this with the utmost regret, but I have no choice. The reasons are set forth in *The Sword and the Trowel* for November, and I trust you will excuse my repeating them here. I beg you not to send anyone to me to ask for reconsideration.

I fear I have considered too long already. Certainly every hour of the day impresses upon me the conviction that I am moving none too soon. I wish also to add that no personal peak or ill-will has in the least degree operated upon me.

It is on the highest ground alone that I take this step, and you know that I have long delayed it, because I hoped for better things. Yours always heartily, C. H. Spurgeon. End quote.

Thus Spurgeon took the historic step. The date was October 1887, and he was 53 years old. He did not try to lead others out of the Union with him, and he did not do as many hoped he would, form a new association of Baptists.

Rather, he wanted to see men and women come to a clear decision in their own minds, and he believed he had given enough information in his articles to enable them to know the course they should take. The Tabernacle membership immediately expressed its decided support of what the pastor had done, and it too withdrew from the Union. Likewise, numerous letters arrived declaring the same strong stand and heartily commending what Spurgeon had done.

But there was much opinion of a directly opposite nature. One man who had been probably the largest financial supporter of the orphanage, the almshouses, and the college, wrote expressing his strong opposition and stating that his giving was finished. A few lesser givers did the same thing.

The editor of *The Christian World*, exalted in his abandonment of the old beliefs, modern thought, he wrote, is in Spurgeon's eyes a deadly cobra in ours it is the glory of the century. It discards many of the doctrines dear to Mr. Spurgeon, not only as untrue and unscriptural, but as in the strictest sense immoral. It is not so irrational as to pin its faith on verbal inspiration, nor so idolatrous as to make its acceptance of a true trinity cover polytheism.

Spurgeon faced criticism also from one of the major figures among the Baptists of England, Dr. John Clifford, the President of the Union. Dr. Clifford was a man of strong intellectual powers and high principles, but he had surrendered his belief in the inerrancy of the scriptures and had accepted many of the views of the higher critics. He was a most honest man, yet he had somewhat deceived himself, for he assumed that the new theology was actually the old evangelicalism, merely that it wore new clothes.

On the basis of this assumption, he could see no grounds whatsoever for Spurgeon's action. In an article published in a widely circulated paper, he declared it was Spurgeon's responsibility to produce evidence of his accusations that not all Baptist pastors remained true to the faith, and he asserted that Spurgeon could better spend his time and talents in encouraging the people rather than in causing division and grief. Quote, Is it too late to ask Mr. Spurgeon to pause and consider whether this is the best work to which the Baptists of Great Britain and Ireland can be put? Is not the fateful crop of disturbing suspicions, broken promises, imperiled churches, and wounded but faithful workers already in sight enough? Oh, it pains me unspeakably to see this imminent winner of souls rousing the energies of thousands of Christians to engage in personal wrangling and strife instead of inspiring them, as he might, to sustained and heroic efforts to carry the good news of God's gospel to our fellow countrymen.

End quote. Despite Clifford's efforts to place the responsibility for the disturbance of the Baptist work on Spurgeon, the officials knew that when the union met for its general assembly, his charges of apostasy would have to be handled. Accordingly, they decided upon a course of action.

They determined that when the matter was introduced, they would reply that since Spurgeon had failed to mention the names of the men whom he assumed had departed from the faith, his assertions were too flimsy to be considered by the assembly. They would state that until he provided such evidence, there was nothing they could do in the matter. But in several letters he had received from the union's secretary, Dr. Booth, Spurgeon had been given various names and statements of men in the union who preached the new theology.

Highly aroused by the charge that he had spoken carelessly and without foundation, Spurgeon wrote to Booth, saying, I will give the information you have given to me. But Booth, who was not a man of courage or high principles, replied, My letters to you were not official, but in confidence. As a matter of honor, you cannot use them.

Accordingly, Spurgeon remained silent as to the information Booth had given him. But when the matter of the correspondence was mentioned to the meeting, Booth began to hedge and implied he had never brought the subject of the new theology and the holders of it to Spurgeon's attention, and that Spurgeon had never complained about the unbelief. When Spurgeon learned of Booth's evasions, he said, For Dr. Booth to say I never complained is amazing! God knows all about it, and he will see me righted.

Some of the new theology men were very bitter toward Spurgeon and the gospel he preached, and they propagated the charge that he had created groundless suspicion concerning the ministers and had also placed a stigma upon all the Baptist people. This idea began to be believed by many, and one of Spurgeon's biographers, writing in 1933, stated, Spurgeon was never righted. The impression in many quarters still remains that he made charges which could not be substantiated, and when promptly called upon to produce his evidence, he resigned and ran away.

Nothing is further from the truth. Spurgeon might have produced Dr. Booth's letters. I think he should have done so.

The assembly was held in April 1888. In order to accommodate the crowd that was expected, a large building, Dr. Joseph Parker's Congregational Church, was used. An attempt was made toward restoring harmony by the introduction of a resolution that it was thought would please both sides of the controversy.

It could be regarded as evangelical in nature, and yet could also be interpreted as not hostile to the new theology. It was moved by Charles Williams, who in making his motion, spoke strongly against the evangelical doctrines, and it was seconded by James Spurgeon, who felt the resolution would further the evangelical cause. The result was that the difference between the doctrinal position of the two parties was blurred still further.

Dr. Clifford had done his work well, and the resolution served to convince many that the new theology was indeed the old evangelicalism, and that no one should be concerned over the new clothes that it wore. In turn, when the vote was called for, 2,000 replied in the affirmative, and merely a paltry seven in the negative. And of the 2,000, a considerable proportion assumed they were voting for evangelicalism and were defending the action Spurgeon had taken.

Yet, the result was thereafter trumpeted abroad as a vote of censure against Spurgeon, and as an evidence that the vast majority of the Baptists of England had rejected him. During later months, although Spurgeon had taken his decided stand and had withdrawn, other men steadily continued the controversy. Some declared their opposition to the new theology, but others were bitter in their attitude towards

Spurgeon and published distorted accounts of his actions.

Dr. Booth wrote to him while he was at Menton to say that he, together with Drs. McLaren, Culross, and Clifford, wished to visit him there, and their hope was that they might influence him to reconsider his withdrawal. But Spurgeon replied there was nothing to be gained by their coming, that unbelief existed in the Union, and that they had done nothing about it.

But he added that he would meet with them upon his return to England. In the midst of the controversy, Spurgeon wrote, quote, The Lord knoweth the way that I take, and to his divine arbitration I leave the matter. I have borne my protest and suffered the loss of friendships and reputation, and the infliction of pecuniary withdrawals and bitter reproach.

I can do no more. My way is henceforth far removed from their way. But the pain it has cost me, none can measure.

I can never compromise the truth of God. It is not a matter of personalities, but of principles. And where two sets of men are diametrically opposite in their opinions upon vital points, no form of words can make them one.

End quote. Numerous persons in America, upon learning of the conflict in England, were likewise divided in their attitude. Some asserted that Spurgeon's withdrawal from the Union was entirely unnecessary.

But many others agreed with what he had done. Replying on June 18, 1888 to a letter from the States that had enclosed a sum of money for his work, he said, quote, I am so glad to forget all this when writing to you. I send hearty thanks for the money that had been sent.

I am cheered when I need cheering. See how I have been in storms. 1. These Union troubles.

2. Then wife very ill these seven weeks, and ill still. 3. Next, my dear mother died. 4. On the day of the funeral I was smitten by my old enemy, the gout, very fiercely, and have undergone a baptism of pain.

Cannot walk yet, and barely stand. Still I rejoice in God. Lots of Americans here.

Choice specimens. Hearty love. End quote.

The growth being made by the new theology concepts emphasized the need for all true Christians to know them and to stand together against them. In view of this situation, a great rally of the Evangelical Alliance was held not long after Spurgeon withdrew from the Baptist Union. The Alliance was composed of people of all denominations, and the enthusiasm with which Spurgeon was greeted at this gathering reveals something of the esteem in which he was still held by a vast number of the people.

One of his most faithful helpers, Robert Schindler, wrote, quote, Never shall we forget the first meeting called by the Alliance for testimony to the fundamental truths of the gospel, which was held in Exeter Hall. The reception given by the audience to Mr. Spurgeon when he rose to speak was overpowering in its fervor and heartiness. We occupied a seat on the platform near enough to witness the powerful emotions that agitated him, and the tears that streamed down his cheeks as he listened to the previous speakers.

And though only a very few of his Baptist brethren were present, there was not wanting such a display of sympathy as must have cheered and comforted his heart. End quote. The controversy proved very hard on Spurgeon physically.

He was sick before it began, and he had frequent attacks of gout while it went on. Moreover, at this stage in his life he was suffering from the beginnings of a disease of the kidneys, which sometimes made him exceedingly weak. As we have seen from his statement, Mrs. Spurgeon was still very unwell.

The experience proved all the more difficult for him, because he did not like to fight. He was utterly unflinching in his stand for what he believed to be God's truth, but his affections for his fellow men were very large, and it was with deep sorrow that he parted from many dear friends in the Union. His battle was waged with boldness and decision, yet he labored to avoid anything that would cause the least unnecessary strife.

I am anxious to have nothing said, he wrote, which can trouble our friends or cause discord. A few heedless persons would be glad to see strife, but I can differ and not quarrel. There was difficulty even among the pastor's college men.

Over a hundred ministers trained at the college signed a mild protest against Spurgeon's intended procedure of inviting only such as made a certain declaration to the conference. The protest was addressed to Spurgeon, and his reply reads in part, I could not endure to give up our conference to one long wrangle. The expense, not merely of money, but of my life, would be too great for a purposeless conflict.

The strain has nearly broken my heart already, and I have had all I can bear of bitterness. Executing his authority as president, he disbanded the existing college conference, and then formed a new one, this one based on a clear declaration of the evangelical doctrines, which was now written into its statement of faith. Four hundred thirty-two men voted in favor of the disbanding step taken by Spurgeon, and sixty-four voted against it.

Some of this latter number were bitter in their attitude, terming him the new pope, and thereafter had no more fellowship with him. Thus were his sorrows multiplied. Part of the difficulty in the union lay in the fact that although nearly all the ministers recognized the presence of unbelief in their midst, many told themselves it would probably do no harm.

It was on this matter that Spurgeon was in direct disagreement, for he could see a future course leading to lifeless and fruitless churches. At the beginning of 1888, he gave a report that compared the work of the men of his college with that of all the other pastors of the union. The 370 college men had, during the preceding year, baptized 4,770 persons, and the increase in their membership had amounted to 3,856.

But the rest of the union, with 1,860 pastors and 2,764 churches, reported an increase of only 1,770 members for the year. And Spurgeon viewed the success of his men as an evidence of the blessing that accompanies the gospel, whereas the bringing in of unbelief robs the church of its power and places it on what he called the downgrade. Many thought Spurgeon's concept of the harmful effects of the new theology was quite wrong, but with the passing of the years, he has been proven entirely correct.

As he foretold, with the denial of the scriptures, church attendances began to fall off. Prayer meetings became places of a mere few, till they were dropped all together, and the miracle of a life transformed by the grace of God was witnessed less and less, if at all. Church after church in city, town, and hamlet gradually died out.

Throughout England one could see what had once been a church now used as a shop or a garage, or could see where one had formerly stood, but it had since been torn down. All manner of reasons were given for this sad condition, but the prime cause was the lack of the gospel in the pulpit. All the attempted substitutes failed to attract the people.

Where there is no acceptance of the Bible as inerrant, and a belief in the great fundamentals of the faith, there is no true Christianity. The preaching is powerless, and what Spurgeon declared to his generation a hundred years ago, is the outcome. The failure of the new theology, or modernism, call it what we will, is forcefully brought out by E.J. Pol Connor in his *Evangelicalism in England*.

He tells of a conversation between the editor of an agnostic magazine and a modernist minister. The editor told the minister that despite their different vocations, they had much in common. I don't believe the Bible, said the agnostic, but neither do you.

I don't believe the story about creation, but you don't either. I don't believe in the deity of Christ, nor in his resurrection or ascension. I don't believe any of these things, but neither do you.

I am as much a Christian as you, and you are as much an infidel as I. Such a condition, infidels in the ministry, was the direct outcome of the new theology and a clear proof of the rightness of Spurgeon's action in withdrawing from all confederacy with it. And now chapter 20, *Last Labors*. And here's how the chapter begins.

During the 1880s, a group of American ministers visited England, prompted especially by a desire to hear some of the celebrated preachers of that land. On a Sunday morning, they attended the city temple, where Dr. Joseph Parker was the pastor. Some 2,000 people filled the building, and Parker's forceful personality dominated the service.

His voice was commanding, his language descriptive, his imagination lively, and his manner animated. The sermon was scriptural. The congregation hung upon his words, and the Americans came away, saying, What a wonderful preacher is Joseph Parker.

In the evening, they went to hear Spurgeon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The building was much larger than the city temple, and the congregation was more than twice the size. Spurgeon's voice was much more expressive and moving, and his oratory noticeably superior.

But, they soon forgot all about the great building, the immense congregation, and the magnificent voice. They even overlooked their intention to compare the various features of the two preachers, and when the service was over, they found themselves saying, What a wonderful Savior is Jesus Christ. That's the preface to the chapter, and now chapter 20 itself begins, again entitled *Last Labors*.

Spurgeon's action in the controversy was not taken without much suffering on his part. After he had withdrawn from the Baptist Union, as he went on to dissolve the old college conference, and to form a new, he found himself almost crushed under the burden. In a letter to his brother, written March 31st, 1888, he said, quote, My dear brother, I was taken ill while trying to preach on Thursday.

An awful depression and a choking sensation made my preaching a great misery. I have taken medicine twice, but feel half dead. Will you come prepared with a sermon on Sunday night, for I may not be able to preach? My teeth made me nervous, my liver made me giddy, and my heart made me sorrowful.

I hope I may get through the conference, but yesterday I was very far from hoping it. The strain is terrible. I want to get the college report done, and time is running close.

Hearty love, your grateful brother, Charles. End quote. He met criticism also from certain religious papers.

We notice especially two American magazines, both of which were evangelical, but held that there was no reason for Spurgeon's act of separating from the Union. One declared, quote, As to the charges he brought, not against the Union, but against some few nameless members of it, all that can be said is none proven. End quote.

To assail the Union, because out of its hundreds of members, some half a dozen men are not in full accord with what Mr. Spurgeon holds, and what we hold also to be the gospel of our Lord, is to set to work to burn down a house because a dozen rats are hidden in the cellar. End quote. Spurgeon had spoken, of course, with much graciousness of Alexander McLaren and other evangelicals in the Union, but he had dealt severely with unbelief itself.

A New York paper, however, confused the two attitudes, and stated, quote, His language regarding the counsel of the Union is pervaded by extreme bitterness. Their expressions of kindness and brotherly love for him he terms the velvet pad covering the claw. This is hardly becoming language to use concerning men like McLaren and Angus and Underhill and Landell's leaders in the Church of God.

End quote. Others, however, made statements of a very opposite nature. They charged that Spurgeon had been too gracious in the controversy, and that his actions ought to have been more militant.

They asserted that he ought to have published the names of the men who had departed from the faith, and should also have reproved those who failed to oppose apostasy. The reasons for his attitude are declared in reply to a letter that commended his withdrawal from the Union. Quote, October 5, 1888.

To the ministers and delegates forming the Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces of Canada. Dear brethren in Christ, I heartily thank you for all the words of cheer which you have sent me. Such a resolution from such brethren, at such a time, gladdened me greatly.

I am grateful that you have not misjudged my action in reference to the English Baptist Union from which I have felt bound to separate myself. I have not acted from sudden impulse, much less from any personal grievance, but I have been long protesting quietly, and have been at last compelled to make a stand in public. I saw the testimony of the churches becoming obscure, and I observed that in some instances the testimony of the pulpit was very wide of the word of God, and I grieved over the state of things which is sure to follow upon defection from the gospel.

I hoped that the many faithful brethren would be aroused to the peril of the situation, and would earnestly endeavor to cleanse their union of the most flagrant offenders. Instead of this, I am regarded as a troubler in Israel by many, and others feel that, important as truth may be, the preservation of the union must be the first object of consideration. The pain I have felt in this conflict I would not wish any other man to share, but I would bear ten thousand times as much with eagerness if I could see the faith once for all delivered to the saints placed in honor among the Baptist churches of Great Britain.

I resolved to avoid personalities from the very beginning, and though sorely tempted to publish all that I know, I have held my peace as to individuals, and thus have weakened my own hands in the conflict. Yet this also I had rather bear than allow contention for the faith to degenerate into a complication of personal

quarrels. I am no man's enemy, but I am the enemy of all teaching which is contrary to the word of God, and I will be in no fellowship with it.

Unable to write all that I feel, I turn to prayer, and beseech our God in Christ Jesus to bless you exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or even think. Yours most gratefully and lovingly, C.H. Spurgeon Weary and worn and ill, my motto is faint yet pursuing. The inspiration of the scriptures is the point assailed, and with it all true religion stands or falls.

May you be kept from this dread tidal wave which is rolling over our country. End quote. The particular value of this letter lies in the fact that not only does it help us to understand Spurgeon's stand in the controversy, but it also reveals something of his physical and mental condition.

He says little concerning these things in his autobiography, and seldom mentions them in his sermons, but in this letter we have his expression weary and worn and ill, and his reference to the pain I have felt in this conflict. Other letters contain similar expressions. He was hurt by the bitter treatment received from some of the new theology men, but he was wounded still more by the increasing spread of their views.

He found relief from the sorrows of the controversy in hard work. More than ever, people invited him to come and minister to them in churches in London and elsewhere, and he responded to as many requests as he possibly could. Although he never made the controversy the subject of his preaching, he often warned against the inroads being made by unbelief, and urged a strong stand for the faith.

He was busy also, as always, in the weekly editing of a sermon, in the monthly preparation of his magazine, and in his other writing. Sermon number 2000 came from the press at this time, and the Tabernacle people made the event something of a celebration, commemorating this milestone in his work with much joy. Likewise, a reunion at the orphanage drew a large company, and both children and grown-ups rallied around him and manifested their love.

New supporters arose to take the places of those who had stopped giving, and though he was sometimes anxious, the 300 pounds that was necessary every week to maintain the different enterprises never failed to be provided. This activity and labor proved a tonic for Spurgeon. Nevertheless, his burdens proved too much for him.

In July of 1888, he was laid aside in sickness, and found himself too weak even to hold a pen. After two weeks, he recuperated to some extent, and returned vigorously to his work, but in November was prostrated again. Subdued by his condition, he wanted to set out for Montauban right away, but he was too weak to travel.

He stated, I cannot get better till I am in another climate, and I cannot reach that other climate until I get better. In December, he became sufficiently well to attempt the journey, and therefore set out for the southern sunshine. This time, however, his days at Montauban were marred by a severe fall on a stone stairway.

At this point of his life, he was a fairly heavy man. His feet and legs were almost always somewhat swollen, and he found it necessary to lean upon a cane as he walked. On the last Sunday of 1888, he went in the afternoon with three companions to enjoy a time of quiet meditation in a nearby villa.

In descending a stair, as he placed the end of his cane on a smooth marble step, it slipped, and he fell headlong. His secretary, Joseph Harold, tells us, Neither he nor his friends realized at first how much he

was injured. In his descent, he turned a somersault, shook some money out of his pocket into his boot, knocked out two teeth that he was glad to lose, and as he picked himself up, he smilingly told his alarmed companions that it was painless dentistry with money to boot.

But although he thus joked, upon being helped back to the hotel, he was put to bed in pain, and was soon forced to realize that the accident had been severe indeed. In a letter to the people of the Tabernacle, he stated, My injuries are far greater than I suppose. It will be some time before foot, mouth, head, and nerves can be right again.

What a mercy that I was not smashed quite up! Another stone would have brought me to mine end. May I be spared to keep my own footing to the end, and let the downgraders know how terrible is a fall from the high places of the Lord's truth. Yours very truly, C. H. Spurgeon.

The recuperation from the fall was slow. After being laid up nearly four weeks, he told the deacons, As soon as I can stand through a sermon and walk without pain, I will take it as my order to return home. Soon, may that glad token be given me, for I long to be among you after these months of weakness intersect with pain.

When he arrived back at the Tabernacle, February 24, 1889, after a two-month absence, he was greeted by an immense congregation. During his absence, the pulpit had been supplied by a young Scottish preacher, John McNeill, a Presbyterian of such eloquence that he was often referred to as a second Spurgeon. The work had been well maintained, but the people were overjoyed in having the pastor back.

The deacons, however, earnestly suggested to Spurgeon that he refuse the many calls he received to preach elsewhere and that he husband his strength for the many duties of the Tabernacle. Spurgeon was soon as busy as ever. In May, he addressed the college conference, speaking on Our Power and the Conditions of Obtaining It, and the collection for the work of the college amounted to 2,800 pounds.

He accepted an invitation to speak at an afternoon meeting among his old congregation at Water Beach, but he refused to stay for the evening meeting, saying, I am now overpressed with many labors, and to remain at Water Beach all night involves losing the next day. If I am home at night, I get a good night's rest in my own bed, which is everything to a feeble man, and then I have the day before me. I am sorry it is so, for I should like to have seen more of my old friends.

In June, a party of sailors had a sermon from him at the Tabernacle, and during that same month he addressed a large assembly who meant to hear some of the old fugal tunes of other days. In July, he paid a memorable visit to the island of Guernsey, where a number of special services were held in connection with the ministry of a former student, Mr. F. T. Snell. During October, a missionary conference was held at the Tabernacle.

Spurgeon, Dr. McLaren, and Mr. McNeill were the speakers, and the occasion was marked especially by a farewell to several men, mostly from the college, who were leaving for the foreign field. Spurgeon had long been closely friendly with Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, and he had led the Tabernacle to give toward this excellent work. And on this occasion, the scene was one of great enthusiasm when Spurgeon descended from the upper to the lower platform to shake hands with a number of young men and women who were going out to China.

In the same month, he had tea with a primate of the Church of England. In a letter in which he refused an invitation to a banquet sponsored by the Master Cutler, By the middle of November 1889, his strength was spent. As he preached, his shoulder was drawn up as if by sharp hitches of pain, and he had no choice but to escape England's winter by returning to Montaigne.

During his absence, the pulpit was to be supplied by an American, Dr. A. T. Pearson, and an evangelistic team was to hold a gospel campaign. Spurgeon urged the people to gather up the fruits of the special mission, that we may have a large increase to God's glory. During his previous stays at Montaigne, he had made it his practice, if he was well enough to hold a pen, to devote himself to his writing.

This time, December 1889 through January 1890, he gave himself over to working on a commentary on Matthew, The Gospel of the Kingdom. His days in the warmth proved profitable, and he was able to return at the end of two months renewed in both body and spirit. Again he threw himself into the work.

But within a month, in refusing an invitation to preach again at Water Beach, he stated, I wish I could be constantly out, but I do not get any stronger, and every year I have more to do. I have been laid up three days with swollen left hand and pain. Still, I shall hold up as long as I can.

But although he could not go to Water Beach, or numerous other places that wanted him, he did minister frequently in and around London, this in addition to his constant labor at the tabernacle. He now suffered a further attack concerning the action he had taken in the controversy. This came from none other than Dr. Joseph Parker, an open letter in which Parker strongly criticized Spurgeon's complaints against the departure from the faith.

He especially opposed Spurgeon's action in withdrawing from the Union. Parker had long exercised a very acceptable ministry, but unlike Spurgeon, he had never been a doctrinal preacher, and he could now easily condone those who denied the scriptures. Spurgeon made no reply to the open letter, yet he undoubtedly felt its effect, not only because of the criticism of himself, but also because of Parker's favor toward the New Theology men, and his failure to stand with the Evangelicals.

Parker's action shows how unthinkingly good men were influenced by the gradual manner in which modernistic teaching was introduced into England. Despite his steadily worsening physical conditions, Spurgeon's zeal for souls remained as warm as ever. This is evident in the following letter which he wrote to a young boy.

Quote, Westwood, Norwood, July 1st, 1890 O Lord, bless this letter. My dear Arthur Lazell, it was a little while ago at a meeting for prayer where a large number of ministers were gathered together. The subject of prayer was our children.

It soon brought the tears to my eyes to hear those good fathers pleading with God for their sons and daughters. As they went on in treating the Lord to save their families, my heart seemed ready to burst with strong desire that it might be even so. And then, I thought, I will write to those sons and daughters to remind them of their parents' prayers.

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

Do you not pray for yourself? If you do not do so, why not? If other people value your soul, can it be right for you to neglect it? See, the entreaties and wrestlings of your father will not save you if you never seek

the Lord yourself. You know this. You do not intend to cause grief to dear mother and father, but you do.

So long as you are not saved, they can never rest. However obedient and sweet and kind you may be, they will never feel happy about you until you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and so find everlasting salvation. Think of this.

Remember how much you have already sinned, and none can wash you but Jesus. When you grow up, you may become very sinful, and none can change your nature and make you holy but the Lord Jesus through His Spirit. You need what father and mother seek for you, and you need it now.

Why not seek it at once? I heard a father pray, Lord, save our children and save them young. It is never too soon to be safe, never too soon to be happy, never too soon to be holy. Jesus loves to receive the very young ones.

You cannot save yourself, but the great Lord Jesus can save you. Ask Him to do it. He that asketh, receiveth.

Then trust in Jesus to save you. He can do it, for He died and rose again, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but have everlasting life. Come and tell Jesus you have sinned.

Seek forgiveness, trust in Him for it, and be sure that you are saved. Then imitate our Lord. Be at home, what Jesus was at Nazareth.

Yours will be a happy home, and your dear father and mother will feel that the dearest wish of their hearts has been granted them. I pray you think of heaven and hell, for in one of those places you will live forever. Meet me in heaven.

Meet me at once at the mercy seat. Run upstairs and pray to the great Father through Jesus Christ. Yours very lovingly, C.H. Spurgeon.

Although sick, tired, and very busy, Spurgeon took time to write to a boy, one whom he had never met, and of whom he had learned only through the prayers of his parents. His earlier correspondence had been remarkable for its excellent orthography, but in this letter the writing is rough and irregular. Undoubtedly his hand was swollen and probably painful as he held the pen, and we must assume that he wrote to each of the children for whom the parents had prayed at that meeting.

Yet, how worthy were the results, for this letter was used of the Lord to bring young Arthur Lazell to himself. Very likely the other letters were equally fruitful in other young lives. After three more months of struggling, Spurgeon returned to Montaigne.

This was in October 1890, and although he frequently suffered pain and weakness during his stay there, he returned to England in February 1891 in good spirits. There was some slight measure of strength in his step, and both he and the people were encouraged and felt he might be on the verge of a new lease on life. But such was not the case.

The annual church meeting was soon held, and it proved to be the last time he would conduct the church's business. The reports provided great cause for thanksgiving. The membership was 5,328.

The church had 127 lay ministers serving in and around London. The people of the tabernacle conducted 23 mission stations, these having 4,000 seatings, and they operated 27 Sunday schools, with 600

teachers and 8,000 scholars. Two years earlier, Spurgeon had built, at his own expense, a fine new church at Thornton Heath, not far from his home, and now a new building, seating 1,000, was about to be opened near the Surrey Gardens, and was a memorial of the years in which he had preached in the Great Music Hall there.

Likewise, the Sword and the Trowel reported, The month of March has been a memorable one. Pastor C.H.S. continued to see persons who wished to join the church, and out of these he had 84 to propose for fellowship, baptism, and membership. How much of joyous labor all these involved is best known to the pastor and to the sympathizing reapers who shared his delightful toil.

The college conference followed. Spurgeon's soul was deeply stirred by the fact that a handful of the men had departed from the faith and had withdrawn from membership during the controversy. But a very large majority had remained, and he spoke with great vigor and conviction in urging them on in zealous labor and defense of the truth.

The effort, however, proved more than he could bear. On the following Sunday evening as he entered the pulpit, he was so overcome by nervousness and weakness that he could not remain. This was the first time in his 40 years of ministry that he had been forced to leave the pulpit by what he called overpowering nervousness.

Nevertheless, he rallied and for a month labored with great diligence, preaching at several churches as well as conducting his ministry at the Tabernacle. On June 7, 1891, Spurgeon stood before his people for the last time. That platform had been his pulpit throne from which he had proclaimed the gospel to at least twenty million hearers.

But now, the great congregation was to hear his voice no more. Undoubtedly, because he knew the end of his labor was near, he set out the next morning against strong advice not to do so for Stambourne. He wanted to visit again some of the scenes of his childhood, but he proved too weak for such travel, and after four days he returned utterly exhausted and in pain.

For the following three months, he was completely laid aside. He was given all that medical skill and careful nursing could provide, but he remained seriously ill. Prayer was made for him by believers all over the world and the Tabernacle Church, beginning with a whole day of intercession, continued to meet morning, noon, and night to plead for his recovery.

He was remembered in prayer by the chief Jewish rabbi, by certain clergy of Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral, and by the ministers of churches of all denominations. Reports of his condition were carried repeatedly in the secular and religious press, and messages of sympathy were sent by the Prince of Wales, by Mr. Gladstone, the former Prime Minister, by several members of the aristocracy, and of Parliament, and by numerous others from all walks of life. As the weeks came and went, he experienced a series of hopeful advances that alternated with disappointing relapses, and his condition showed no thorough improvement.

As the winter approached, it was evident he must go to Montaigne if he could bear the strain of the travel. Accordingly, on Monday, October 26, 1891, accompanied by his brother, his secretary, and Mrs. Spurgeon, he set out on the Thousand Miles Journey. This was the first time Mrs. Spurgeon had ever been able to be with him at Montaigne, and it was a delight to both of them that she was well enough to accompany him now.

Upon reaching the warmer air, he improved somewhat. He was able to work toward completing his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, and he was also able to be outdoors much of the time, sitting or being wheeled in a wheelchair. On New Year's Eve, he gave a short address to a number of friends who gathered in his apartment at the hotel, and he did the same on the following morning.

He wanted to attempt to speak on the two following Sundays, but was persuaded not to do so. On January 17, however, he gave out the hymn that closed the little service, and that also closed his active participation in the ministry of the Lord. Very fittingly, it was, The sands of time are sinking, the dawn of heaven breaks, the summer morn I've sighed for, the fair sweet morn awakes.

Dark, dark hath been the midnight, but dayspring is at hand, and glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land. O Christ, he is the fountain, the deep sweet well of life, the streams on earth I've tasted, more deep I'll drink above. There to an ocean fullness his mercy doth expand, and glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land.

During the days that followed, he was much of the time only partly conscious. It was evident to Mrs. Spurgeon and to the doctor that he was fast sinking away. On January 28th, he became totally unconscious, and despite all that could be done, this remained his condition till in the evening of Sunday, January 31st, 1892, his earthly journey came to its close, and he departed to be with Christ, which, as the scriptures assure us, is far better.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/0/SID0379.mp3>

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