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THE SINGING LION OF LONDON:
HYMNODY AS A PEDAGOGICAL AND DOXOLOGICAL TOOL
IN THE PASTORAL MINISTRY OF CHARLES SPURGEON

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THE SINGING LION OF LONDON:
HYMNODY AS A PEDAGOGICAL AND DOXOLOGICAL TOOL
IN THE PASTORAL MINISTRY OF CHARLES SPURGEON

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For Jamie Lynn, the love of my life, and our children:

Caden, Avery, Addison, and Cannon.

May our family love and live for the glory of Christ.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>NPSP</i>	<i>New Park Street Pulpit</i>
<i>MTP</i>	<i>Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit</i>
<i>S&T</i>	<i>The Sword & the Trowel</i>
<i>TD</i>	<i>Treasury of David</i>
<i>OOHB</i>	<i>Our Own Hymn-book</i>

PREFACE

Remembrance is the kindling of thanksgiving, and I have much to be thankful for. I am deeply grateful to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for providing not only the theological education I desired, but a family of learners who seek to disciple the coming generation of church leaders through theological education. I have not earned the right to be counted among you, it has wholly been grace. I am particularly thankful for the investments of my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Esther Crookshank, as well as my committee members Dr. Tom Nettles and Dr. Michael Haykin. I am also thankful to Dr. Joe Crider, Dr. Greg Brewton, Dr. Stephen Yuille, and Dr. Matthew Westerholm for their investment in my life throughout this part of my academic life. I would never have braved this endeavor had it not been for the prompting of Dr. Randy Stinson, Dr. Bruce Ware, Dr. Donald Whitney, and Dr. Philip Bethancourt. The direction of doctoral studies has been done with the excellent leadership of Dr. Jonathan Pennington and the administration of Trey Moss.

This journey would not have reached its destination had it not been for Devon Kauflin, my brother in Christ, who has challenged, sharpened, and encouraged me every step. Chris Fenner was a steady help as a hymnologist. My dear friend, Dr. Jordan Stone, has cheered me on always, looking over his shoulder as I followed him on this course. Cheyenne Haste served as editor of this work, a task that took great courage and greater skill. Also, my assistant, Jennifer Haeg, was incredibly helpful in working through a world of hymn quotations.

Thank you to my church family, The Trails Church. Though not yet two years old now, you are much older in my heart. It is a joy to serve as your pastor. I am specifically indebted to the elders of our congregation who are such life and

encouragement to me, and for their constant support for my labor in hymnody.

My parents, Charles and Patti Boswell, and my in-laws, Martin and Sandra Critz, have continually asked me how my studies were coming along and have supported me in prayer. They are each a wonderful gift to our family and the body of Christ.

Finally, though this degree means a great deal to me, nothing means more to me than the love and support of my family. Caden, Avery, Addy, and Cannon are the joy of my life. (And one day the proud inheritors of my personal Spurgeon library). As for my wife, Jamie, she has prayed, laughed, assisted in research, and sacrificed many hours for me to do this good work. For her, I am forever grateful to our Savior.

Matthew Boswell

Celina, Texas

May 2020

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Col 3:16–17)¹

The Christian faith is a singing faith; and the gospel of Christ is its melody and verse. As Paul writes to the church at Colossae he instructs them in the importance of congregational singing in their life and practice of corporate worship. The Scripture is replete with singing from the first song of praise recorded in Exodus 15, through the “treasury of David” that is the Psalms, to the final “Hallelujah!” ringing out in Revelation 19. Many of the songs contain a pedagogical nature and provide means to teach the people of God who he is and what he has done.² Other biblical songs are responsive in nature and are a form of prayer to God. The content of each psalm, hymn, spiritual song, and canticle recorded in the Scripture is fully inspired, infallible, and inerrant.

Christians have clearly been commanded by God to “sing to the Lord a new song” (Ps 96:1). This imperative to sing is given as an act of worship.³ They have also

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

² See Scotty Gray, *Hermeneutics of Hymnody: A Comprehensive and Integrated Approach to Understanding Hymns* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2015); Theresa Berger, *Theology in Hymns? A Study of the Relationship of Doxology and Theology According to a Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists (1780)* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995).

³ D. A. Carson defines worship as “the proper response of all moral, sentient beings to God, ascribing all honor and worth to their Creator-God precisely because he is worthy, delightfully so.” D. A. Carson, “Worship under the Word,” in *Worship by the Book*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 26. Here believers can see a connection between blessing the Lord—properly responding, ascribing honor and worth to God in song, delighting in God as they sing.

been instructed as to the content of their singing: telling the salvation of God from day to day (Ps 96:2). Further, all the earth is called to join in the song of God's greatness and saving grace (Ps 96:3). Singing is a means of expression of unity within the body of Christ, with the strain of voices raised together to God.⁴ However, church history tells the story of how many wars have been waged over who should lead congregational singing, what the church should sing together, and even if the church should sing at all.

One of the greatest needs of the church today is a theological vision of congregational singing. For this to occur, pastors and music directors must pay close attention to the biblical mandate of singing to draw from the wells of Scripture its sense, meaning, and application within the context of the local church. The Scriptures themselves are the locus of such an endeavor. Martin Luther explains the weddedness of the Word and corporate singing:

We have put this music on the living and holy Word of God in order to sing, praise, and honor it. We want the beautiful art of music to be properly used to serve her dear Creator and his Christians. He is thereby praised and honored and we are made better and stronger in faith when his holy Word is impressed on our hearts by sweet music.⁵

One lament of modern time is that many pulpits lack passion and biblical exposition regarding the duty and delight of congregational song. Few pastors instruct on the biblical practice of singing; therefore, congregations find themselves fumbling forward in their practice of song, often chasing the latest offerings of popular charts, rarely stopping to consider the implications of *lex cantandi, lex credendi*.

⁴ John Bell argues that the corporate act of singing together helps to facilitate and promote communal identity. See John Bell, *The Singing Thing: A Case for Congregational Song* (Glasgow: Wild Goose, 2000); see also Brian Wren, *Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000).

⁵ Martin Luther, "Preface to the Burial Hymns," in *Liturgy and Hymns, Luther's Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1965), 53: 328.

Church history provides numerous pastors who were heavily invested in the practice of hymnody and took seriously the singing of the church, understanding what was at stake in its practice. One notable example of this pastoral involvement in the hymnody of his congregation is Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892). Spurgeon relished singing as a part of gathered worship at Metropolitan Tabernacle.⁶ He says,

Singing, as it is a joyful, and at the same time a devout, exercise, should be a constant form of approach to God. The measured, harmonious, hearty utterance of praise by a congregation of really devout persons is not merely decorous but delightful, and is a fit anticipation of the worship of heaven, where praise has absorbed prayer, and become the sole mode of adoration.⁷

Many contemporary churches lack a clear biblical, articulated theological vision of congregational singing. As a result, the songs and practice of singing suffers due to lack of biblical clarity and theological development. The Metropolitan Tabernacle was no such place, but rather a church who understood the joys of singing together in the worship of God—and this understanding began in the pulpit. Spurgeon regularly taught on the practice of singing in sermons, picked the songs his church sang, edited a hymnal, and also wrote psalms and hymns for congregational use.⁸

The intention of this dissertation is to present Spurgeon, the “Prince of

⁶ For the history of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, see C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle: Its History and Work* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1876). See also Eric W. Hayden, *A Centennial History of Spurgeon's Tabernacle* (Pasadena, CA: Pilgrim, 1971).

⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, *Treasury of David* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1869-85), 4:306.

⁸ For Spurgeon's practice of picking the hymns for congregational worship, see C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography: Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by his Wife, and His Private Secretary* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897-99), 2:9. For sermons preached on the subject of singing, see C. H. Spurgeon, “Mary's Magnificat” (606), December 25, 1864, in Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 51 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1855-1917); Spurgeon, “Sing in the Ways of the Lord” (1615), August 11, 1881, in *MTP*, vol. 27; and, Spurgeon, “The Minstrel,” (1612), August 7, 1881, in *MTP*, vol. 27; “Magnificat” (340), October 4, 1860, in C. H. Spurgeon, *New Park Street Pulpit*, vol. 6 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1856-61). These sermons are discussed in chap. 3 of this dissertation. Spurgeon also produced a hymnal for the Metropolitan Tabernacle; see C. H. Spurgeon, *Our Own Hymn-book: A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for Public, Social, and Private Worship* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1866). *OOHB* will be discussed throughout this dissertation, but is the focal point of chap. 5.

Preachers,” not only as a faithful and fruitful herald of the gospel; but present him as “The Singing Lion of London,” who heralded the same glorious gospel in song that he did in sermon. The pastoral theology of Spurgeon in relationship to congregational singing is of personal interest to me as one who is a pastor-hymnwriter in search of exploring the relationship of song in the life of my own church.

Thesis

This dissertation argues that Charles Spurgeon viewed hymnody as an essential pedagogical and doxological tool within the life and public worship of the local church. This is evidenced by the role of hymns in his pastoral ministry, preaching, and the editing of *Own Our Hymn-book*. Spurgeon understood hymn-singing equally as a biblical command and a devout exercise for the people of God.⁹ Further, he believed the practice should be a constant form of communion with God.¹⁰

While Spurgeon is a frequented source of pithy quotes, and rightly revered for his homiletical acumen, his lifelong relationship with hymnody has been an oft neglected focus in Spurgeon scholarship.¹¹ This dissertation presents the rich relationship that Spurgeon had with hymnody, as demonstrated in his life as a Christian and a minister of the gospel of Christ. The second objective places Spurgeon’s persuasion and practice of hymnody in its historical context. The convictions demonstrated by the pastor in regard to congregational singing were in no way unique, but were an inherited set of principles handed down by previous generations of Particular Baptists, specifically from the men who preceded him as the pastors of Metropolitan Tabernacle.¹² My third objective is to

⁹ Spurgeon, *TD*, 4: 306.

¹⁰ Spurgeon, *TD*, 4: 306.

¹¹ In his book *Living by Revealed Truth* Tom Nettles provides the most comprehensive presentation of any biography to date highlighting the role of congregational music in Spurgeon’s ministerial context. See Tom J. Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2013).

¹² The Metropolitan Tabernacle, located in London, began in 1650 and underwent various location and name changes. The same congregation has been called Horse-Lie-Down, Carter Lane, New

present Spurgeon's theological, philosophical, and methodological convictions in the practice of hymnody within the context of gathered worship. These convictions are presented through the collection of data from sermons and writings in which these values are stated.

The fourth objective is to demonstrate the role of hymns in Spurgeon's preaching as a homiletical device. Spurgeon quoted hymns with great regularity in his sermons as an illustrative technique. He explains, "No matter on what topic I am preaching, I can even now, in the middle of any sermon, quote some verse of a hymn in harmony with the subject. The hymns have remained with me."¹³ Here Spurgeon draws a connection between the hymns that were sung to the hymns that he often quoted in his sermons.

The fifth objective of this dissertation is to feature *Our Own Hymn-book*, the hymnal edited by the preacher in 1866 in order to aid the congregation in singing to the Lord and one another, teaching and admonishing one another in the truth.¹⁴ The research concludes with a summary of the work of Spurgeon, with a call to theological and pastoral faithfulness in the modern practices of hymn-writing and hymnal-editing in a modern, ecumenical, digital environment. In summary, the aim of this dissertation is to research the multivalent role of hymnody in the life of Spurgeon as a pastor intricately involved in hymnody as a model for pastoral involvement in the congregational singing within the context of the local church.

Park Street, and finally received the name Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1861 with the completion of its current building. It maintains that name today under the tenured pastoral ministry of Peter Masters.

¹³ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 44.

¹⁴ For a view on the formational role hymnal play in the life of local churches, see Christopher P. Phillips, *The Hymnal: A Reading Story* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018). See also Monique Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation: How Contemporary Worship Music Forms Evangelical Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Methodology

The primary methodology of this dissertation is a survey of the role of hymns in Spurgeon's theology, preaching, and spirituality through the primary sources of his sermons, lectures, letters, writings, hymns, and autobiography. Iain Murray comments on the amount of material of Spurgeon alone to consider: "Spurgeon's writings are so voluminous, extensive enough to fill the twenty-seven volumes of the ninth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*."¹⁵ I employ secondary sources to fill out ideas, comparing and contrasting ideologies and developments found in the primary sources.

Chapter 4, "Redeeming Love Proclaim: The Use Of Hymn Quotation as a Homiletical Device in Spurgeon's Sermons," uses the following methodology. First, I assimilated a database of hymn quotations from Spurgeon's sermons contained in the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* dating between 1866 and 1875, the ten-year period following the publishing of his hymnal. The limitation of this body of sermons was specified in order to coincide with the publication of *Our Own Hymn-book*, originally released in 1866. Second, I ran a query to confirm which hymns Spurgeon quotes most frequently in his sermons. Third, I examine the most oft-quoted hymns with regard to how Spurgeon used these hymns in his preaching. Fourth, I summarize theological emphases drawn from the hymn quotations in order to connect the pedagogical nature of hymns to their frequent use in this body of work.

Status of the Research

The body of Spurgeon research is primarily located in the numerous biographies that have featured the "Prince of Preachers." Arnold Dallimore begins his biography of Spurgeon by inquiring, "Why would you write another biography of Spurgeon? Hasn't everything about him already been said and said a hundred times?"¹⁶

¹⁵ Iain H. Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), 4.

¹⁶ Arnold A. Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1985), xi. Dallimore also states, "Following Spurgeon's death in 1892, for two years of more new biographies

The earliest works include *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* by G. Holden Pike.¹⁷ Pike served as co-editor of *The Sword and the Trowel* monthly publication alongside Spurgeon. The contribution of Murray in 1966 was entitled *The Forgotten Spurgeon*.¹⁸ Murray presents the personal and theological trials the pastor endured through his ministry, paying special attention to his theological convictions throughout the work. W. Y. Fullerton released his biography of Spurgeon between the initial wave Spurgeon biographies immediately following his death and renewed interest in the late twentieth century.¹⁹

The late twentieth century offered two broad-spectrum biographies of Spurgeon: *Spurgeon: A New Biography* by Dallimore, and *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* by Lewis Drummond.²⁰ Both Dallimore and Drummond mention the presence of hymns in and around Spurgeon's life, yet spend little attestation on gathered worship, much less his practice of hymn-writing seen in *Our Own Hymn-book* and other publications.

The turn of the century offered multiple important volumes in Spurgeon scholarship. The two scholarly works include *Communion with Christ and His People* by Peter Morden, and *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* by Tom Nettles.²¹ Morden presents the first in-depth biographical work of Spurgeon's spirituality, while Nettles features the life of Spurgeon through the lens of

appeared at the rate of about one a month." Dallimore, *Spurgeon*, xi. Two early volumes of interest should also be noted: Charles Ray, *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1903); William Williams, *Personal Reminiscences of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1895).

¹⁷ G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Toronto: Briggs, 1886).

¹⁸ Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*.

¹⁹ W. Y. Fullerton, *C. H. Spurgeon: A Biography* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1920).

²⁰ Dallimore, *Spurgeon*; Lewis Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1992).

²¹ Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*; Peter J. Morden, *Communion with Christ and His People: The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014).

his pastoral theology. Recent trade books of a biographical nature include *The Gospel-Focus of Charles Spurgeon* by Stephen Lawson, and *Spurgeon On The Christian Life: Alive in Christ* by Michael Reeves.²² Zack Eswine adds two Spurgeon volumes; one featuring his battle with depression, the other his preaching as an aid to help preachers in their ministry.²³ While each biography casts new light on Spurgeon studies, the *C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography* compiled by his beloved wife Susannah Spurgeon (1832-1903) and his assistant J. W. Harrald remains the standard work on the preacher.²⁴

While previous research has been conducted on the impact of other influences on his life, the specific role of hymnody has been neglected.²⁵ In their preface to Spurgeon's *Autobiography*, Susannah Spurgeon and J. W. Harrald write,

If there had been sufficient space available, an interesting chapter might have been compiled concerning "Mr. Spurgeon as a Poet and Hymn-writer." As that is not possible, the specimens included in the present and previous volumes of this work will convey some ideas of his work in that direction.²⁶

Robert Shindler, Spurgeon's biographer and personal assistant, included a chapter entitled "Mr. Spurgeon as Hymn-Writer" in his biographical work of his pastor.²⁷

There has been no extensive scholarly treatment on the relationship between hymnody and the life of Spurgeon. The extent of this type of research is limited to a brief

²² See Stephen Lawson, *The Gospel Focus of Charles Spurgeon* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2012); Michael Reeves, *Spurgeon on the Christian Life: Alive in Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018).

²³ See Zack Eswine, *Kindled Fire: How the Methods of C. H. Spurgeon Can Help Your Preaching* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2006); see also Eswine, *Spurgeon's Sorrows: Realistic Hope for Those Who Suffer from Depression* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2015).

²⁴ See Spurgeon, *Autobiography*.

²⁵ Due to the volume of works about Spurgeon, as Dallimore observed, I do not include here all biographies written on Spurgeon, though many biographies are referenced throughout this dissertation. These include the following: Ernest Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967); Helmut Thielicke, *Encounter with Spurgeon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975); Ray, *Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*; Williams, *Personal Reminiscences*.

²⁶ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 4: 313.

²⁷ Robert Shindler, *From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit: The Life and Labors of Pastor C. H. Spurgeon* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1892), 257-65.

journal article written in 1979 by David Music, “C. H. Spurgeon and Hymnody,” and a section in the 2013 biography by Nettles.²⁸ Hymnody and congregational singing are subjects Spurgeon frequented, and while choice biographers have commented on its importance, no academic work has been entirely devoted to this worthwhile subject. Thus, this body of research comes at the suggestion of Eric Hayden: “More than a passing reference was needed for this much-neglected aspect of Spurgeon’s genius and some aspiring student seeking a doctoral thesis subject might well study the hymns and poems of the Prince of Preachers.”²⁹

Biography of Hymnody in the Life of Charles Spurgeon

The biography of Spurgeon is a well-documented story of the boy who, in God’s divine plan, grew to become the Lion of London. While still in the climb of his ascent to public notoriety, even still in his mid-twenties, it is reported that American tourists returning from England were greeted with two questions: “Did you see the Queen?” and “Did you hear Spurgeon?”³⁰ Carl Henry dubs Spurgeon “one of evangelical Christianity’s immortals.”³¹

While Spurgeon biographies are plentiful, there are three that chronicle in great detail the early life and ministry of Spurgeon. Shindler’s *From the Usher’s Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit* was published in 1892, and documents insightful details from his childhood and early life.³² Pike’s 6-volume set *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon*

²⁸ See David W. Music, “C. H. Spurgeon and Hymnody,” *Foundations* 22, no. 2 (April 1979): 174–81; and Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 260-67.

²⁹ Eric Hayden, *The Unforgettable Spurgeon* (Greenville, SC: Emerald House, 1997), 101.

³⁰ A. P. Peabody, “Spurgeon,” *North American Review* 86 (1858): 275, quoted in Christian T. George, *The Lost Sermons of C. H. Spurgeon*, vol. 1, *His Earliest Outlines and Sermons Between 1851 and 1854*, critical ed. (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2017).

³¹ Carl Henry, foreword to *Spurgeon*, by Drummond, 11.

³² See Shindler, *From Usher’s Desk to Tabernacle Pulpit*.

Spurgeon is also an invaluable contribution to understanding the biographical perspective of the preacher.³³ The most full-orbed contemporary biography is Nettles' *Living by Revealed Truth*; Nettles spent fifteen years studying the life and ministry of Spurgeon, making applications to his pastoral ministry. He includes nearly a hundred pages on the early life of Spurgeon, bringing fresh insight to much of the preacher's background.³⁴

Spurgeon was born on June 19, 1834, to John and Eliza Spurgeon. He was the first of seventeen children, only eight of whom would live past infancy. In 1856, Spurgeon married Susannah Thompson.³⁵ With the scope of this dissertation in view, there are three biographical accounts from the life of Spurgeon that are critical to this study, because they reveal that hymnody was integral to Spurgeon's experience; these accounts include a childhood conversation with Richard Knill (1787-1857), his conversion in a Primitive Methodist chapel, and his call to Metropolitan Tabernacle.

“God Moves in a Mysterious Way”

Knill was a member of the London Missionary Society, and was assigned the region of Essex to help build relationships with churches in the region.³⁶ When his travels took him through Stambourne, Knill would stay at the parsonage kept by the church there. Knill was an evangelist at heart with a great missionary spirit.³⁷

When Spurgeon was 10 years old, Knill was staying in the parsonage and the two had some time together. Knill walked the property and shared the gospel with young Spurgeon. Spurgeon tells, “With many a story he preached Christ to me, and told me how

³³ See Pike, *Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*.

³⁴ See, Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*.

³⁵ A recent work on the life of Susannah (“Susie”) Spurgeon, and on Charles Spurgeon's marriage and family life is Ray Rhodes Jr., *Susie: The Life and Legacy of Susannah Spurgeon, Wife of Charles H. Spurgeon* (Chicago: Moody, 2018).

³⁶ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 33.

³⁷ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 33.

good God had been to him, and then he prayed that I might know the Lord and serve Him.”³⁸ Knill knelt down with Spurgeon in the arbor and prayed for him with his arms around his neck. Over the three days that followed, Knill requested that Spurgeon stay close by him so that he could teach him the salvation of God.³⁹ Spurgeon peppered him with questions and recalls Knill being gracious in his responses.

Finally, on the day he was scheduled to leave, the family was gathered together for morning prayer. Knill took Spurgeon on his knee and announced, “This child will one day preach the gospel, and he will preach it to great multitudes. I am persuaded that he will preach in the chapel of Rowland Hill, where (I think he said) I am now the minister.”⁴⁰ Spurgeon remembers, “He spoke very solemnly. He then called upon all present to witness what he said. The he gave me sixpence as a reward if I would learn the hymn—

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.”⁴¹

Spurgeon was made to promise that the day he preached in Rowland Hill’s Chapel that he would sing this hymn of William Cowper (1731-1800).⁴² Years later while preaching in London, Alexander Fletcher was scheduled to preach the annual sermon to children at Metropolitan Baptist, but he fell ill. Spurgeon was invited to preach in his place. “Yes,” he accepted the invitation, “If you will allow the children to sing, “God Moves in a Mysterious Way.”⁴³ Spurgeon told the story of how he had promised he would

³⁸ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 33.

³⁹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 34.

⁴⁰ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 34.

⁴¹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 34. “God Moves in a Mysterious Way” (211) was written by Cowper and published in 1774.

⁴² Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 33.

⁴³ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 33.

do this many years before. Spurgeon concludes his account, “And so it was: I preached in Rowland Hill’s Chapel, and the hymn was sung. My emotions on that occasion I cannot describe, for the word of the Lord’s servant was fulfilled.”⁴⁴

Sometime later, Spurgeon was invited to preach at Watton-Under-Edge, which was Hill’s summer residence.⁴⁵ Spurgeon clarifies this was all unsought by him to try and self-fulfill the prophecy of Knill. He agreed to the engagement yet again under the condition that the congregation sing, “God Moves in a Mysterious Way,” to which the pastor agreed.⁴⁶ Spurgeon reflects, “To me it was a very wonderful thing, and I no more understood at that time how it came to pass than I understand today why the Lord should be so gracious to me.”⁴⁷

“E’er Since by Faith”

Spurgeon came to saving faith in Christ on January 6, 1850, at age 15. There were questions he needed answers to, namely asking how he might come to know genuine salvation.⁴⁸ He had resolved to attend every place of worship in town in order that he might know for himself what the Scriptures had to say about the saving grace of God.⁴⁹ As he went from church to church, he heard one man preach divine sovereignty, but Spurgeon did not hear him apply how sinners might come to be accepted before God by Christ. Another preacher proclaimed the Law, but that seemed of no use to a boy who had tried to follow the Law since his early days.⁵⁰ Spurgeon remembers, “These good

⁴⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 34.

⁴⁵ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 34.

⁴⁶ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 34.

⁴⁷ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 34.

⁴⁸ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 103.

⁴⁹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 103.

⁵⁰ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 104.

men all preached truths suited to many in their congregations who were spiritually-minded people; but what I wanted to know was,—“How can I get my sins forgiven? — and they never told me that.”⁵¹ The question that Spurgeon was asking, in retrospect, carried with it a sense of urgency. He says, “I desired to hear how a poor sinner, under a sense of sin, might find peace with God; and when I went in, I heard a sermon on, ‘Be not deceived, God is not mocked.’”⁵² These truths may not have held forth Christ as the way of salvation, but they did continue to reveal to him the bleak nature of his condition before being cleansed of sin. He remembers, “I was willing to do anything, and be anything, if God would only forgive my sin.”⁵³

On the wintry Sunday morning of his conversion, a snowstorm blew through town, and Spurgeon made his way to a church close to his home, walking through the door of the small Primitive Methodist Chapel. As he later recalled in his autobiography, he had heard of the Primitive Methodists and of their practice of singing loudly.⁵⁴ He describes, “I wanted to know how I might be saved, and if they could tell me that, I did not care how much they made my head ache.”⁵⁵ The minister did not arrive to preach that morning. Spurgeon assumed he was likely snowed in. Instead, a “thin shoe-maker, or tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach.”⁵⁶

Spurgeon had been reading Philip Doddridge’s *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, and Richard Baxter’s *Call to the Unconverted*.⁵⁷ He had also been roaming

⁵¹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 104.

⁵² Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 104.

⁵³ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 104.

⁵⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 105.

⁵⁵ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 105.

⁵⁶ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 105.

⁵⁷ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 104. See Philip Doddridge, *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1827); and, Richard Baxter, *A Call to the Unconverted to Come and Live* (London: Printed by R. W. for N. Simmons, 1669).

from church to church listening to trained ministers of the gospel, but it was the word preached by a “poor, uneducated man, a man who had never received any training for the ministry, and probably will never be heard of in his life” who preached salvation in Christ to Spurgeon.⁵⁸

In the middle of the sermon, the man looked directly at Spurgeon and said, “Young man, you look very miserable.”⁵⁹ Spurgeon knew that he looked—and was indeed—miserable, and felt this direct approach as “a good blow” which “struck right home.”⁶⁰ The minister explained that he would always be miserable until he obeyed the text being preached that day: “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.”⁶¹ The man raised his hands and shouted, “Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothing to do but look and live.”⁶² Spurgeon says, “I saw at once the way of salvation.”⁶³ Spurgeon says the man “had just enough of grace to say on the Sabbath, “Look unto Me, and by ye saved, all the ends of the earth.”⁶⁴ Spurgeon confesses, “The books [Doddridges’s and Baxter’s] were good, but the man was better. The revealed Word awakened me; but it was the preached Word that saved me; and I must ever attach peculiar value to the *hearing of the truth*, for by it I received the joy and peace in which my soul delights.”⁶⁵

As the story of his conversion reached its resolution, Spurgeon describes the encounter in poetry to help explain what he experienced in his conversion. He quotes

⁵⁸ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:104.

⁵⁹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:106.

⁶⁰ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:106.

⁶¹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:106.

⁶² Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:106.

⁶³ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:106.

⁶⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:104.

⁶⁵ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 104.

Cowper's verse from "Rock of Ages" (552), proclaiming that now he can say these words:

E'er since by faith I saw thy stream,
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.⁶⁶

London Calling

In 1853, Spurgeon was pastoring the Particular Baptist church at Waterbeach, and seeing wonderful fruit in his ministry there. During this season of his ministry, William Olney, a leader of the New Park Street Chapel in London, became aware of the gift of preaching Spurgeon possessed.⁶⁷

Most Sundays he hiked a country road of five to six miles between his house and the church, except for the Sundays he was met half way and taken by horse and buggy.⁶⁸ On the last Sunday of November, Spurgeon walked from Cambridge to Waterbeach in order to preach for the worship service. As Spurgeon sat down in the pew with his hymnbook to select songs for the service, he was handed a letter addressed to him that was postmarked London.⁶⁹ Opening the letter with curiosity, inside he found an invitation to preach at New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, the pulpit of which had formerly been occupied by John Rippon (1751-1836). Spurgeon records, "The very Dr. Rippon whose hymn-book was then before me on the table—the great Dr. Rippon out of whose *Selection* I was about to choose the hymns for our worship."⁷⁰ This invitation to come and preach in the venerated pulpit came as a shock to the young preacher. In that

⁶⁶ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 108.

⁶⁷ Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 65.

⁶⁸ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 316.

⁶⁹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 316.

⁷⁰ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 376.

moment, he recalls making the connection between the letter in his hand and the prominent hymnal that lay juts in front of him: Rippon's *Selection*.

Spurgeon passed the letter back to the deacon who lined out the hymns, saying that there must have been some mistake. Charles thought the letter must have been intended for a different Spurgeon that was being summoned by the famous London congregation. After correspondence back and forth, Spurgeon came to realize that the letter was indeed addressed to the correct Spurgeon all along. London was calling, and more so, God was calling him to a new place of ministry.⁷¹

Each of these biographical incidents reveal hymns embedded in the life story of Spurgeon. Whether it was the intuitive encouragement of Knill, the illuminating words of Cowper, or the hymnal lying on the pew at Waterbeach, hymns were always near.

Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1 introduces the thesis statement and argument of the dissertation, namely that Spurgeon viewed hymnody as an essential pedagogical and doxological tool within the life and public worship of the local church; in addition, it offers biographical information on Spurgeon in order to provide context.

Chapter 2 examines the historical lineage that Spurgeon inherited, with specific evaluation of the history of pastors who preceded Spurgeon in the task of shepherding Metropolitan Tabernacle. It outlines the unique contributions and relationship to hymnody of his forbears: Benjamin Keach (1640-1704; pastored from 1668-1704), John Gill (1697-1771; pastored from 1720-1771), and Rippon (pastored from 1773-1836). This research places Spurgeon in his historical context not as an innovator, but as the beneficiary of a well-worn theology of congregational singing, informed by Particular Baptist history.

⁷¹ Regarding the decision to move to London, Spurgeon said, "I am in the hands of our covenant God, whose wisdom directs all things. He shall choose for me; and as far as I can judge, this is his choice." Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 69.

Chapter 3 displays Spurgeon's theological vision of singing through writings and sermons in which he expounds and teaches on the subject. By surveying sermons preached on congregational song, it reveals the biblical and theological foundations of his theology of singing. From this base, it considers the philosophical and methodological implications Spurgeon practiced in his approach toward congregational singing.

Chapter 4 draws upon Spurgeon's *Lectures to My Students* and considers the use of hymn quotations in the preaching ministry of Spurgeon as a homiletical tool at Metropolitan Tabernacle.⁷² Chapter 5 surveys the pastoral and editorial philosophy that shaped *Our Own Hymn-book*, the hymnal created by Spurgeon for use at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Chapter 6 summarizes the legacy of Spurgeon as liturgist, pastor hymn-writer, and hymnal editor.

⁷² See C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2008).

CHAPTER 2

SINGING SHEPHERDS: THE PASTORAL IMPACT OF CONGREGATIONAL SONG AT METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE FROM 1668 TO 1892

On the first Sunday of 1874, John Curwen (1816-1880), the founder of the Tonic Solfa method of teaching singing, attended the Metropolitan Tabernacle of London to document the worship practices of Charles Spurgeon and his congregation.¹ He observed,

The first hymn on Sunday morning last was “God is our refuge and our strength,” to the tune “Évan.” Mr. Spurgeon read it slowly through, then he announced the tune and read the first verse again. As the people stood up the precentor advanced from the back of the platform, and started the melody with a clear voice. Like a giant that needs a moment to arouse himself the congregation allowed a note or two to pass before they entered in full strength. Then the heavy tide of sound streamed forth from every part of the building. Many churches have more cultivated congregational singing than Mr. Spurgeon’s, but, from the numbers engaged, no other singing touches the heart with such an indefinable pleasure, and makes the frame glow with such a sense of worshipful sympathy.²

The church gathered that winter morning and sang from *Our Own Hymn-book*, which Spurgeon had edited for the congregation and published in 1866.³ They sang one metrical psalm, “God is Our Refuge and Our Strength” (46 b), along with two hymns,

¹ John Spencer Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music: Chiefly as Regards Congregational Singing* (London: Curwen and Sons, 1880), 427. While Curwen does not state the actual date of his visit to the church, SBTS Archival Librarian Chris Fenner has cross referenced Curwen’s record with the hymns provided in C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1855-1917), 20:12. A reconstruction of the service in its entirety has been made possible from these two records.

² Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music*, 427.

³ All hymns cited in this work refer to the hymn numbers in C. H. Spurgeon, *Our Own Hymn-book: A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for Public, Social, and Private Worship* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1866). Hymns that do not include a number after the title are not included in *OOHB* and are public domain.

“Thou Hidden Love of God” (798) and “Beneath Thy Cross I Lay Me Down” (818).⁴ The poetic description of the service focuses on the manner in which the church sang. Curwen commends the church, saying that “no other singing touches the heart with such an indefinable pleasure” as hearing the thousands at the Tabernacle joined together in song.⁵ But how did the congregation develop such a practice of singing?

This chapter specifically considers the pastors of Metropolitan Tabernacle from 1669-1892. It surveys the unique contribution of Benjamin Keach, John Gill, John Rippon, and Charles Spurgeon to the field of theology and practice of congregational singing. The pastoral influence of each of these singing shepherds significantly contributed to the formation and cultivation of a singing congregation which rejoiced to declare God’s redeeming love. Ultimately, it concludes that Spurgeon was the heir to a legacy of pastors who were heavily invested in the theology, curation, and practice of congregational singing as a pastoral exercise.

A Heritage of Singing

“The best excuse for writing a history is that there is something to tell,” Spurgeon notes in his preface to *The Metropolitan Tabernacle: Its History and Work*.⁶ By God’s grace there is quite something to tell in the history of what is known today as the Metropolitan Tabernacle. From its establishment in 1652, the gospel witness of this body transports with each of its location and name changes: Horsleydown, Carter Lane, New Park Street, and finally Metropolitan Tabernacle.⁷ The men who served this congregation

⁴ “Thou Hidden Love of God” (798) was originally written by Gerhard Tersteegen in 1729, translated by John Wesley in 1738, and revised in 1739 and 1780. “Beneath Thy Cross I Lay Me Down” (818) was written by William Williams in 1722.

⁵ Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music*, 427.

⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, preface to *The Metropolitan Tabernacle: Its History and Work* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1876), v.

⁷ Spurgeon quotes Crosby in explaining the congregation’s origin: “This people had formerly belonged to one of the most ancient congregations of the Baptists in London, but separated from them in

made substantial contributions to various elements of church history: Keach with his catechism, Gill with his theological oeuvre, Rippon with his hymnal, and Spurgeon (pastored from 1854-1892) with his preaching. The deposit to Baptist history from this pulpit is a treasury unmatched in its value and influence.

While much has been written on the life and legacy of Metropolitan Tabernacle, the role hymns have played through its span have not been given due attention. The Tabernacle's practice of and attention to singing never abated from the ministry of Keach all the way through that of Spurgeon. The church continued in the tradition of worship conducted with biblical faithfulness.

Benjamin Keach and the Singing of Hymns

Keach was a champion among the seventeenth-century Baptists. "The Famous Mr. Keach" helped to lead a movement of church leaders who would stand to articulate and propagate as clearly as possible their convictions on the whole teaching of God's Word.⁸

Keach was also the author of important polemical works, most notably *The Breach Repair'd in God's Worship, Or, Singing of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs Proved to Be a Holy Ordinance of Jesus Christ: With an Answer to All Objections: As Also an Examination of Mr. Issac Marlow's Two Papers, One Called, A Discourse Against Singing, Etc. the Other An Appendix, Wherein His Arguments and Cavils Are*

1652, for some practice which they judged to be disorderly." Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle*, 17.

⁸ This appellation is given by James Patrick Carnes, "The Famous Mr. Keach: Benjamin Keach and His Influence on Congregational Singing in Seventeenth Century England" (MA thesis, University of North Texas, 1984). See Benjamin Keach, *The Child's Instructor: A New Easie Primmer* (London: published by the author, 1664); Keach, *Tropologia: A Key to open Scripture Metaphors* (London: J. R. and J. D. for Enoch Prosser, 1682); and the following has sometimes been attributed to Keach: Keach, *The Baptist Catechism, Commonly Called Keach's Catechism: or A Brief Instruction in the Principles of The Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Pub., 1851). For more on the imprint of Keach on Baptists, see Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach: Rediscovering English Baptist Heritage* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1997).

Detected and Refuted.⁹ This lengthy title articulated the importance of congregational singing in the context of gathered worship, and served as an apologetic for the writing of new hymns, based on the biblical precedent of Colossians 3:16.

It seems fitting to name Keach the first “Champion of Baptist Hymnody” for his tireless efforts to the field of hymnody on multiple fronts, particularly for congregational singing in the Baptist tradition.¹⁰ There are three specific areas that David Music summarizes the part Keach played related to hymnody. He outlines,

Keach’s fame rests primarily on three bases: (1) his introduction of singing into the Baptist church at Horselydown, Southwark, London; (2) his treatise in defense of singing, *The Breach Repair’d in God’s Worship*; and (3) his hymnal, *Spiritual Melody*.¹¹

The Introduction of Hymn-Singing

This brief sketch of Keach traces Music’s outline, highlighting his conviction to the practice of hymn singing during the Hymn Controversy of 1690-1700, and the production of his hymnal. Early Baptists found themselves divided over the issue of whether there should be singing in gathered worship at all.¹² While many General

⁹ Benjamin Keach, *The Breach Repair’d in God’s Worship, Or, Singing of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs Proved to Be a Holy Ordinance of Jesus Christ: With an Answer to All Objections: As Also an Examination of Mr. Isaac Marlow’s Two Papers, One Called, A Discourse Against Singing, Etc. the Other An Appendix, Wherein His Arguments and Cavils Are Detected and Refuted* (London: John Hancock, 1691).

¹⁰ David posits, “Keach was not the earliest, most original, nor most influential of the 17th-century English hymnodists. Thus, his fame will and should continue to rest on his ‘introduction’ of congregational singing and his famous treatise in defense of its practice. However, he should also be remembered and honored for his attempts to make congregational singing practical by the provision of an ordered body of church song.” David W. Music, “The Hymns of Benjamin Keach: An Introductory Study,” *The Hymn* 34, no. 3 (July 1983): 153. E. E. Ryden dubs Watts with the accolade explaining the reason for such merit: “By universal consent the title, ‘The Father of English Hymnody’ is bestowed upon Isaac Watts. . . . It remained for the genius of Watts to break the paralyzing reign of psalmody in the Reformed Church which had continued uninterrupted since the days of Calvin. Ernest Edwin Ryden, *The Story of Christian Hymnody* (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Book Concern, 1959), 269.

¹¹ Music, “Hymns of Benjamin Keach,” 147. See Keach, *The Breach Repair’d*. See also Benjamin Keach, *Spiritual Melody* (London: John Hancock, 1691).

¹² Louis Benson establishes that the full records of the Broadmead Church of Bristol left by

Baptists originally opposed singing, Particular Baptists found the practice commanded by Scripture. The Baptist association meeting at Bridgewater in 1655 understood singing as a vital part of its practice of worship, deeming the act an ordinance of the church.¹³ They declared,

That singing of psalms is an ordinance of Christ, to be performed in the church of Christ by the saints and ‘singing is, when the soul being possest with the apprehension of the goodness and mercy of God, doth make a joyful noise to his praise.’¹⁴

From this basis, Particular Baptists reached the conclusion that while Psalm singing was a biblical practice that should not be forsaken, the use of hymn singing was also a scriptural mandate that should not be mistaken.¹⁵

Keach heartily agrees, and explains,

Though I am satisfied the Lord doth enjoyn his Churches to sing the *Psalms of David*, both in *Eph. 5.19. Col. 3.16.* we reading of no other Psalms but the *Book of Psalms*; so by Hymns and Spiritual Songs I see no reason to doubt but he intends all *Sacred Hymns* . . . taken out of the holy Scripture by the help of God's Spirit.¹⁶

Keach first introduced hymn singing to the church at Horsleydown sometime between 1673 and 1675.¹⁷ He introduced the practice by placing a hymn following the

Edward Terrill are silent on singing from 1640 to 1670, but from 1671 to 1685 the records show that congregational singing was practiced. Louis Benson, *The English Hymn: Its Development and Use in Worship* (New York: Hodder and Straughton, 1915), 99.

¹³ Some Puritans did not object to music itself, as much as they rejected its ornate use in the service. To accept music only as background noise for state occasions reflects a profound lack of appreciation for the art. See Donald R. Boomgaarden, *Musical Thought in Britain and Germany During the Early Eighteenth Century*, American University Studies, series 5, vol. 26 (New York: Peter Lang, 1987). For more, see Matthew Ward, *Pure Worship: The Early English Baptist Distinctive* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014). This understanding of singing as ordinance is addressed in chap. 3, “Singing Saints: Spurgeon’s Theological Vision of Congregational Singing.”

¹⁴ Christopher Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in the Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 154.

¹⁵ Keach, introduction to *Spiritual Melody*.

¹⁶ Keach, introduction to *Spiritual Melody*.

¹⁷ *The Breach Repair’d* was written in 1691, and in it Keach dates the introduction of hymn singing as “16-18” years earlier. Keach, *The Breach Repair’d*, viii-ix.

Lord's Supper. His argument from Scripture was that this was the very practice of Christ and the disciples, so it would be fitting for the church to walk in the same manner.

Eventually, he added hymn singing to Days of Thanksgiving, and finally to the service of the Lord's Day.¹⁸

The Hymn Controversy

The unhindered singing of Metropolitan Tabernacle detailed above in the day of Spurgeon was the triumph of a war fought two centuries before. Horsleydown was the battlefield for the Hymn Controversy of 1690-1700.¹⁹ Over the course of the seventeenth century's last decade, Keach muddled through opposition not from an exterior adversary, but from church members who disputed that hymn singing was proper for the worship of God. Keach's position on congregational hymn singing that would ensue was a slow war over the practice. Christopher Ellis cuts to the heart of the question:

Was congregational hymn singing an example of obedience to God and his ways, or an indulgence in fanciful inventions which replaced divinely ordained worship? Attention to Scripture was a key value for both sides in the debate.²⁰

Keach and the majority understood singing to be a biblical ordinance, while church attendee Isaac Marlow fought diligently against the practice and pastor. When Keach stood unflinching in his exercise of hymn singing on the Lord's Day, Marlow took up his pen. He published a pamphlet in 1691 entitled *Prelimiting Forms of Praising God, Vocally sung by all the Church together, Proved to be no Gospel-ordinance*.²¹ Keach

¹⁸ Benson, *The English Hymn*, 97.

¹⁹ Paul Westermeyer, "The Breach Repair'd," *The Hymn* 47, no. 1 (January 1996): 10–16.

²⁰ Ellis, *Gathering*, 174.

²¹ Isaac Marlow, *Prelimiting Forms of Praising God, Vocally sung by all the Church together, Proved to be no Gospel-ordinance*, 1691, quoted in Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, 2nd ed. (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2003), 173. Davies outlines Marlow's argument in five headings. First, the essence of singing being the praise of God is not necessarily 'tunable'; secondly, women are prohibited from speaking in public (1 Cor 14:34-35); thirdly, singing in the early church is not a precedent for singing in the modern dispensation; fourthly, unison singing demands pre-composed forms, which

traded blows with Marlow by publishing a pamphlet of his own, *The Breach Repair'd in God's Worship*. The pastoral tenor of Keach is heard in his response:

And now to you, my Beloved Brethren and Sisters, (who meet on *Horsleydown*) whom I hope I may say are my Joy and my Crown, whose Souls are most dear to me, and whom I can say I truly love and long after; it rejoices my Spirit to see how generally you are inlightned into this Gospel-Duty; but 'tis no small grief to me to see (since the Church in such a solemn manner agreed to sing the Praises of God on the Lord's Day) to find some of you so much offended; I am perswaded 'tis for want of Consideration, for you have no new thing brought in among you. Hath not the Church sung at breaking of Bread always for 16 or 18 Years last past, and could not, nor would omit it in the time of the late Persecution? And have not many of the honest Hearers (who have stayed to see that Holy Administration) sung with you, at that time, and yet none of you ever signified the least trouble? And have we not for this 12 or 14 Years sung in *mixt Assemblies, on Days of Thanksgiving*, and never any offended at it, as ever I heard? What is done more now? 'tis only practised oftner: and sure if it be God's Ordinance, the often practising of it, by such who find their Hearts draw out so to do, cannot be sinful.²²

These two opening publications led to a harsh exchange of words and escalated to various pamphlets arguing each side. Eventually, the singing of hymns among Particular Baptists prevailed. Keach fought and stood victorious in the end. Carnes summarizes,

It is astonishing considering the obstacles he faced, that Benjamin Keach accomplished the 1673 inauguration of free church hymnody. . . . Keach demonstrated great tact and patience in persuading his congregation and others to discover the importance of congregational singing.²³

The hymnologist John Julian also notes the sacrifice Keach endured through this work of championing hymn singing. In *A Dictionary of Hymnology* he comments,

Keach was a man of considerable Biblical attainments. He had led a hunted life, often endangered by his love of singing: his congregation surprised: and he himself on one occasion trampled under a trooper's horse, and on another imprisoned.²⁴

should be considered equal with pre-composed prayers as unacceptable, and finally, believers and unbelievers should not sing to God together.

²² Keach, *The Breach Repaired*, viii-ix.

²³ Carnes, "The Famous Mr. Keach," 88.

²⁴ John Julian, *A Dictionary of Hymnology: Setting Forth the Origin of Christian Hymns of All Ages and Nations* (J. Murray, 1892), 349. Spurgeon records one event prompted by the publication of

Congregational hymn singing would spread from Horsleydown across Particular Baptist and Dissenting churches far and wide. The battle over singing was claimed by a pastor who believed that singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs was an ordinance of worship commanded by Scripture, and in submission to Scripture he stood his ground.

The First Baptist Hymnal

The desire to shape the singing of his church led to the publication of two important hymnals, *Spiritual Melody* (1691) and *Spiritual Songs* (1696). Davies dubs Keach the originator of paraphrases or of hymns among the Dissenters.²⁵ He notes the influence and importance of this work of Keach, but adds, “Keach’s importance is merely chronological,” showing that Watts would surpass him in poetic valuation.²⁶ Others, such as Harry Eskew and Hugh McElrath, honor Keach as an “adventurous pioneer” in writing hymns, but also note, “Practically all of these hymns were of poor quality. None has survived into current use, but the name Benjamin Keach remains in the history of congregational hymn singing as a valiant pioneer.”²⁷ As Spurgeon evaluates the writing of Keach, he agrees, “As for the poetry of Keach’s works, the less said the better.”²⁸

Keach’s *The Child’s Instructor*, a catechism for children. Keach was restrained for a fortnight after being accused and tried for teaching contrary to the *Book of Common Prayer*. He was forced twice to stand in the pillory at midday, in different towns, with a paper on his head that read, “For writing, Printing, and publishing a schimatical book, entitled The Child’s Instructor; or, A New and Easy Primer.” He was forced to watch his books burn as he stood in front of the town. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle*, 20-24.

²⁵ Leon McBeth notes, “Benjamin Keach is often credited with introducing hymn singing to English Baptists and, indeed, to all the English churches. Keach does indeed rank as a pioneer, but others preceded him.” H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 94. McBeth notes that Anna Trapnell published a hymnal in 1654, as did Katherine Sutton in 1663.

²⁶ Davies, *Worship of English Puritans*, 179.

²⁷ Harry Eskew and Hugh T. McElrath, *Sing with Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Hymnology*, 2nd rev. and enlgd. ed. (Nashville: Genevox, 1995), 130.

²⁸ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle*, 30.

While history may have turned the page on the hymns of Keach, his legacy as a pioneer of hymnody marches on.

Keach made a considerable contribution to the church at Horsleydown, the people of Metropolitan Tabernacle who followed, and the broader field of Baptist hymnody. The pastor-hymnwriter pioneered the work of hymn-singing which flowed from a pastor's desire for biblical faithfulness and a shepherd's heart for his congregation. Though his hymns were not widely circulated, for his contribution as champion of hymn singing, Keach stands as the "Father of Baptist Hymnody."

John Gill's Theological Vision of Singing

Gill served as the fourth pastor in the history of Metropolitan Tabernacle from 1720-1771. Gill stands as a pillar among Baptists in the eighteenth century in his leadership and theological influence. Gill produced over ten thousand pages of content over his career, earning him the name "Mr. Voluminous."²⁹ His influential works include an entire commentary on the whole of Scripture, *Exposition of the New Testament* (1748), *Exposition of the Old Testament* (1766) and a complete *A Body of Doctoral Divinity* (1769).³⁰ In addition to his theological contributions, Gill is known to have written one hymn. "Was Christ Baptized to Sanctify" was sung at his baptism on November 1, 1716. The first verse reads of his identification with Christ in baptism:

Was Christ baptized to sanctify
This ordinance he gave
And did his sacred body lie

²⁹ Dustin Blaine Bruce, "The Grand Encouragement: Andrew Fuller's Pneumatology as a Reception of and Advancement on Orthodox, Puritan, and Evangelical Perspectives on the Holy Spirit" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 108.

³⁰ Timothy George and David Dockery, eds., *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition* (Nashville: B & H, 2001). For a list of recent Gill research see R. W. Oliver, "John Gill (1697-1771)," *The British Particular Baptists 1638-1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 1998), 1:146-65.

Within the liquid grave?³¹

It is fitting that the sole known hymn written by the pastor is one concerning believer's baptism. The doctrine was not for Gill simply to be understood, but here articulates the way this doctrine also shaped his affections. The final verse is a prayer to live as one who has been raised to walk in a new way of life:

Then how should this engage my heart
To live to Christ that dy'd;
And with my cursed sins to part,
Which pierc'd his precious side?³²

Gill built upon the seminal work of Keach by continuing to biblically defend and practically uphold the practice of congregational singing. He did not contribute to the advancement of congregational singing through hymn writing, but through theological precision and articulation, explaining the importance of singing as an ordinance of God given to the church.

What Is to Be Sung?

On Christmas Day 1733, Gill preached a sermon entitled "A Discourse on Singing of Psalms as a Part of Divine Worship," based on 1 Corinthians 14:14, saying, "I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."³³ The sermon was drawn by five headings illuminating Gill's theological vision of congregational singing. He contends,

³¹ John Gill, "Was Christ Baptized to Sanctify," in *A Collection of Sermons and Tracts: Several of Which Were Never Before Printed* (London: G. Keith, 1773), 1: xii.

³² Gill, "Was Christ Baptized to Sanctify," xiii. See also Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697-1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1997).

³³ According to the title, the sermon was delivered to "a society of young men, who carry on an exercise of prayer on Lord's-day mornings." John Gill, *A Discourse on Singing of Psalms as Part of Divine Worship, from 1. Corinthians Xiv. 15, Preached 25th of December, 1733, Etc. To a Society of Young Men, Who Carry on an Exercise of Prayer on Lord's Day Mornings at a Meeting House at Horsly-down, Southwark* (London: published by the author, 1734), 4.

I. I shall endeavor to show you what is singing, and the nature of it, as an ordinance of God. II. Prove that it is an ordinance not confined to the Old Testament dispensation. III. Inquire into the subject matter of singing, or what that is which is to be sung. IV. Point out to you the persons who are to sing. And V. Observe the manner in which this ordinance should be performed.³⁴

The third heading of Gill's sermon contains points on his understanding of what is to be sung in corporate worship. He incorporates Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16; in both passages Paul instructs the New Testament churches to sing "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." If singing is to be informed by the Scripture, then Gill finds it necessary to define the terms Paul uses to inform the matter of Christian singing. He exegetes, "By *psalms*, is meant the book of *psalms*, composed by *David, Asaph, Heman*, and others, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God."³⁵ This definition would not limit a bare reading of the actual text, whether in English or Hebrew, but would be expanded to include metrical versification of the Psalms.

Gill departs from Keach's theology of singing as regards the use of hymns. As Gill considers Paul's use of the word *hymnos*, he concludes, "I cannot think that such composes are designed by the Apostle; nor can I believe that he would place such between psalms and spiritual songs, made by men inspired by the Holy Ghost, and put them upon a level with them, and to be sung equally with them, to the edification of the churches; therefore, I take *hymns* to be but another name for the book of psalms."³⁶ While Gill would not defend hymn singing exegetically, he was not antagonistic toward the singing of modern hymns. In 1748 Richard Davis (1658-1714), a lifelong friend of Gill, published a collection of hymns titled *Hymns Composed on Several Subjects and Diverse Occasion*.³⁷ Gill wrote the preface for the hymnal, mostly noting the theological fortitude

³⁴ Gill, *A Discourse on Singing of Psalms*, 4.

³⁵ Gill, *A Discourse on Singing of Psalms*, 20.

³⁶ Gill, *A Discourse on Singing of Psalms*, 21. Gill shares the same sentiment of John Cotton. See John Cotton, *Singing of Psalmes a Gospel Ordinance* (London: 1650).

³⁷ See Richard Davis, *Hymns Composed on Several Subjects, and on Divers Occasions: In*

and character of the hymnwriter, and finally adding his own sentiments on hymnody. He restates,

And though I have some years ago declared my sentiments, that the Psalms of David are most fit and proper to be sung in the churches of Christ; yet I never denied, nor do deny, that hymns and spiritual songs composed by good men, though without the inspiration of God may be made us of, and may be useful, provided they are agreeable to the sacred writings, and the analogy of faith.³⁸

After injecting his own theological convictions regarding singing, Gill offers a generous endorsement of singing hymns:

I earnestly desire that the Divine Spirit would make the reading and singing of these hymns, of use of the magnifying of the free grace of God, to the exaltation of Christ. . . . I do heartily recommend them to every lover of Christ and his gospel, who profess myself to be of that number, and esteem it my great honor to be reckoned one of them.³⁹

At first glance it may appear in these works that Gill is saying that biblically speaking, “hymns” are Psalms, so the church should only sing Psalms. However, a closer look at the synthesis of these statements reveals a layered understanding of Gill and his opinion of hymn singing. First, Gill’s personal conviction of exegetical faithfulness will not permit him to apply the words “hymns” or “spiritual songs” to the modern rendering. He maintains that Paul’s multivalent phrases are each synonymous with the Psalms of David. Second, he intends to call for a biblical precedent for Psalm singing as an act of worship. In this final point, however, he shows that though extracanonical hymn writing is not mandated by Scripture, these hymns may still magnify Christ and edify the Christian in song.

Three Parts. With an Alphabetical Table . . . The Second Edition. Some of the Hymns Composed by Other Hands (London: J. Ward, 1748).

³⁸ John Gill, preface to *Hymns Composed*, by Davis, iv.

³⁹ Davis, *Hymns Composed on Several Subjects*, v.

Theology of Singing

Gill succinctly outlines his theology of singing in his *Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, under the heading “Of the Public Ordinances.” The pastor aims “to shew what singing is, according to the common idea we have of it, as a natural act of the voice; and as a religious duty distinct from other acts of religion.”⁴⁰ Gill elaborates, “Singing musically with the voice, as a religious action is distinct from all other religious acts and exercises.”⁴¹ He argues that the act of singing is distinct from prayer, giving thanks, praising, and spiritual joy.⁴² Gill includes a statement of his theology of singing in the “Declaration of Faith and Practice of the Church of Christ at Horsly-down, under the pastoral care of Mr. John Gill,” which John Rippon includes in his *Life and Writing of John Gill, D. D.*⁴³ The twelfth article of the declaration of faith states, “We also believe in the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, vocally, is an ordinance of the Gospel to be performed by believers; but that as to time, place, and manner, every one ought to be left to their liberty in using it.”⁴⁴ Gill believed in the church singing together as an ordinance of the gospel, while allowing freedom in its practice and form. It can be seen that in this area of his theology he demonstrated humility and generosity, holding his conviction while allowing others to hold their own.

⁴⁰ John Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity: Or, A System of Evangelical Truths, Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures* (London: W. Winterbotham, 1796), 376.

⁴¹ Gill, *Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 377.

⁴² Spurgeon differs from Gill and instead unites prayer, praise, and singing together as a threefold understanding of means given to Christians in order that they might know and glorify God. Spurgeon argues, “We must not think Christians are wasting time when they pray and praise. . . . If a little bird has nothing else to do but sing, it has a great deal to do. . . . This is the culmination, the very apex of the pyramid of existence, that we praise God with all our heart and soul.” Spurgeon, *MTP*, 51:310.

⁴³ John Rippon, *The Life and Writings of the Rev. John Gill, D. D.* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 2006).

⁴⁴ Rippon, *Life and Writings of Rev. Gill*, 18.

Rippon was careful to illustrate the pastoral care that Gill exercised for his congregation regarding the practice of singing. He had introduced some new tunes that the youth of the church very much enjoyed. Yet, one day a godly woman in the church approached Gill in “great trouble” about the singing because over the previous three years the precentor had introduced two new tunes for the congregation to sing. Rippon records,

The Doctor, after patiently listening, asked her whether she understood the singing? No, she said. What! Can't you sing? No, she was no singer, nor her aged father before her. And, though they had had about a hundred years between them to learn the old hundred tune, they could not sing it, nor *any other tune*. The Doctor did not hurt her feelings . . . but meekly he said, Sister, what tunes would you like us to sing? Why Sir, she replied, I should like very much like David's tunes. Well, said he, if you will get some of David's tunes for us, we can then try to sing them.⁴⁵

While Gill was not a hymnwriter, or hymnal editor, his theological investment in the growing Baptist community shaped the understanding and singing of congregations. Gill's *Body of Divinity* became the standard of theological formation for Baptist pastors and hymnwriters that would continue to shape the song and theology of the growing Baptist movement. In this regard one may best see Gill's theological contribution to singing both in the Tabernacle and beyond.

John Rippon and His Hymnal

John Rippon was a groundbreaking figure in the history of British Baptists and greater Nonconformity. Trained at the Baptist Academy of Bristol, he was reared on the teaching of Hugh and Caleb Evans.⁴⁶ Rippon was a man who was involved in many endeavors throughout his career, chief of which was *The Baptist Annual Register* (1790-1802). Ken Manley explains, “The thirteen years during which Rippon published his

⁴⁵ Rippon, *Life and Writings of Rev. Gill*, 124.

⁴⁶ Ken R. Manley, *Redeeming Love Proclaim: John Rippon and the Baptists* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 28.

Register were among the most significant in the history of the Particular Baptists in both Britain and the United States.⁴⁷ The register chronicled the growth and optimism of the Baptist movement, giving voice to a people looking to speak up for their beliefs.

Rippon pastored Carter Lane Baptist Church a remarkable tenure of 61 years, from 1773 until his death in 1836. Some older members of the congregation believed he was too young for the pastorate when Rippon was first installed as pastor of Carter Lane. He was even accused of having gone up to the pulpit two steps at a time because he was in such a rush.⁴⁸ Spurgeon comments, “Rippon was a busy man, and though neither a scholar or an original thinker, his pen was seldom idle and himself never.”⁴⁹ Rippon may not have had the theological acumen of his predecessor, but “he possessed popular gifts of a high order, and his ministry was eminently a successful one.”⁵⁰ This shepherd cared for the people of Carter Lane for a remarkably lengthy tenure, making critical contributions to the rapid expansion of the Baptist movement.⁵¹ Rippon’s most substantial and enduring work was his *Selection*, a hymnal which Rippon published in 1787.⁵²

Rippon’s *Selection*

Rippon’s significant contribution to hymnody was providing the Baptists their first widely received hymnal.⁵³ His *Selection of Hymns, from the Best Authors, including*

⁴⁷ Manley, *Redeeming Love Proclaim*, 139.

⁴⁸ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle*, 48.

⁴⁹ Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle*, 51.

⁵⁰ Henry S. Burrage, *Baptist Hymn Writers and Their Hymns* (Portland, ME: Brown Thurston, 1888), 98.

⁵¹ One important work outside the scope of this research is Rippon’s *Baptist Annual Register* (1790-1802). Ken Manley says that his work with the *Annual Register*, “not only provided a unique expression of the denomination’s new maturity and confidence but also promoted a deeper mutual awareness among Baptists.” Manley, *Redeeming Love Proclaim*, 7.

⁵² See John Rippon, *Selection of Hymns, from the Best Authors, Including a Great Number of Originals: Dr. Watt’s Psalms and Hymns* (London: Arthur Hall, 1787).

⁵³ The first markedly Baptist hymnal was produced by Caleb Evans (1737-1791) and John Ash

a Great Number of Originals; Intended to be an Appendix to Dr. Watts's Psalms and Hymns was published in London in 1787. Manley argues that Rippon's hymnal "provided a comprehensive resource for the homiletical bias of Baptist worship."⁵⁴ The *Selection* has stood as one of the most successful hymnals in church history, and through the popularity and distribution of this hymnal, Rippon became "the chief disseminator of the evangelical and Baptist hymnody available in his day," according to Joseph Carmichael.⁵⁵

Rippon outlines four specific aims in his hymnal.⁵⁶ First, he emphasizes that his added *Selection* was not meant to replace the use of Watts's *Psalms and Hymns*, but to extend the use of Watts.⁵⁷ Watts had become the hymnal of choice for many Dissenters, including many Baptist congregations. Second, the *Selection* was intended to supplement Watts. Rippon argues that Watts did not have many "whole hymns" on various subjects he thought should be sung. He lists the following:

The Characters of Christ—the Work of the Spirit—the Christian Graces and Tempers—the Parables of the New Testament—the Ordinance of Baptism—and but few suited to Associations and General Meetings of Churches and Ministers—Ordinations—Church meetings—Meetings of prayer.⁵⁸

Rippon saw his work as "filling up in some measure these deficiencies."⁵⁹

Third, the *Selection* was an *appendix* to Watts, containing many hymns on the same

(1725-1779). This publication included hymns by Anne Steele, Benjamin Beddome, and Joseph Stennett. Caleb Evans and John Ash, *Hymns Adapted to Public Worship* (Bristol, England: W. Pine, 1769).

⁵⁴ Manley, *Redeeming Love Proclaim*, 7.

⁵⁵ Joseph Van Carmichael, "The Hymns of Anne Steele in John Rippon's Selection of Hymns: A Theological Analysis in the Context of the English Particular Baptist Revival" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 11.

⁵⁶ This list is outlined by Manley, *Redeeming Love Proclaim*, 89-90.

⁵⁷ See Isaac Watts, *The Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs of Isaac Watts*, ed. Chris Fenner (Frisco, TX: Doxology & Theology, 2016).

⁵⁸ Rippon, *Selection*, iii.

⁵⁹ Rippon, *Selection*, iii.

themes, “that we may not always sing of the same thing in the same words but enjoy variety in the work of praise.”⁶⁰ William Reynolds commends Rippon for his work on this point:

Rippon’s editorial judgment in appending to Watts the finest hymns of the Wesleyan and Evangelical writers made this collection and its subsequent editions of real significance and it became the standard of Baptist hymnody well into the nineteenth century.⁶¹

Finally, Rippon introduced a “Variety of Measures” by including 23 meters to sing from. This was a departure from Watts’ *Psalms and Hymns*, for Watts used only three meters of hymns in his writing.⁶² Manly summarizes, “Rippon brought to the task a capacity for hard work, attention to detail, a discriminating poetic taste, and a sensitive awareness of Baptist needs.”⁶³

The *Selection* was released in 1787 with 588 hymns. By the tenth edition it had grown by sixty more; and by the time it had been in publication for a half century it had grown by nearly 400 hymns. The tenth edition is the one that sat in the pews of Carter Lane until Spurgeon was in the pulpit.⁶⁴

A Curation of Baptist Hymnody

Rippon set out to form a supplement to Watts and in doing so paved the way for Baptists to approach the art of hymn curation. The *Selection* was the first hymnal to include hymns by authors from various theological persuasions and denominations. Though his focus was to serve Baptist congregations, he states, “It has not been my

⁶⁰ Rippon, *Selection*, iii.

⁶¹ William J. Reynolds, *A Survey of Christian Hymnody* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963).

⁶² Watts, *Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, xi.

⁶³ Manley, *Redeeming Love Proclaim*, 90.

⁶⁴ Burrage, *Baptist Hymn Writers*, 631.

Enquiry *whose* hymns I shall choose, but *what* hymns; and hence it will be seen, that Churchmen and Dissenters, Watts and Tate, Wesley and Toplady, England and America sing Side by Side and very often join in the same Triumph, using the same words.”⁶⁵

While Rippon was intentional on creating a hymnal for broad and interdenominational dissemination, he did not waver in his Particular Baptist convictions. Rippon introduced the world to the works of many Baptist hymnists, who contribute nearly a third of the text.⁶⁶ The most numerous offerings from Baptists were the 53 hymns by Anne Steele (1717-1778), 42 from Benjamin Beddome (1718-1795), and 38 from Samuel Stennett (1727-1795). Stennett’s “To God the Universal King” is the first hymn in the book. Other Baptists include Robert Robinson (1735-1790), John Fellows (1740-1817), Joseph Stennett (1663-1713), and John Ryland Jr. (1753-1825). Rippon found Baptist doctrine set to verse, and gave congregations a collection of theological hymns that would articulate and advance Baptist beliefs. Manly states, “Few ordinary Baptists had read Gill’s tedious tomes, but most of them sang from Rippon’s book.”⁶⁷ He continues, “This was a responsibility Rippon fully recognized and his book promoted the orthodox but moderate Calvinism he espoused.”⁶⁸

Over 200,000 copies of Rippon’s *Selection* had been sold by 1832, not including the sale of the hymnal in America.⁶⁹ The pastor-hymnwriter had accomplished what he so busily set out to do: provide Baptists a hymnal that would give them a voice,

⁶⁵ Rippon, preface to *Selection*.

⁶⁶ Manley, *Redeeming Love Proclaim*, 53.

⁶⁷ Manley, *Redeeming Love Proclaim*, 85.

⁶⁸ Manley, *Redeeming Love Proclaim*, 85.

⁶⁹ John Rippon, *A Selection of Hymns, From the Best Authors, Including a Great Number of Originals: Intended to be an Appendix to Dr. Watts’s Psalms and Hymns*, 30th ed. (London: printed for the author, 1832), iii.

while allowing their voices to be raised alongside many others who had been redeemed by Christ.

Spurgeon's Contribution to Hymnody

Spurgeon received a heritage of hymnody as the pastor of Metropolitan Tabernacle. This tradition was not a burden he saw need to break free from, but a path that had been marked for him to follow. Spurgeon demonstrated acute historical understanding of his life, his ministry, his time, and his place. From the doctrine he stood on to his convictions regarding corporate worship, he embodied much of the Puritan heritage he loved so much. Ernest Bacon identifies the many ways Spurgeon looked to the Puritans for doctrinal instruction, pastoral example, and spiritual encouragement. He maintains,

[Spurgeon] was completely molded and fashioned by those spiritual giants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Puritans. He stood in their noble tradition, in the direct line of their theology and outlook, and can without question be called *the heir of the Puritans*.⁷⁰

Bacon names Spurgeon the “Heir of the Puritans,” a claim which few would dispute.⁷¹ However, it must be added that Spurgeon was also the heir of the Particular Baptists, and uniquely the “Heir of the Metropolitan Tabernacle.” This is a reality he was cognizant of throughout his ministry among the people of the church.

Spurgeon wrote his own history of Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1876, adding the subtitle *Its History and Work*. The title itself gives evidence to the fact that Spurgeon understood the importance not only of what was happening in and through the church in

⁷⁰ Ernest Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967), 101.

⁷¹ Bacon refers to the influence the Puritans held on Spurgeon through his personal library, specifically certain books which he read again and again. Bacon mentions the following authors by name: Thomas Brooks, Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, John Flavel, Thomas Watson, Thomas Manton, and Richard Baxter. Bacon, *Heir of the Puritans*, 108.

his own day but demonstrated acute historical awareness to the importance of the church he now served as steward. In the introduction of his work he states a historical summary:

You will here see how our fathers struggled and suffered for liberty of conscience in former times, how their sons held fast to truths handed down to them, and in a measure “how a church upon whom the ends of the earth are come” still lives and flourishes by faith in the unseen God.⁷²

Spurgeon was clearly one of those “sons” who held fast to the truths and also many of the practices handed down to him. He was a man who frequented the past in order to interpret the present, and thereby navigate the future. Specifically, with respect to his predecessors in the pastorate of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, he followed Keach as a hymnwriter, Gill in his devotion to the Psalms, and Rippon in his editorial work in publishing *Our Own Hymn-book*.

Spurgeon the Hymn-Writer

Spurgeon was, among many other things, a hymn-writer.⁷³ Spurgeon research has typically allowed his prolific preaching ministry to eclipse the composition of his hymns. Yet, the Prince of Preachers was also a poet who contributed to the ever-growing body of Christian hymnody, in the same vein of Particular Baptist pastor hymn-writers who had gone before him—such as Benjamin Beddome (1717-1795), John Ryland (1753-1825), and John Fawcett (1739-1817). Focusing specifically on his own congregation, he was now the pastor-hymnwriter, writing hymns for the same congregation, as Keach and Rippon had done before.

⁷² Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle*, vi.

⁷³ Spurgeon was also responsible for starting or being involved in many endeavors. Schindler organizes portions of his biography by highlighting “The Pastor’s College,” “The Stockwell Orphanage,” “Mr. Spurgeon as Hymn-Writer,” and “Mr. Spurgeon as a Preacher and Author.” Robert Shindler, *From the Usher’s Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit: The Life and Labors of Pastor C. H. Spurgeon* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1892), vi.

Spurgeon began to write hymns early in his ministry. In his biography *From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit* Robert Schindler features a handful of hymns that Spurgeon penned. Schindler, an assistant to Spurgeon, explains, "In the early years of his ministry, Mr. Spurgeon sometimes indulged in the making of verses; and even before this, he gave proof of his ability, if not his genius in this field."⁷⁴ One of his first hymns was entitled "Immanuel" and was introduced for the first time on June 26, 1853, as a part of the Jubilee services for Waterbeach Church.⁷⁵ It reads,

When once I mourned a load of sin,
When conscience felt a word within,
When all my works were thrown away,
When on my knees I knelt to pray,
 Then blissful hour, remembered well,
 I learned Thy love, Immanuel!

When storms of sorrow toss my soul,
When waves of care around me roll,
When comforts sink, when joys shall flee,
When hopeless griefs shall gape for me,
 One word the tempest's rage shall quell,
 That word, Thy name, Immanuel!

When for the truth I suffer shame,
When foes pour scandal on my name,
When cruel taunts and jeers abound,
When "bulls of Bashan" gird me round,
 Secure within my tower I'll dwell
 That tower, thy grace, Immanuel!

When hell, enraged, lifts up her roar,
When Satan stops my path before,
When fiends rejoice, and wait my end,
When legion hosts their arrows send,
 Fear not, my soul, but hurl at hell
 Thy battle-cry, Immanuel!

⁷⁴ Schindler, *From Usher's Desk to Tabernacle Pulpit*, 257.

⁷⁵ *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography: Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by his Wife, and His Private Secretary* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897-99), 1: 293.

When down the hill of life I go,
When o'er my feet death's waters flow,
When in the deepening flood I sink,
When friends stand weeping on the brink,
I'll mingle with my last farewell
Thy lovely name, Immanuel!

When tears are banished from mine eye,
When fairer worlds than these are nigh,
When heaven shall fill my ravished sight,
When I shall bathe in sweet delight,
One joy all joys shall far excel
To see Thy face, Immanuel!⁷⁶

Of all Spurgeon's hymns and psalms, "Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands" (939) was his most popular text during the nineteenth century.⁷⁷ The hymn was written "hastily" one Saturday afternoon in order to be used the next day to celebrate the Lord's Supper.⁷⁸ The theme of communion with Christ resounded throughout the preaching ministry of Spurgeon, poignantly expressed in this hymn's opening stanza:

Amidst us our Belovèd stands,
And bids us view his piercèd hands,
Points to His wounded feet and side,
Blest emblems of the Crucified.⁷⁹

Another hymn that demonstrates Spurgeon's skill as a hymn-writer is "The Holy Ghost is Here" (451). This stands as Spurgeon's favorite hymn that he composed.⁸⁰

The Holy Ghost is here,

⁷⁶ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 295.

⁷⁷ See chap. 6 for an analysis of this text. C. H. Spurgeon, "Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands" (939), in *OOHB*; David Music, "C. H. Spurgeon and Hymnody," *Foundations* 22, no. 2 (April 1979): 178. The hymn has been featured in 26 hymnals, according to one modern hymn website. See "Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands," Hymnary.com, accessed January 2020, https://hymnary.org/text/amidst_us_our_beloved_stands.

⁷⁸ Russell Conwell, *Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon: The World's Greatest Preacher* (Edgewood, 1892), 480, quoted in Music, "Spurgeon and Hymnody," 178.

⁷⁹ Spurgeon, "Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands" (939).

⁸⁰ Burrage, *Baptist Hymn Writers*, 205.

Where saints in prayer agree,
As Jesus' parting gift is near
Each pleading company.

Not far away is He,
To be by prayer brought nigh,
But here in present majesty,
As in His courts on high.

He dwells within our soul,
An ever welcome guest;
He reigns with absolute control,
As monarch in the breast.

Obedient to Thy will,
We wait to feel Thy power;
O Lord of life, our hopes fulfill,
And bless this hallowed hour.⁸¹

Spurgeon wrote hymns throughout his ministry. Of his texts, he included in *Our Own Hymn-book* 14 metrical psalms and 12 hymns.⁸² Additionally, five hymns bear his name as editor.⁸³ The pastor took his turn as a hymn-writer by expanding the body of hymnody meant to “aid in worship and for the exposition of scripture.”⁸⁴ In the hymnal’s preface Spurgeon expressed the hope “that in some few churches of the land we [his own texts] may be helpful to their service of sacred song, and aid them in praising the Lord.”⁸⁵ Spurgeon saw the hymns he wrote as both pedagogical and doxological tools in the life of

⁸¹ C. H. Spurgeon, “The Holy Ghost is Here” (451), in *OOHB*.

⁸²The hymns of Spurgeon are categorized as follows: The Church (7), The Holy Spirit (1), Conflict and Encouragement (1), Blessing and Thanks (2), Prayer (1). Included under the heading “The Church” are two hymns to be sung regarding church leadership, two pertaining to church buildings, two hymns for baptism, and one communion hymn.

⁸³ Hymns marked with Spurgeon as editor include the following: “Woe’s Me That in Mesecham” (120), “Why Should I Sorrow More” (632), “Come, Ye Who Bow to Sovereign Grace” (923), “Great King of Zion, Now” (1020), and “God, Before Whose Radiant Throne” (1022).

⁸⁴ J. R. Watson, *The English Hymn: A Critical and Historical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 111.

⁸⁵ Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, v.

the church. Keach had earlier explained how “singing is not only sweet and raising to the Spirit, but also full of instruction.”⁸⁶

While not all evaluations of Spurgeon’s hymns resonate with the grandiose praise of Shindler—that he demonstrated “genius in this field,”⁸⁷ others did commend the preacher’s verses. John Julian, the leading hymnologist of Spurgeon’s age, critiques, “Only ‘Sweetly the Holy Hymn’ can be possessing of any merit. The others do not rise above respectable mediocrity.”⁸⁸ Author Joseph Miller claims, “Spurgeon’s lyrics reflected a ‘high value upon the Christian psalms and hymns’ having ‘a clearness, a fullness of Gospel teaching, and a characteristic Lutherlike force, such as we might have expected from the nature of his ordinary discourses.”⁸⁹ One scholar echoes the argument of this chapter. Veeneenea Smith, in her literary biography of Spurgeon, claims,

His hymns were described, “Like his sermons, books, and other writing, his hymns share the common features of an old-fashioned evangelistic appeal, simplicity of language, the use of illustration and various literary strategies.”⁹⁰

Combining evangelistic directness with a command of literary rhetorical strategies and illustration equipped Spurgeon to reach his congregants through words and hymns alike.

The Legacy of Psalms

One of the ways Spurgeon shows his commitment to both the doctrinal and philosophical convictions of his forbears is in his devotion to the singing of metrical psalms. The Psalms themselves held a central place in the piety and practice of the preacher. He commented, “If I had nothing else to think of, I would have thought of

⁸⁶ Keach, *The Breach Repair’d*, 192.

⁸⁷ Shindler, *From Usher’s Desk to Tabernacle Pulpit*, 257.

⁸⁸ Julian, *A Dictionary of Hymnology*, 1081.

⁸⁹ Joseph Miller, quoted in Veeneenea Erika Smith, “Dinna Forget Spurgeon: A Literary Biography” (PhD diss., Case Western Reserve University, 2006), 214.

⁹⁰ Smith, “Dinna Forget Spurgeon,” 213.

nothing else.”⁹¹ The Psalms were a refuge for the preacher, from the depths of his bouts with depression to the joyful heights of his ministry.⁹²

Spurgeon would have easily agreed with John Calvin, who in 1557 wrote in the preface to his commentary on the Psalms,

I have been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, “An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul;” for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated.⁹³

Calvin understood that while the Psalms contain a rich theology of God, they also possess a unique perspective on the suffering, sorrows, and the spirituality of man. They were so dear to him that he would spend the last years of his life constructing his magnum opus from the Psalms, *The Treasury of David*.⁹⁴

Spurgeon began his hymnal with a compilation of metrical psalms, influenced in large part by the importance he saw placed on metrical psalmody in the life and ministry of Watts.⁹⁵ He includes a metrical psalm for each biblical Psalm and paves an expositional path chapter by chapter through the hymnbook of the church.⁹⁶ Of the 150

⁹¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1869-85), 6: vii.

⁹² See Tom Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2013), 595-631; Peter J. Morden, *Communion with Christ and His People: The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), 258-85. See also the recent trade book by Zack Eswine, *Spurgeon’s Sorrows* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2015).

⁹³ John Calvin, *Writings on Pastoral Piety*, ed. Elsie Anne McKee (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 56.

⁹⁴ See Spurgeon, *TD*.

⁹⁵ See Isaac Watts, *The Psalms of David: Imitated in the Language of the New Testament, and Apply’d to the Christian State and Worship* (London: J. Clark, R. Ford, and R. Cruttenden, 1719). Addressing the parameters of *OOHB*, Spurgeon comments, “The Psalms of David are here . . . in forms suitable for congregational singing, and our endeavor has been to preserve the devout spirit of that inspired book.” Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, vi.

⁹⁶ The psalms selected were a collection from across denominational lines, including Watts, Tate and Brady, and the *Scottish Psalter*. The meter of tune selections was limited to 35 various forms. Metrical psalms written in this period served as “thought for thought,” traveling expositions of the Psalms

psalm texts, Spurgeon included fifteen of his own metrical psalms.⁹⁷ The pastor had learned from the psalms of Isaac Watts (1674-1748), Tate and Brady, and the *Scottish Psalter* how nourishing metrical psalm singing could be to the soul of its singer both individually and in corporate worship. Following in the footsteps of Particular Baptists, and most notably Rippon, Spurgeon demonstrated great care and skill in assembling his psalter.⁹⁸

This combination of poetry, exposition, and melody from the historic English and Scottish psalters allowed the people of Metropolitan Tabernacle to dwell upon the beauty of God particularly through the many hardships and trials the congregation faced. These psalms of lament gave melody to their faint prayers and benefit to their weary souls. Spurgeon notes the importance of the Psalms in his own spirituality: “The delightful study of the Psalms has yielded me boundless profit and ever-growing pleasure; common gratitude constrains me to communicate to others of the benefit, with the prayer that it may endure them to search further themselves.”⁹⁹ In this medium of song, Spurgeon communicated these benefits and intended for others to be edified by them.

of Scripture. The practice of singing metrical psalms found its force in 1562 when Thomas Sternhold, W. Whitingham, and John Hopkins published their *Whole book of Psalms*, which allowed the worshiper to have rhythmic and rhyming songs to the Psalms of Scripture. See Thomas Sternhold, W. Whitingham, I. Hopkins, *The Whole Booke of Psalms, Collected into English Meter* (London: John Dayne, 1584). For perspective on the origin of metrical psalm singing, see Madeline Forell Marshall and Janet Todd, *English Congregational Hymns in the Eighteenth Century* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 12-18.

⁹⁷ Psalms of Spurgeon included in *OOHB* are as follows: “Lord, I Would Dwell With Thee” (15), “Thy Strength, O Lord, Makes Glad Our King” (21), Behold, O Lord, My Days are Made (39), “Jesus, Poorest of the Poor” (41), “Our Ears Have Heard, O Glorious God” (44), “The Foes of Zion Quake for Fright” (53), “Lord, Make My Conversation Chaste” (58), “O God, Thou Hast Cast Off Thy Saints” (60), “The Kings of Earth Are in the Hands” (82), “O God, Be Thou No Longer Still” (83), “Praise the Lord, with Exultation” (111), “Blessed Is the Man That Feareth” (112), and “Woe’s Me That I in Mesech Am” (120).

⁹⁸ Authors of Psalms included in *OOHB* also include notable writers such as Watts, Goode, Lyte, Tate and Brady, Auber, Sternhold, Irons, and the *Scottish Psalter*.

⁹⁹ Spurgeon, preface to *TD*, 1: i.

The relationship between Spurgeon and the Psalms was a staple in his life as a Christian and a pastor. Throughout this dissertation the Psalms will never be far from reach. This section has demonstrated Spurgeon's pastoral conviction and care that the Psalms remain a vibrant part of the church, in the vein of Gill.

Spurgeon the Hymnal Editor

Perhaps the most clear and compelling evidence of Spurgeon's historically-rooted understanding of hymns is in the publication of *Our Own Hymn-book*. Spurgeon looked to the past to shape his work as hymnal editor. He says, "We have not been able to fall in with modern scruples, but have rested content with ancient precedents."¹⁰⁰ In an age when hymnals were attempting to take new ground, Spurgeon held his own. He wrote,

In Spurgeon's selection of hymns it cannot be said that he was ahead of his time. While he included works by contemporary writers, few of them were particularly noteworthy. The heavy reliance on a dozen authors, especially those from the eighteenth century, did not leave much room for innovation or variety. This emphasis, plus the presence of a complete psalter, made the book a distinctly backward-looking one.¹⁰¹

The claim that "it cannot be said that (Spurgeon) was ahead of his time" draws out the point that in many ways he looked to the past to inform the ministerial decisions he faced. These features that had fallen out of practice, such as including a complete psalter give evidence to this fact. However, it was not history Spurgeon was serving, it was his Savior and the people for which his Savior had shed his own blood. He was a shepherd caring for the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:2).

The pastoral aim and scope of *Our Own Hymn-book* is evident from its introduction. Spurgeon outlines four features which he felt substantiated the new hymnal. First, the hymns were drawn from the original works of the authors, and kept as

¹⁰⁰ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 3: 320.

¹⁰¹ Music, "Spurgeon and Hymnody," 177.

they were written as much as possible. This is different from Rippon, who edited at will in his *Selection*. Second, were “subjects frequently passed over or pushed into a corner,” such as the great doctrines of sovereign grace, the personal Advent of our Lord, and especially “the sweetness of present communion with Him.”¹⁰² Third, hymns suitable for revivals, prayer-meetings, and earnest addresses to sinners, were given intentional prominence, reflecting the evangelist heart of the preacher. Finally, the setting of the entire Psalms of David, especially those by Watts, are included.¹⁰³

The second feature of the hymnal shows that its aim was not merely pedagogical but devotional, designed to promote communion with God in song. Spurgeon saw in addition to the didactic nature of hymnody also its experiential nature. Spurgeon would have wholeheartedly agreed with Keach’s analysis that “singing is not only sweet and raising to the Spirit, but also full of instruction.”¹⁰⁴ For a thorough treatment of how Spurgeon saw the ordinance of song, I will allow the preacher to do what he does best: take a verse of God’s Word and allow the Spirit of God to breathe on it through the preached word.¹⁰⁵

Smith agrees pointing out, “Spurgeon valued hymns and admired hymn writers such as Benjamin Keach, Isaac Watts, John Rippon, and Charles Wesley (1707-1788), all of whom were pastors and also created hymnbooks.”¹⁰⁶ Donald Brown says that in the

¹⁰² Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, vi.

¹⁰³ Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, vi.

¹⁰⁴ Keach, *The Breach Repair’d*, 244.

¹⁰⁵ For more sermons in which Spurgeon addresses singing, see C. H. Spurgeon, “Holy Songs from Happy Saints,” (3476), March 5th, 1871, in *MTP*, vol. 61; Spurgeon, “Singing Saints,” (2489), March 5th, 1871, in *MTP*, vol. 42; Spurgeon, “Songs of Deliverance,” (763), July 28, 1867, in *MTP*, vol. 13.

¹⁰⁶ Smith, “Dinna Forget Spurgeon,” 218. While Smith misapplies some historical data, her overall thesis agrees with this case.

final evaluation, *Our Own Hymn-book* stands as Spurgeon's chief contribution to the field.¹⁰⁷

In 1859 Spurgeon and the diaconate celebrated laying the Tabernacle foundation stone, placing a bottle in the edifice which contained the items they believed represented the values they most cherished. He explained,

In the bottle which is to be placed under the stone, we have put no money—for one good reason, that we have none to spare. We have not put newspapers, because albeit we admire and love the liberty of the press, yet that it not so immediately concerned with this edifice.¹⁰⁸

They placed five articles under the stone. First, the Bible, which Spurgeon confessed was “the foundation of our church.”¹⁰⁹ This doctrinal conviction regarding the Scripture as the Word of God and as the authoritative rule for their faith, life, and practice as a church had been passed down from generation to generation. Scripture was the fuel and guide of generations of gospel ministry. Second, the bottle contained a copy of *The Baptist Confession of Faith* (1689). Spurgeon highlights that it “was signed in the olden times by Benjamin Keach, one of my eminent predecessors.”¹¹⁰ The same confession of faith signed by Keach was the one that articulated their continued set of beliefs. There was no wavering in Spurgeon's convictions from the old confession that held the Particular Baptists together. Third, the church included an edition of Rippon's hymn book, which had been the beloved hymnal of the congregation for so many years. Finally, there was a program of the day's proceedings held to honor and commemorate the dedication of the building they had worked so hard to construct. This collection of artifacts demonstrates that as Spurgeon walked the earth preaching the gospel of Jesus,

¹⁰⁷ Donald Brown, “Spurgeon's Hymnals,” *The Hymn* 30, no. 1 (January 1979): 46.

¹⁰⁸ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2: 323.

¹⁰⁹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2: 323.

¹¹⁰ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2: 323.

and sang with his congregation day by day, he did so with the awareness of the inheritance he had been given by these fathers of the faith.

Conclusion

The rich legacy of pastoral ministry which Spurgeon inherited and built upon at Metropolitan Tabernacle cannot be limited to sermon alone, but must consider the importance of singing within the church. Gratitude must be given for Keach's embattled commitment to hymn singing, for Gill's commitment to and articulation of the Psalms, for Rippon's curation and distribution of his *Selection*, and finally for Spurgeon's theological convictions and philosophical distinctives which he drew from the history of Puritan and Particular Baptist values. While Spurgeon did not exceed Keach in his theological advancement of hymn-singing, he continued in the tradition of writing new hymns—particularly communion hymns—for his congregation. Though he did not exceed Gill in amassing a *Body of Divinity* that articulated in creedal form a defense for psalm-singing, he published the *Treasury of David*; this served the church in championing the role of the Psalms in the devotional life of the Christian, as well as holding firm to the Psalm-singing practice when many churches were abandoning it. Finally, though Spurgeon's *Own Hymn-book* never attained the popularity and reach of his predecessor Rippon's collection, it served its purpose in providing the congregation with a body of hymns that achieved the theological and doxological ends for which he had designed it.

Spurgeon walked the path of those who went before him and gathered the best offerings from his predecessors as he developed his own theology, including that of song. As a result, he curated a hymnal for the Tabernacle overflowing with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, while adding his own voice to the choir. With his vivid biblical preaching and expositions on congregational song throughout his career, and with the hymnbook and his own leading of hymns, Spurgeon secured for decades to come the strong theology

and practice of psalms, hymns, and spiritual singing that had been bequeathed to him in the rich legacy of the singing shepherds of Metropolitan Tabernacle.

CHAPTER 3

SINGING SAINTS: SPURGEON'S THEOLOGICAL VISION OF CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

Singing Saints

On the Lord's Day evening, October 3, 1886, Spurgeon delivered the sermon "Singing Saints" (2489).¹ He held before the people an exposition of Psalm 30:4, with the imperative, "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." He highlights the fact that after David had been restored to health as indicated in the psalm, his first instinct was to praise the Lord. Spurgeon exhorts the church to the same way of thinking. He instructs, "The first thing to do, when the throat is clear after an illness, is to sing praises to God; the first thing to do when the eyes are brightened again, is to look up to the Lord with thankfulness and gratitude."²

Spurgeon labored to help the congregation to see their identity as singing saints. He illustrated his point by relating a conversation he had with a "red-hot Methodist" who loved to shout out "Glory!" and "Hallelujah!" during a worship service, but did not feel like he had the freedom to do so at Metropolitan Tabernacle.³ He explained that it was God's great mercy that caused people's hearts to become so full they felt as though they were ready to burst, and to allow the praise of God to readily be on

¹ Throughout this dissertation Spurgeon's sermons are followed parenthetically by sermon number, while footnotes locate the sermon in one of the following: Spurgeon, *New Park Street Pulpit*, 6 vols. (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1856-61); C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 63 vols. (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1855-1917).

² Spurgeon, *MTP*, 42: 517.

³ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 42: 525.

their tongues. In his conclusion he told the church, “We have not enough singing saints.”⁴ As he instructed them once more to grow in this great task, he appealed to them, “Now you must finish my sermon for me by standing up and singing”—

All hail the power of Jesus name!
Let angels prostrate fall:
Bring for the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all.⁵

This chapter argues that Spurgeon held a theological and pastoral vision for congregational singing that saw the practice of song as a vital part of the church’s life together in Christ. This philosophy of singing was aimed at the glory of God, latched to the centrality of Christ, and committed to mutual edification. This thesis will be traced by considering a selection of sermons focused on the subject of singing, observing the distinct features of singing within the church, and observing how Spurgeon pursued communion with Christ and his people.

Spurgeon’s Role in Song

On New Year’s Eve, 1870, the people of Metropolitan Tabernacle gathered together to end the current year and welcome the new one in the worship of their Savior. One of the largest “watch night” meetings was held annually on New Year’s Eve at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.⁶ A reporter for *The Christian*, a weekly herald from London of “Christian Life, Christian Testimony, and Christian Work” was on hand for this special service and recounted the event as the evening drew to a close. The service was a

⁴ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 42: 525.

⁵ Edward Perronet, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name (417),” quoted in Spurgeon, *MTP*, 42: 525.

⁶ Tom J. Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2013), 266.

combination of hymn singing, prayer, and the Word of God being preached.⁷ According to *The Christian*, Charles Spurgeon encouraged the church to reflect on how “the new year reminded them of their new birth, of the time when it was with them the beginning of days, and therefore it was fitting that they should come together and praise God for his mercies.”⁸ The reporter records,

At the close of the address, and when the hands of the clock pointed to within a few minutes of midnight, the assembly knelt in silent prayer, and thus remained until the new year’s morn had come, and then all rising, the following verses, composed by Mr. Spurgeon just before coming to the meeting, were sung, and then with reciprocal wishes from pastor and people for a happy new year.⁹

The hymn that Spurgeon composed for the close of the year was a hymn in short meter fittingly entitled “At Midnight Praise the Lord.” They sang,

At midnight praise the Lord,
Ye who this temple throng,
Lift up your hearts with one accord,
And close the year with song.

Light up the altar fire,
Forget the chilly night;
Let grateful love all hearts inspire,
Praise God with all your might.

Into the coming year,
March ye with banners high;
Nor in the future need ye fear,
For Israel’s God is nigh.

But march with voice of praise,
Let music lead your way;
To God the Lord your voices raise,
On this, the New Year’s Day.¹⁰

⁷ “The Last Hour of 1870,” *The Christian*, January 5, 1871, London edition.

⁸ “The Last Hour of 1870.”

⁹ “The Last Hour of 1870.”

¹⁰ “The Last Hour of 1870.”

This scene, which was chronicled on this celebrated evening, was not an isolated occurrence, but a familiar scene of Spurgeon and his congregation, singing the praises of the Lord together.

Congregational singing was, for Spurgeon, a pastoral expression in leading the church in the worship of God. The pastor himself was the one who led the church in this understanding and involvement in congregational song. Ira Sankey (1840-1908) comments on how influential this role of singing as a part of pastoral ministry was among the congregation. Sankey recalls,

I have held him up as an example to hundreds of congregations, as a man who could inspire his people to worship in hymns of praise, by devoting time to the reading of the hymn, and then himself standing and singing with the people. I hope this example may be largely followed by the ministers of the gospel. The praise of God is a part of the worship, and should not be slighted.¹¹

Spurgeon could never be accused of slighting the role of hymnody in the life of his church. Proof of his multifaceted care is evidenced from his oversight of what the church sang to his involvement in how the church sang. His reach extended into the creation of “singing schools,” which equipped the church to learn to sing better, and even led to the production of *Tabernacle Tune Book*.¹² Singing was a prominent feature in the life of Metropolitan Tabernacle.

¹¹ Ira Sankey, quoted in G. Holden Pike, *From the Pulpit to the Palm-Branch: A Memorial of C. H. Spurgeon* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1892), 163.

¹² C. H. Spurgeon, *Tabernacle Tune Book: A Companion to “Our Own Hymn-book” with Remarks on Psalmody* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1869), 3. *Tabernacle Tune Book* was published three years following *Our Own Hymn-book*. See also C. H. Spurgeon, *Our Own Hymn Book: A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for Public, Social and Private Worship* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1866). *Tabernacle Tune Book* was published as a supplement to the hymnal by providing a definitive collection of melodies by which the texts contained in *OOHB* could be set to. In the nineteenth century hymnals were published independently of one another; the texts of hymns were contained in one book, and a collection of notated melodies for singing were still. A church would have a set hymnal filled with texts written to various meters, and their tune book would provide various settings for accompanying metrical texts.

The Ordinance of Song

Singing, to Spurgeon, was more than a preferential practice; it was a commanded ordinance of duty and delight.¹³ His theological vision of singing stood firmly in the Particular Baptist tradition which understood singing as a vital part of its practice of worship.¹⁴ In 1655 the Baptist association at Bridgewater provided guidance when they declared “that singing of psalms is an ordinance of Christ,”¹⁵ and issued a fourfold argument for the implementation of congregational singing: (1) It is an ordinance having been given by Christ; (2) A practice to be performed by the church; (3) A gift that is counted a grace given by the goodness and mercy of God; and (4) Singing should be conducted from a soul in praise to God.¹⁶

The *Second London Baptist Confession* (1689), building on these premises, named “singing with grace” alongside other ordinances and vital elements of Christian worship:

The reading of the Scriptures, preaching, and hearing the Word of God, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord; as also the administration of baptism, and the Lord’s supper, are all parts of religious worship of God, to be performed in obedience to him, with understanding, faith, reverence, and godly fear; moreover, solemn humiliation, with fastings, and thanksgivings, upon special occasions, ought to be used in an holy and religious manner.¹⁷

¹³ The term *ordinance* carried no trace of sacramental connotation for Spurgeon. This section discusses his understanding of the term in greater detail.

¹⁴ Some of the Puritan clergy did not object to music itself as much as the use of ornate music in the service. See Donald R. Boomgard, *Musical Thought in Britain and Germany During the Early Eighteenth Century*, American University Studies, series 5, vol. 26 (New York: Peter Lang, 1987).

¹⁵ Christopher Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in the Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 154.

¹⁶ Ellis, *Gathering*, 154.

¹⁷ William L. Lumpkin, *Second London Baptist Confession*, in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. Bill J. Leonard, rev. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), 281.

The forebears of Metropolitan Tabernacle helped build the foundation of this theological vision throughout its history. Benjamin Keach first articulated the importance of hymn singing in *The Breach Repair'd in God's Worship*. The subtitle of the book states the thrust of its argument: *Singing Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, proved to be a Holy Ordinance of Jesus Christ*.¹⁸ John Gill also defended the biblical nature of singing as a part of corporate worship. He explained the nature of singing as an ordinance of God, not confined to the Old Testament dispensation. He encouraged all Christians to sing and calls for singing to be conducted in a holy and reverent manner.¹⁹ John Rippon contributed an entire body of hymnody to promote the practice of singing as a means to worship God. As chapter 2 argues, Spurgeon built on the previous foundation and cultivated a practice of song that equipped the saints as beneficiaries of the investment that had been built in the repository of the church.

David Music believes that the most clear and concise statement of Spurgeon's theological vision of singing is found in his notes on Psalm 100.²⁰ Spurgeon expounds on the Psalms as follows:

Singing, as it is a joyful, and at the same time a devout, exercise, should be a constant form of approach to God. The measured, harmonious, hearty utterance of praise by a congregation of really devout persons is not merely decorous but delightful, and is a fit anticipation of the worship of heaven, where praise has absorbed prayer, and become the sole mode of adoration.²¹

¹⁸ Benjamin Keach, *The Breach Repair'd in God's Worship, Or, Singing of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs Proved to Be a Holy Ordinance of Jesus Christ: With an Answer to All Objections: As Also an Examination of Mr. Issac Marlow's Two Papers, One Called, A Discourse Against Singing, Etc. the Other An Appendix, Wherein His Arguments and Cavils Are Detected and Refuted* (London: John Hancock, 1691).

¹⁹ John Gill, *A Discourse on Singing of Psalms as Part of Divine Worship, from 1. Corinthians Xiv. 15, Preached 25th of December, 1733, Etc. To a Society of Young Men, Who Carry on an Exercise of Prayer on Lord's Day Mornings at a Meeting House at Horsly-down, Southwark* (London: published by the author, 1734), 4.

²⁰ David Music, "C. H. Spurgeon and Hymnody," *Foundations* 22, no. 2 (April 1979): 174.

²¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1869-85), 4: 306.

Spurgeon saw this joy-filled and devout exercise as something to be enjoyed with great frequency.²² He believed this “constant form of approach to God” was meant to be a means of grace to the people of God as they sang and experienced communion with their Maker.²³ The motivating factor of this vision of song is not mere duty, but delight. In addition, he explains singing as “a fit anticipation of the worship of heaven,” giving also an eschatological perspective to the subject of singing.²⁴

Instruction on Singing

The greatest sermon Spurgeon preached on the doctrine of singing was the one he lived out in front of his congregation. It was here that he taught by example what he believed about the nature and role of singing in the life of a Christian. Additionally, Spurgeon preached on singing to instruct the church from the Scriptures on the practice he treasured so dearly. Whether he was casting a vision for corporate worship, correcting some deficiency or error, or simply encouraging the church to carry on, Spurgeon preached. The following sermons each make significant contributions to building Spurgeon’s theology of congregational singing.²⁵

“Mary’s *Magnificat*” (606)

Spurgeon outlined specific reasons that Christians should sing in a sermon entitled “Mary’s *Magnificat*” on Luke 1:46-47. First, believers should sing because singing is the natural language of joy.²⁶ He explains, “If the children of earth sing, the

²² Spurgeon, *TD*, 4: 306.

²³ Spurgeon, *TD*, 4: 306.

²⁴ Spurgeon, *TD*, 4: 306.

²⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, “Mary’s *Magnificat*” (606), December 25, 1864, in *MTP*, vol. 51; Spurgeon, “Sing in the Ways of the Lord” (1615), August 11, 1881, in *MTP*, vol. 27; and, Spurgeon, “The Minstrel” (1612), August 7, 1881, in *MTP*, vol. 27; “*Magnificat*” (340), October 4, 1860, in *NPSP*, vol. 6.

²⁶ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 51: 302.

children of heaven ought to sing far more often, far more loudly, far more harmoniously than they do.”²⁷ The second reason is because singing is the language of heaven.²⁸ Here he sets his point on the believers’ identity as citizens of the age to come: “If the children of earth sing, the children of heaven ought to sing far more often, far more loudly. . . . Heaven is the home of sacred song, and we are the children of heaven.”²⁹ The third reason to sing is that singing is sweet to the ear of God.³⁰ This statement implies the immanence of God and acknowledges that God is actually hearing his people when they lift their voices to him. “[God] loves to hear us sing when we sing his praise from our hearts,” Spurgeon shows by cross referencing Psalm 104.³¹ He then sets this belief in a familial illustration, saying, “Do you not delight to hear your own children sing, and is there anything sweeter than the song from a child!”³² He aims to warm their hearts by their own experience and allow their lips to sing.

This section of the sermon concludes with a call for the people of God to be writing new hymns of praise from their own communion with God, rather than repressing new melody-making. Spurgeon points to the Moravian’s hymns to show that singing need not be only reserved for articulate theological treatises, but very well may be simple gospel hymns meant to glorify God and edify his church. Spurgeon notes the connection between hymnody and outpourings of the work and Spirit of God: “Revivals of religion always bring with them new hymns and spiritual songs.”³³

²⁷ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 51: 302.

²⁸ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 51: 302.

²⁹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 51: 302.

³⁰ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 51: 302.

³¹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 51: 303.

³² Spurgeon, *MTP*, 51: 303.

³³ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 51: 304.

Making pastoral application to the congregation, he suggests the following:

Every Christian should have some particular hymn that he loves best, so that, when his heart is merriest, he should sing that hymn. How many good old people I have known, who used to sit and sing, or walk about the house, just humming or crooning—

“When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.”

Some have other favourites, but, whatever our choice is, I think it is well to have a hymn, which, although we have not ourselves written it, has nevertheless, been made our own by our circumstances and experiences. When we have fixed on such a hymn as that, let us sing it unto the Lord again and again.³⁴

Here Spurgeon connects the theological value of singing to its implementation in the life of every Christian. He instructs believers to survey the body of hymnody known to themselves and find a hymn that is “their own” by experience, and allow that hymn to carry them through accompanying joys or sorrows.

“Magnificat” (340)

Spurgeon also sought to help his congregation understand the numerous reasons they had to sing. On October 4, 1860, his text for the morning was Judges 5:12, which says, “Awake, awake, Deborah; quake, awake, utter a song; arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.” In the sermon entitled “*Magnificat*,” Spurgeon taught how precious this practice of singing was to him. As he introduces his text he declares, “I shall urge upon you a stirring up of all your powers to sacred song.”³⁵ From here he answers the question, “What is there that we need to awaken if we would praise God?”³⁶

³⁴ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 51: 304.

³⁵ Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6: 429.

³⁶ Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6: 429.

His answer displays a theology of singing that includes expressions of song from the people of God rooted in their redemption.³⁷ He explains first that if one wants to awaken the soul to sing, then one must first awaken the body to sing. Second, he charges the church to awaken their mental powers in song; specifically, their judgment and godly imagination. Here he shows not only the participation of the body and soul, but also the mind's involvement in singing. He models how to engage the mind in song:

Sing, my understanding, sing aloud of that matchless wisdom which contrived—of that divine love which planned, and of that eternal grace which carried out the scheme of thy redemption. Awake, my *imagination*, and dance to the holy melody.³⁸

Spurgeon also shows the importance of the heart being awakened to sing the praises of God. He preaches to his affections, commanding, “Wake up, my *love*, for thou must strike the key-note and lead the strain.”³⁹ He understood that his love, faith, and hope were all connected under this heading of “the graces of his spirit” which must be involved in singing. He uses emotive words like delight, ecstasy, and rapture to motivate the people. He exhorted,

You know also what it is to praise God passionately—to throw energy into all the song, and so to exult in his name. So do ye, each one of you, this day; and if Michal, Saul's daughter, should look out of the window and see David dancing before the ark with all his might, and should chide you as though your praise were unseemly, say unto her, “It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, therefore will I play before the Lord” (2 Sam 6:21).⁴⁰

Next Spurgeon poses a new question: “Why should I praise God?” Spurgeon begins by showing how all creation praises him, asking in response, “Shall God *not* be

³⁷ To build a theological framework of captivity and freedom, Spurgeon reads Heb 4:3, 1 Cor 3:21-23, Isa 26:1, and Ps 100:2. This is with the intent of placing the freedom song of Deborah and Barak, written the day God delivered his people from Sisera and the Canaanites, into the mouths of modern Christians who have also been delivered by God from sin and the power of Satan.

³⁸ Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6: 431.

³⁹ Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6: 431.

⁴⁰ Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6: 432.

praised?” Then he points the attention to the praise of heaven.⁴¹ He concludes the sermon by calling for singing in the midst of suffering, when outward graces seem few, and even as an act of spiritual warfare. He instructs, “When afflictions sore are pressing us down to the very dust, then is the time to sing psalms unto our God and praise him in the very fire.”⁴² In the lack of outward graces, he beckons, “Sing in the night like the nightingales, praise him in the fires, sing his high praises even in the shadow of death, and let the tomb resound with the shouts of your sure confidence.”⁴³ Finally, he even encourages the church to sing to make Satan angry. With Luther-like summons, he appeals, “He has vexed the saints, let us vex him.”⁴⁴ Spurgeon leaves no room for any who are in Christ to say they have no song to sing.

“Sing the Ways of the Lord” (1615)

On April 11, 1881, Spurgeon preached a sermon entitled “Sing the Ways of the Lord.”⁴⁵ The sermon text was Psalm 137:5, which says, “Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord; for great is the glory of the Lord.” This sermon shows how Spurgeon engaged with the Scripture, and from it builds a theology of singing from the text. By simply placing different emphases on various parts of the phrase, Spurgeon teaches the church about the nature of singing.

⁴¹ In another sermon Spurgeon reminds his church that they “must not think Christians are wasting time when they pray and praise.” Spurgeon, *MTP*, 51: 310. He continues, “If a little bird has nothing else to do but sing, it has a great deal to do. . . . This is the culmination . . . that we praise God with all our heart and soul” (310).

⁴² Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6: 432.

⁴³ Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6: 432.

⁴⁴ Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6: 434.

⁴⁵ Spurgeon believed that the song of the Christian was not a dutiful task, but a wondrous privilege. He taught that Christians must sing (1) reverently, (2) with personal devotion, (3) with great spirituality, (4) intelligently, (5) enthusiastically, (6) divinely, (7) evangelically, and (8) with devotion. C. H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Expository Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 12: 117-27.

First, he notes, “They shall sing in the ways of the Lord.” Spurgeon calls the congregation into the practice of delighting in the ways of God. He warns them not to go off this sacred path to look for lesser pleasures, but to sing *in* the ways of God and find something to sing while they are in those ways. Spurgeon unites prayer, praise, and singing together as a threefold understanding of means given to Christians in order that they might know and glorify God. He encourages them to be a singing and praying people. He submits, “Song and prayer are like butter and honey, a royal mixture.”⁴⁶ This is not, however, a utopian vision of singing and dancing through life with no strain of suffering. Spurgeon soberly addresses those who are called to difficult service, sickness, and suffering, admonishing them also to sing the praises of the Lord.⁴⁷ “Set no limit to it,” Spurgeon says of singing; for, “Nobody ever does sing the high praises of God too often or heartily.”⁴⁸

Second, the people of God should sing *of* the ways of the Lord. Spurgeon says that this kind of singing is true doctrine and explains, “Not only are God’s ways the place of their song, but the subject of their song.”⁴⁹ He organizes singing of the ways of the

⁴⁶ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 27: 475.

⁴⁷ Spurgeon’s own record of dealing with suffering is well documented. See Brian William Albert, “When the Wind Blows Cold”: The Spirituality of Suffering and Depression in the Life and Ministry of Charles Spurgeon (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015); Peter Morden, “C. H. Spurgeon and Suffering,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 35, no. 4 (2011): 306-25; and Zach Eswine, *Spurgeon’s Sorrows: Realistic Hope for Those Who Suffer from Depression* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2014). With a Calvinistic understanding of God’s sovereignty and suffering, Spurgeon saw pain as a result of the fall and a part of the wages of sin. He also noted that some suffering was the result of the devil’s activity. Biographer Morden explains, “Spurgeon’s focus on God’s sovereignty provided an underpinning for his approach to questions of suffering, an approach in which Spurgeon was able to maintain, firstly, that God was not to blame for afflictions, which were the result of the fall; secondly, that God was still in control, being the sovereign ‘first cause’ of suffering; and, thirdly, that God is still good, limiting the suffering of believers.” Peter Morden, *Communion with Christ and His People: The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), 265.

⁴⁸ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 27: 475. In another sermon Spurgeon exhorts, “Make no excuse because you are ill. Sometimes a little song between the sheets is very sweet in the ears of God, even though it has to be accompanied by sighs and groans.” Spurgeon, *MTP*, 51: 305.

⁴⁹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 27: 477.

Lord under two headings: (1) singing God's ways to the church, and (2) singing of the church's ways which lead them to God. Singing God's ways to the church includes the use of hymns that proclaim the eternal decree of God's council, predestination, the incarnation, the substitutionary work of Christ, and how God has proven himself faithful and true. Songs must also be sung of the ways of believers, which in turn lead them to God. This includes songs that aid in remembering who believers were before Christ, the blessedness of their current journey and disposition, and the security of eternal hope in the beatific vision.

His third application of this Psalm text is that the people of God should also sing *of the Lord of the way*. He calls for singing songs that highlight the attributes and characteristics of God; his lovingkindness, truth, condescension, mercy, and preservation of the saints are brought to attention to show what kind of singing is to be conducted. The verse of interest is set in the broader context of Psalm 137 as these themes mentioned are those highlighted by the Psalmist as he praises God in song. Spurgeon believes that the content of the songs of God's people must have a theocentric quality, praising God for his attributes and ways.

The final observation is that the church shall sing *to* the Lord of the way, as well as *of* the Lord of the way. Spurgeon lifts singing to its ultimate aim, and warns, "Oh, brethren, let us take care that all our songs are to the honor and praise of God, for if we ever sing to our own praise it will be idolatry."⁵⁰ From another sermon addressing singing, he explains,

They [Christians] do not make melody for human ears, but unto the Lord. "The Lord is my song." Then I ought always to sing, and if I sing my loudest, I can never reach the height of this great argument, nor come to the end of it. This song never changes. If I live by faith my song is always the same, for "the Lord is my song." Our song unto God is God Himself. He alone can express our most intense joy. O

⁵⁰ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 27: 483.

God, You are my exceeding joy. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, You are my hymn of everlasting delight.⁵¹

The theme of theocentric singing is replete in Spurgeon's theology of singing. He never takes his eyes off of his Savior. Even when he explains his own experience of communion with God, he casts his accounts in a way that would draw the attention and affection of his hearers unto God. Spurgeon believed ultimately that singing was designed for this great purpose: magnifying the greatness of God. This is the chief end of singing the ways of the Lord.

“The Minstrel” (1612)

In an exposition of 2 Kings 3:5 titled “The Minstrel,” the preacher displays how beneficial the presence of song can be for the people of God. He shows the example of David playing music for King Saul and ministering to him through song, and notes the power of song to help lift the spirits of other Christians. He calls the church to the practice of singing with the aim of mutual encouragement, but also with gentle humor warns those who cannot sing:

Those with cracked voices would be kind if they would not sing quite so loudly in the congregation, for they grievously disturb other people; but they might get alone and have good times with themselves, where nobody could complain of their strong voices and lusty tones.⁵²

Spurgeon identifies personally with the need of encouragement through singing. He recalls a time when a certain lie had been waged against him and had sunk his spirit to despair. He then recalls how singing ministered to his soul and caused his heart to again recount the faithfulness of God: “Well, I went alone awhile, and sung over to myself in my own poor way. . . . By that means the sting was removed, and I felt merry

⁵¹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 31: 598.

⁵² Spurgeon, *MTP*, 27: 441.

again.”⁵³ Here is an example of the way singing for edification ministered personally to the pastor in his times of need for his own edification, even if this example is that of personal singing.

Singing with Spurgeon

In the forward to *Our Own Hymn-book* Spurgeon acknowledged, “Our congregation has distinct features which are not suited for every compilation, not indeed by any known to us.”⁵⁴ The distinct features that this statement acknowledges could be drawing out one of multiple characteristics: the unique influence of the church, the swell of the congregation, the historically informed manner of its services, or its evangelistic tenor. While some of the qualities that shaped their congregation would not have been irregular, the binding of these factors certainly made the worship service of the Tabernacle unique in its day; specifically, in its philosophy of singing. John Curwen agrees, stating, “But the congregation is a special one from its size and the spell which Mr. Spurgeon’s voice and presence exert upon it.”⁵⁵ Spurgeon’s influence on the singing, however, did not begin with the volume of his voice in the service, but in his act of choosing the hymns beforehand.

Choosing Hymns

Spurgeon saw to it that he be the one who chose the hymns that the church sang. He saw this as an exercise of the pastor.⁵⁶ At Metropolitan Tabernacle the decision

⁵³ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 27: 441. The hymn quoted is “O Thou From Whom All Goodness Flows” by Thomas Heweis (1792). It says, “If on my face, for thy dear name / Shame and reproaches be / I’ll hail reproach, and welcome shame / If thou remember me.” Spurgeon included the hymn in *OOHB*. Thomas Heweis, “O Thou From Whom All Goodness Flows” (625), in Spurgeon, *OOHB*.

⁵⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, v.

⁵⁵ John Spencer Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music: Chiefly as Regards Congregational Singing* (London: Curwen and Sons, 1880), 426.

⁵⁶ Even as Spurgeon received the initial call to serve Metropolitan Tabernacle as its pastor, he sat down at a desk at Waterbeach to pick out the hymns the church would sing that day from Rippon’s

of what hymns would be sung was not left to a choir director, deacon, or precentor, the pastor himself would pick the hymns the church sang. Spurgeon maintained the practice of arriving to the building early to spend time in prayer and to choose the hymns and melodies to be sung for the meeting; afterward he would then relay the information to the precentor before the gathering would begin.⁵⁷ Hymnologist Louis Benson, whose history of the English hymn was definitive for most of the twentieth century, praises Spurgeon for this close care of the hymns sung at the church. He argues that Spurgeon “deserves mention for the breadth of his studies and his care for the texts of the hymns.”⁵⁸

Typical Spurgeon sermon manuscripts include three hymns handwritten on the outline of a sermon “skeleton” indicating what hymns would be sung on a given Sunday. For example, for “Two Pillars of Salvation” (2,347), Spurgeon preached on Romans 1:24-25. The three points of his sermon were: (1) Christ died for the ungodly; (2) Christ died for us when we were without strength; and (3) Christ died for us in due time. His concluding comments on the outline summarize, “The gospel to sinners is the comfort of saints, the gospel of saints is the hope of sinners.”⁵⁹ Immediately under the conclusion are written three hymn numbers with the tunes that had been assigned to them for the service: 439 REDHEAD, 734 HANOVER, 715 HEMSBY.⁶⁰

Selection. C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography: Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by his Wife, and His Private Secretary (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897-99), 1:317. Also see John Rippon, *Selection of Hymns, from the Best Authors, Including a Great Number of Originals: Dr. Watt's Psalms and Hymns* (London: Arthur Hall, 1787).

⁵⁷ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2: 9.

⁵⁸ Louis Benson, *The English Hymn: Its Development and Use in Worship* (New York: Hodder and Straughton, 1915), 452.

⁵⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, *Facsimile Pulpit Notes: With the Sermons Preached From Them in the Metropolitan Tabernacle* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1894), 8-9.

⁶⁰ Spurgeon, *Facsimile Pulpit Notes*, 9.

Hymn 439 in *Our Own Hymn-book* is “Sweet the Theme of Jesus’ Love!” by Albert Midlane (1864). Lines three and four of verse two were edited by Spurgeon to read,

Love, so vast that nought can bound;
Love, too deep for thought to sound;
Love, which made the Lord of all
Drink the wormwood and the gall.⁶¹

The second hymn was “Be Gone, Unbelief, My Saviour is Near” (734), written by John Newton (1725-1807) in 1779, and also serves the theme of substitutionary atonement in verse 6:

How bitter the cup no heart can conceive,
Which he drank quite up,
That sinners may live!
His way was much rougher
And darker than mine;
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer,
And shall I repine?⁶²

The final hymn for the morning was “My Soul, Arise in Joyful Lays” (715) by Samuel Medley (1789). Verse 3 of this hymn also helps frame the preacher’s text:

When Jesus to my sinful soul
Applies His precious blood,
To pardon, cleanse, and make me whole,
I sing, my gracious God.⁶³

While not every hymn selected was matched so neatly with the Scripture text being expounded in the service, this example demonstrates the way that Spurgeon sought to enhance the preaching of God’s Word with the singing of God’s praises.

⁶¹ Verse 2, lines 3-4 in the original hymn read, “Love, which led God’s only Son, to become the Suffering One.” See Spurgeon’s note in Albert Midlane, “Sweet the Theme of Jesus’ Love!” (439), in Spurgeon, *OOHB*.

⁶² John Newton, “Be Gone, Unbelief, My Saviour is Near” (734), in Spurgeon, *OOHB*.

⁶³ Samuel Medley, “My Soul, Arise in Joyful Lays” (715), in Spurgeon, *OOHB*.

The concept of exercising pastoral care in choosing hymns was an inherited value Spurgeon had received from his grandfather, James Spurgeon (1776-1864) and also the pastoral predecessors of the Tabernacle.⁶⁴ He championed the cause and taught the generation of preachers that would come through the Pastor's College to do likewise. In one of his *Lectures* he exhorts his students to take the entirety of the service with great intentionality and sobriety. He warns,

I trust, my brethren, that we all feel very deeply the importance of conducting every part of divine worship with the utmost possible efficiency. When we remember that the salvation of a soul may hang, instrumentally, upon the choice of a hymn, we should not consider so small a matter as the selection of the psalms and hymns to be trifle.⁶⁵

Spurgeon was not hinting at the power of hymn singing as a salvific agent. Rather, he was insisting that these future pastors consider the great importance of the hymns they would choose in shaping and forming the singer and listener alike, ensuring that the hymns be chosen with pastoral care and in this case, evangelistic fervor. This intentionality was not limited to the hymns, but included the entirety of the service.

Congregational Singing

Spurgeon taught that congregational singing was first and foremost meant to be an act of worship to God, and that anything less—or anything man-centered—amounted

⁶⁴ James Spurgeon, grandfather of Charles, was partial to singing the hymns of Isaac Watts regularly. Rev. W. Osborne tells of the time he preached at Stambourne for Mr. Spurgeon, with him sitting in the congregation. While Osborne had intended to sing Watts to please the aged man, he had mixed up his numbers and with every hymn he arrived at some “unappreciated poet.” G. Holden Pike, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Preacher, Author, and Philanthropist: with Anecdotal Reminiscences* (Toronto: S. R. Briggs, 1886), 5-7. Pike reports that the hymns were allowed to be sung, but as the service progressed Osborne could tell the elder Spurgeon was growing irritated with the hymns being sung. Spurgeon told him, “Young man! If you do not want your brains knocked out, you must sing Dr. Watts’s hymns!” (5) Osborne took the advice to heart and a “nod of approval” was given by Spurgeon at the first hymn; by the time the second and third hymn were announced, “former chagrin gave place to extreme satisfaction” (6). Spurgeon told Osborne, “Right, sir, right! I am glad to see you can appreciate the best authors so quickly” (7).

⁶⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2008), 84.

to “idolatry.”⁶⁶ He believed that singing was designed for this great purpose: magnifying the greatness of God. While singing was fixed in this ultimate, God-exalting aim, the penultimate goals of singing were many, not least of which was the act of building up the body of Christ with an emphasis on the congregational aspect of singing. He preaches on these twin aims and declares,

I can speak well of the ways of the Lord *and earnestly stir up all my fellow pilgrims to sing in them*, for they have been good ways to me. Let us march on and sing on! Let us proceed with a step and a song, a step and a song!⁶⁷

He makes the point that a function of the act of singing is building up the other members of the congregation in the faith. This is the same truth the apostle Paul teaches in Colossians 3:16, as the church is encouraged to admonish one another with all wisdom, “speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.”

This work of edification is given to the church itself and is not to be outsourced to any other entity. One movement in the mid-nineteenth century in England was to import professional singers to aid in the worship of the church. Spurgeon despised this practice and boldly judged, “The institution of singers, as a separate order is an evil, a growing evil, and ought to be abated and abolished; and the instruction of the entire congregation is the readiest, surest, and most scriptural mode of curing it.”⁶⁸ Here the need to correct an errant liturgical practice is decidedly evidenced by the preacher wanting to instruct the congregation why this was not an invention to be supported. Spurgeon went on to say that professional singers were “to the grief of the pastor, the injury of the church, and the scandal of public worship.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 27: 483.

⁶⁷ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 27: 477.

⁶⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Sword and the Trowel*, June 1, 1870 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1865–1902), 276-77.

⁶⁹ Spurgeon, *S&T*, June 1, 1870, 276-77.

The participatory nature of congregational singing was never in question for the preacher. He believed and proclaimed tirelessly that singing in the church was meant to be enjoined by all Christians. W. Y. Fullerton records one of the ways this commitment was communicated:

Upon the seat to be occupied by each person is a half-sheet of paper, printed on one side, and bearing the heading ‘Hymns to be sung at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on the Lord’s Day evening, August 11, 1878.’ Under the heading comes the following paragraph preceding the hymns: ‘It is earnestly requested that every sincere worshipper will endeavor to join in the song, carefully attending to time and tune; and above all, being concerned to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.’⁷⁰

Spurgeon’s conviction for congregational singing is clearly stated as he attempts to recover a working definition of the subject. He states, “Let all the people of God praise him. Singing should be congregational, but it should never be performed for the credit of the congregation.”⁷¹ And the church did sing. Curwen comments,

“There are waterfalls,” it has been said, “more beautiful than Niagara, but none so overwhelming.” To yield oneself to the power of this great human voice, to let the spirit sink and rise with the swell of this mighty bosom, is to know the force of human sympathy, and feel the joy that companionship in worship inspires.⁷²

The definition provided by the pastor summarizes his position on the matter well.

Unaccompanied Singing

Congregational singing at the Metropolitan Tabernacle was always done without accompaniment. Spurgeon believed that while the Bible clearly taught that Christians are to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col 3:16), the Scripture mentions nothing of singing with instrumental accompaniment. Commenting on Psalm 33, Spurgeon summoned numerous voices from church history to historically bolster his

⁷⁰ W. Y. Fullerton, *C. H. Spurgeon: A Biography* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1920), 180.

⁷¹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 27: 483.

⁷² Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music*, 427.

position of *a cappella* song. Before delving into the church fathers, a contemporary ally is given. He first quotes Anglican John Mason Neale, who wrote, “It is to be observed that the early fathers almost with one accord protest against their use [instruments] in churches.”⁷³ Spurgeon also quotes Thomas Aquinas (1224/25-1274), saying, “Our church does not use musical instruments as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize.”⁷⁴ Spurgeon then quotes John Chrysostom (c.349-407), “It was only permitted to the Jews, as sacrifice was, for the heaviness and grossness of their souls. God condescended to their weakness, because they were lately drawn off from idols; but now instead of organs, we may use our own bodies to praise him withal.”⁷⁵ This idea of instrument-free singing aligns with classic Calvinistic understanding of the matter. John Calvin had warned, “It would be too ridiculous and inept imitation of papistry to decorate the churches and to believe oneself to be offering God a more noble service in using organs and the many other amusements of the kind.”⁷⁶ Ultimately, Spurgeon agreed with Aquinas and Chrysostom. He concludes,

‘Praise the Lord with harp.’ Men need all the help they can get to stir them up to praise. This is the lesson to be gathered from the use of musical instruments under the old dispensation. Israel was at school, and used childish things to help her to learn; but in these days, when Jesus gives us spiritual manhood, we can make melody without strings and pipes. We who do not believe these things to be expedient in worship, lest they should mar its simplicity, do not affirm them to be unlawful, and if any George Herbert or Martin Luther can worship God better by the aid of well-tuned instruments, who shall gainsay their right? We do not need them, they would hinder than help our praise but if others are otherwise minded, are they not living in gospel liberty? ‘Sing unto him.’ This is the sweetest and best of music.

⁷³ John Mason Neale, quoted in Spurgeon, *TD*, 2: 123.

⁷⁴ Thomas Aquinas, quoted in Spurgeon, *TD*, 2: 123.

⁷⁵ John Chrysostom, quoted in Spurgeon, *TD*, 2: 123.

⁷⁶ John Calvin, quoted in Percy Scholes, *The Puritans and Music: In England and New England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 336. Calvin also comments, “Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law.” John Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms* (Oxford: Talboys, 1840), 1: 385.

No instrument like the human voice. As a help to singing the instrument is alone to be tolerated, for keys and strings do not praise the Lord.⁷⁷

So, how would Spurgeon have interpreted Psalm 150, with the clear command of Scripture to “praise the Lord with the harp?” He believed that the use of instrumentation was not suitable in the “gospel age,” but for a previous dispensation. Nettles clarifies, “Spurgeon did not believe instruments to be expedient but did not see them as “unlawful.”⁷⁸ Though Spurgeon held such a position for his own practice and that of the Tabernacle, he never felt the need to impose it upon others. As the gospel hymns movement spread through America and England alike, Spurgeon welcomed the modern-day revivalist hymn writer Ira D. Sankey to play at the Tabernacle on a week night, though only *a cappella* singing of “solid psalms and hymns, and the grave, sweet melodies of our well-worn tunes” would be fitting for the Sabbath.⁷⁹

The music of the Tabernacle focused on the sound of the congregation. On one occasion, the preacher encouraged those tasked with leading song, “Select not anthems and tunes in which your skillfulness will be manifest, but such as will aid the people to magnify the Lord with their thanksgivings.”⁸⁰ The work of the people was in full view here. Spurgeon’s theology of singing was a practiced theology, which was set on encouraging, exhorting, and teaching through Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, according to biblical command (Col 3:16). This orthopraxy of singing is seen well in the practice of song at Metropolitan Tabernacle.

⁷⁷ Spurgeon, *TD*, 2: 115.

⁷⁸ Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 262.

⁷⁹ Spurgeon, *S&T*, September 1882, 495, quoted in Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 264.

⁸⁰ Spurgeon, *S&T*, June 1, 1870, 276-77.

Precenting and Lining Out

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of Spurgeon's practice of singing, largely obsolete by his time except in Scottish churches, was his retention of a precentor to lead the historic Puritan practice of "lining out" a hymn. "Lining out" was a method of leading congregational singing where a precentor would sing the line first, then the congregation would echo what they had just heard.⁸¹ This was especially useful in places where congregations had little expertise in reading music, or did not have the luxury of having many hymnals.

But Spurgeon not only used a precentor, he first as pastor read through the entire hymn in a specific, deliberate way. Curwen explains how the practice was observed at the Tabernacle from first-hand experience. He records, "Mr. Spurgeon read [the hymn] slowly through, then he announced the tune and read the first verse again."⁸² Spurgeon was careful to read through the entire hymn one time, and then come back and read the first verse again. This was all before even a note was sung by the congregation. Curwen critiques,

But why should the hymns be read twice through? It may help some illiterate people to understand the words, and Mr. Spurgeon's energetic reading may infuse the devotional spirit of the poet among the congregation; but nearly all the hymns are so well known, that these considerations must be of little practical worth. The reading takes up time, and is evidently wearisome to many; besides, it takes away the freshness of the thoughts that are to be uttered.⁸³

⁸¹ The position was outlined in Scottish Presbyterian and reformed churches as a result of the hymns called for in the *Directory of Public Worship*. See Duncan Fraser, *The Passing of the Precentor* (Edinburgh: John Knox's House by W. J. Hay, 1906). "The name given to the leader of singing in public worship at this time was that of "Uptaker of the Psalme." Fraser, *Passing of the Precentor*, 6. This office was conjoined in many instances with that of the "Reader" and in others with that of the teacher of the "Sang Scule," still an important institution in Scottish worship at the time. Ultimately, the position became known as "the precentor" from the Latin *praecentor*. Curwen also details the role of precentor in the Scotch Presbyterian Churches. See Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music*, 141-48, 170-72.

⁸² Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music*, 427.

⁸³ Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music*, 428.

After the hymn had been read, the people stood to their feet as the precentor moved to the front of the platform, and started the melody. Often a pitch pipe would be used to set the appropriate key for the congregation to join in. As Curwen witnessed this in person, at this point in his report he transforms from critic to poet as he describes the force of singing at the Tabernacle.⁸⁴ Spurgeon defended his practice of lining out hymns and objected to the accusation of it being less than useful. He states, “It is wretched to go into chapels and tear through a hymn like mad, while you have no idea what the words may be which they are thus hurrying over.”⁸⁵ He understood the hymns sung were to be a source of doctrinal formation, of theological force, and spiritual nourishment to the souls of his congregation. He refused to let this practice be anything less than serious.

The singing of the Tabernacle was led by a precentor throughout the ministry of Spurgeon.⁸⁶ Mr. Hale served the church as precentor from the time of his adolescence, and when his health began to decline, Mr. Turner took the primary role, according to Curwen.⁸⁷ For the sake of lining out at the Tabernacle, often the hymn was first spoken, then sung by the precentor, and finally the congregation would join in the song. The precentor had a monumental task of attempting to lead a congregation of that size, and even when singing a few notes in advance, it was nearly impossible to direct the power of the voices. Curwen described, “He battles with his Goliath, but it is all in vain, and if he were three or four notes in advance, the people would not quicken.”⁸⁸

⁸⁴ See Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music*, 427.

⁸⁵ Spurgeon, *S&T*, December 1877, 575.

⁸⁶ Curwen offers a report of his first-hand account: “The first hymn on Sunday morning last was ‘God is Our Refuge and Our Strength,’ to the tune ‘Evan.’ Mr. Spurgeon read it slowly through, then he announced the tune and read the first verse again.” Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music*, 427.

⁸⁷ Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music*, 427.

⁸⁸ Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music*, 428.

Even with a precentor, the leadership still fell to Spurgeon. Spurgeon was said to have been the loudest voice in the room leading the congregation in song.⁸⁹ He found no problem interrupting the singing to give directions to either hush the singing to a quiet level for meditative texts, or at other times to sing faster with joy.

One night in the middle of a song he is reported to have interrupted, “Dear friends, the devil sometimes makes you lag half a note behind the leader. Just try if you can’t prevail over him tonight, and keep in proper time.”⁹⁰ When he did so, it produced results that were immediately helpful. Drummond tells,

His voice can be heard above all the others, he holds his own, and is not to be run away with, and in the closing hymn he is as unflagging as in the first. “Now quicker,” cries Mr. Spurgeon, as we reach the last verse; and it is wonderful to notice the access of spirit which this produced.⁹¹

Lectures to Precentors

Perhaps one of the most important sources when it comes to Spurgeon’s philosophy of singing is in the article “How Shall We Sing?” The article was written in *The Sword and the Trowel* on June 1, 1870, and documents some of the pastor’s deep-seated convictions on the matter.

Spurgeon begins his article with a disclaimer, stating that while he and his congregants have “neither the will nor the power to become reformers of sacred music we should like to whisper a few things into the ear of some of our Jeduthuns or Asaphs, who happen to be ‘chief musicians’ in country towns or rural villages.”⁹² Spurgeon offers a footnote pointing to 1 Chronicles 15-16, to give biblical background for the use of the

⁸⁹ Lewis Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1992), 375.

⁹⁰ Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music*, 428; Spurgeon, *S&T*, June 1, 1870, 276-77.

⁹¹ Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 375.

⁹² Spurgeon, *S&T*, June 1, 1870, 276.

names Jeduthun and Asaph, drawing the connection that the role of leading people in song is both a biblical and important role in the life of God's people.

As Spurgeon enters into his instruction he says,

O sweet singer of Israel, remember that the song is not for your glory, but for the honour of the Lord, who inhabiteth the praises of Israel. Therefore, select not anthems and tunes in which your skillfulness will be manifest, but such as will aid the people to magnify the Lord with their thanksgivings. The people come together not to see you as a songster, but to praise the Lord in the beauty of holiness.⁹³

These words point to the primary aim of the people of God in song: to bring glory to God, a glory to be shared with none—the leaders of song in particular. He goes on to remind the singers not to think primarily of themselves in the leading of congregational song, but to consider the needs of the congregation: “Choose such tunes as can be learned and followed by all, that none in the assembly may be compelled to be silent while the Lord is extolled.”⁹⁴ He adds to this prescription a call to simplicity in song:

Simple airs are the best, and the most sublime; very few of the more intricate tunes are really musical. Your twists, and fugues, and repetitions, and rattlings up and down the scale, are mostly barbarous noise-makings, fitter for Babel than Bethel. If you and your choir wish to show off your excellent voices, you can meet at home for that purpose, but the Sabbath and the church of God must not be desecrated to so poor an end.⁹⁵

He continues and carries his methodological persuasions into the tempo and pace of a song, warning that singing not be conducted too fast or too slow:

The time is a very primary consideration, but it is too often treated as a matter of no consequence. Large bodies move slowly, and hence the tendency to drawl out tunes in numerous assemblies. We have heard the notes prolonged till the music has been literally swamped, drenched, drowned in long sweeps and waves of monotonous

⁹³ Spurgeon, *S&T*, June 1, 1870, 276.

⁹⁴ Spurgeon, *S&T*, June 1, 1870, 276.

⁹⁵ Spurgeon, *S&T*, June 1, 1870, 276.

sound. On the other hand, we cannot endure to hear psalms and solemn hymns treated as jigs, and dashed through at a gallop.⁹⁶

After these practical considerations, Spurgeon returns to his aim in writing the article altogether; he wants precentors to understand the importance and centrality of the glory of God in congregational singing. He implores,

May we in the very gentlest whisper beg you to think very much of God, much of the singing, and extremely little of yourself. The best sermon is that in which the theme absorbs the preacher and hearers, and leaves no one either time or desire to think about the speaker; so in the best congregational singing, the leader is forgotten because he is too successful in his leadership to be noticed as a solitary person. The head leads to the body, but it is not parted from it, nor is it spoken of separately; the best leadership stands in the same position. If your voice becomes too noticeable, rest assured that you are but a beginner in your art.⁹⁷

The emphasis that a precentor held in the life of each local congregation would need the ministerial care and oversight Spurgeon encouraged. There would also be need for a Jeduthun or an Asaph in each church to help conduct the singing in a manner worthy of the audience: God himself.

Communion with Christ

Spurgeon believed that the heart was as vital an instrument as the voice when it came to the worship of God. At the heart of singing was communion with Christ. It was in this connection of the heart to the act of worship that a tryst would occur between each singer and the Savior, he explained. To get a sense of the affective emphasis he held in regard to song, one must consider again the terms Spurgeon used in his summary of what biblical singing is meant to be. The adjectives he employs are rich with affective language: joyful, hearty utterance of praise, delightful, and adoration.⁹⁸ Spurgeon

⁹⁶ Spurgeon, *S&T*, June 1, 1870, 276.

⁹⁷ Spurgeon, *S&T*, June 1, 1870, 276.

⁹⁸ Spurgeon, *TD*, 4: 306.

believed it was not true singing if the heart was not involved. He would have agreed wholeheartedly with his mentor Isaac Watts, who taught,

The Great God values not the service of men, if the heart be not in it: The Lord sees and judges the heart; he has no regard to outward forms of worship, if there be no inward adoration, if no devout affection be employed therein. It is therefore a matter of infinite importance, to have the whole heart engaged steadfastly to God.⁹⁹

Spurgeon emphasizes this notion in multiple places. For example, he states in the *Treasury of David*, “Fine music without devotion is but a splendid garment upon a corpse.”¹⁰⁰ He writes in *The Sword and the Trowel*, “True praise is heart work.”¹⁰¹ Spurgeon echoes again and again the same sentiment as Keach:

Though intelligible Singing for teaching and admonishing others cannot be without the use of the Organical Instruments of the Voice, yet the Essence or Being of Singing consists in an inward spiritual Exercise of the Soul or Mind of Man.¹⁰²

Spurgeon would rather have had the purity of whole-hearted engagement of the people in song more than any visible expression. He preferred “the wild song of the revivalist with the homely street tune, sung from the very soul,” over “the noblest music that was ever penned, or ever flowed from human lips, if the heart be absent, and if the strain be not in accordance with God’s word.”¹⁰³ Singing was distinctly personal for Spurgeon. He says it is “strikingly” personal and goes on to say, “Some of you cannot sing unto God because you have no personal enjoyment of grace from Him, and do not know God for yourselves. Oh, if this is your case, do not let the sun go down until you

⁹⁹ Isaac Watts, *Discourses on the Love of God, and Its Influence on All the Passions. With a Discovery of the Right Use and Abuse of Them in Matters of Religion. Also, a Devout Meditation Annexed to Each Discourse* (New York: J. H. Turney, 1832).

¹⁰⁰ Spurgeon, *TD*, 4: 102.

¹⁰¹ Spurgeon, *S&T*, June 1, 1870, 276-77.

¹⁰² Keach, *The Breach Repair’d*, 121.

¹⁰³ Spurgeon, *S&T*, March 1876, 137.

know this God, and so can offer your own peculiar song to Him.”¹⁰⁴ He modeled the joy and important role of singing in his own life for his people. During one sermon he is so overwhelmed by his subject, he confesses, “I wish I could sing instead of speaking to you of him who was with the Father before all worlds began.”¹⁰⁵ Singing helped articulate the seeming ineffable affections the pastor held for his Lord and his congregation.

He drew a connection between the health of the soul and the song of the Christian, saying, “When we doubt our salvation, we suspend our singing, but when we realize it, when we get a grip of it, when we see clearly the great work that God has done for us, *then we sing unto the Lord who has for us also triumphed gloriously.*”¹⁰⁶ When the topic of singing arose in a sermon, Spurgeon would compel the church to remember the greatness of their salvation, and to sing in response to all that the Lord had done on their behalf by his saving grace. He challenged, “I say again, how can we help singing? How can our joy of heart any longer be pent up? It must pour itself forth in floods of harmony, in tunes of realized salvation.”¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

Singing was a practice Spurgeon enjoyed both in his personal life and his public ministry. One of the ways he shepherded the church he so dearly loved was through the attentiveness, care, and involvement he demonstrated in the practice of hymn singing. This ordinance would serve as a means of expressing devotion, affection, and communion with God. This theology is evidenced in his sermons and his practice of corporate worship in the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

¹⁰⁴ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 31: 589-600.

¹⁰⁵ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 27: 445-56.

¹⁰⁶ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 31: 592.

¹⁰⁷ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 31: 592.

Through his sermons he laid the biblical and theological foundations of hymnody that were capable to hold such an important practice. His inclination to preach on singing informed their practice by the Word of God, which was their rule for faith and life. The simplicity and purity of their practice of singing protected them from being tossed about by every wind of modernity that continued to offer new and novel additions and adornment to worship practices. From paid choirs and organs to embellished preaching and prayer books, Spurgeon continued to navigate the present day by looking to the past. More than simply looking back, he pulled the well-worn practices of their shared history into their shared practice of worship. In all of this, he understood singing to be a way to allow the Word of God to dwell in the congregation richly, “teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in [their] hearts unto God” (Col 3:16). Spurgeon believed the heart was the central instrument in his relationship with both God and his people. Curwen’s final comment on the singing of the Tabernacle testifies that no one could doubt that they sang as much from the heart as any congregation in the kingdom.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music*, 430.

CHAPTER 4
REDEEMING LOVE PROCLAIM: SPURGEON'S
USE OF HYMN QUOTATION AS
A HOMILETICAL TOOL

Charles Spurgeon's attachment to hymns began in his childhood when he was living with his grandparents and attending school.¹ His grandfather, James Spurgeon, had a deep love of hymns, especially favoring the work of Isaac Watts.² James Spurgeon wrote hymns that were sung in the church in which he served as pastor at Stambourne. While he may have loved reading and singing hymns, Spurgeon spoke bluntly of his grandfather's own work: "We dare not quote even a verse."³ He explains that the elder Spurgeon had difficulty writing hymns in meter, but somehow that did not deter him from continuing to write them. While the poetic quality of his grandfather's hymns may not be praise-worthy, Spurgeon defends their veracity when he writes, "We could quote every line before the Westminster Assembly, and never fear that a solitary objection would or could be raised."⁴

Both of Spurgeon's grandparents played a role in the cultivation of his love for hymnody. He recounts from his childhood the influence of each of them:

During one of my many holidays at Stambourne, I had a varied experience which I am not likely to forget. My dear grandfather was very fond of Dr. Watts's hymns, and my grandmother, wishing to get me to learn them, promised me a penny for each one; that I should say to her perfectly. I found it an easy and pleasant method of earning money, and learned them so fast that grandmother said she must reduce the price to a halfpenny each,

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography: Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by his Wife, and His Private Secretary* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897-99), 1: 13-24.

² Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 43.

³ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 41.

⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 41.

and afterward to a farthing, if she did not mean to be quite ruined by her extravagance. There is no telling how low the amount per hymn might have sunk, but grandfather said he was getting overrun with rats, and offered me a shilling a dozen for all I could kill. I found, at the time, that the occupation of rat-catching paid me better than learning hymns, but I know which employment has been the more permanently profitable to me.⁵

Learning hymns at such a young age proved to have been a much more profitable employment for Spurgeon, for it was in the memorizing of hymns that he was able to then recall them throughout his preaching ministry. “No matter on what topic I am preaching,” Spurgeon said, “I can even now, in the middle of any sermon, quote some verse of a hymn in harmony with the subject. The hymns have remained with me.”⁶ The investment of hymnody made in Spurgeon’s life became an account he would draw from in preaching as he turned hymnody into a priceless homiletical tool.

This chapter highlights the practice of hymn quotation in the preaching ministry of Spurgeon. Spurgeon viewed the hymn-book as a treasury of illustrations which he used throughout his sermons. This exercise of quoting lyric connected the truths being sung by the congregation to the truths they heard preached. By including hymn-quotations in sermons, hymns were given greater theological exegesis, and sermons were given greater doxological emphasis. In *Lectures to My Students* Spurgeon outlines a list of uses for “anecdotes and illustrations” in the body of a sermon.⁷ This chapter demonstrates that Spurgeon used hymn quotations as illustrations to achieve five purposes: to “interest the mind and secure the

⁵ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 43.

⁶ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 44. Fullerton adds, “I have heard him declare in later days that memorizing the hymns paid the best, for he was able to use them to advantage in his sermons.” W. Y. Fullerton, *C. H. Spurgeon: A Biography* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1920), 11.

⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2008), 491. Spurgeon clarifies, “The use of anecdotes and illustrations are manifold; but we may reduce them to seven . . . not for a moment imagining that this will be a complete list” (468). Spurgeon prioritizes these uses for illustrations: “[They] interest the mind and secure the attention of our hearers, that they render the teaching vivid and lifelike, that they explain some difficult passages to dull understandings, that they help the reasoning faculties of certain minds, that they aid the memory, that they arouse feelings, and that they catch the ear of the careless” (491).

attention” of his congregation, to explain doctrine and duty, to help the congregation to grasp truth through memory, to “arouse feelings,” and “to catch the ear of the careless.”⁸

The catalog of sermons preached by Spurgeon over the course of his ministerial career comprises a mountain of expositions. The index of subjects on which he preached contains passages ranging from God’s holiness, the fall, the beauty and work of Christ, and the eschatological hope that awaits the people of God.⁹ Hymnody, which Spurgeon used skillfully to serve his congregation and to navigate the Scripture alongside them, is woven consistently throughout this collection of works; it is rare that a Spurgeon sermon was delivered without the “garnish” of a well-paired hymn.¹⁰

During the course of my research, I compiled a database of every hymn quotation from Spurgeon’s sermons contained in the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* between 1866 and 1875, the ten-year period following the publishing of *Our Own Hymn-book*.¹¹ In order to illustrate the argument of this chapter, I dialogue with the top hymns Spurgeon used in his preaching, summarizing theological emphases drawn from the hymn quotations and connecting the pedagogical nature of hymns to their frequent use in Spurgeon’s ministry.

Interest the Mind, Secure the Attention

In regard to Spurgeon’s view of illustration use in preaching, his rule was to ensure that the sermon contained enough illustrations to help keep the listener engaged in the subject matter of the sermon; but he took care not to use so many illustrations that it would obscure the

⁸ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 491. For the purposes of this chapter, the way Spurgeon used hymns in his homiletics is categorized under his own heading “anecdotes and illustrations.” I reduce his list of seven uses of anecdotes and illustrations to five, providing for the overlap contained in the list Spurgeon outlines.

⁹ For an index of sermons preached by Spurgeon during the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Series*, see Bob Ross, *Textual and Subject Indexes of C. H. Spurgeon’s Sermons* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1971).

¹⁰ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 158.

¹¹ See C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1855-1917); Spurgeon, *Our Own Hymn-book: A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for Public, Social, and Private Worship* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1866).

truth he was setting forth. Spurgeon was wise and skillful in the way he used illustrations, and challenged his students to be mindful of their audience when considering these things. He says,

We must have attention. In some audiences, we cannot get it if we begin with solid instruction; they are not desirous of being taught, and consequently they are not in a condition to receive the truth if we set it before them nakedly.¹²

He also quips, “Garnish your dishes, but remember that the joint is the main point to consider, not the garnishing. Real instruction must be given and solid doctrine taught, or you will find your imagery pall upon your hearers, and they will pine for spiritual meat.”¹³

Spurgeon used hymn quotation as illustrations, to intrigue listeners and capture the attention of his congregation.¹⁴ He believed that this was needed not only during the sermon, but in the course of the entire worship service: “We want to win attention at the commencement of the service and hold it till the close.”¹⁵ The hymns themselves were never Spurgeon’s point; rather, they were mere pointers to the truths of God’s Word and articulations of the doctrines that the preacher held dear. Tom Nettles notes, “He would punctuate his sermons with apt quotes from hymns, sometimes a full verse, sometimes two lines, but always spot-on in their relevance.”¹⁶ This inclusion of quotes was designed to capture the interest and arrest the attention of his audience.

Simplicity and Depth

The hallmark of Spurgeon’s preaching style was the balance he achieved between simplicity of expression and theological depth. While holding to this commitment regarding

¹² Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 469.

¹³ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 158.

¹⁴ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 468.

¹⁵ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 468.

¹⁶ Tom Nettles, foreword to *Spurgeon’s Own Hymn-book*, ed. Chris Fenner and Matt Boswell, rev. ed. (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Heritage, 2019), xi.

simplicity, however, Spurgeon's language was never wooden, but flowery with prose and poetry, clarity and forcefulness. Regarding his simple approach, *The Freeman* reported,

Spurgeon is truly a poet, and without having heard him one cannot even form an idea of the richness and power of his conceptions, and thus, too, without even swerving from the simplicity which befits the Christian pulpit, or the dignity which becomes a minister of Jesus Christ.¹⁷

Spurgeon balanced this desire to secure the attention of his hearers by using simple language to see it accomplished. He sought to avoid any hint of pretense in his sermon delivery. He mentions, "Some people would impress us by their depth of thought, when it is merely a love of big words. To hide plain things in dark sentences, is sport rather than service for God."¹⁸ Zack Eswine comments, "This plain style finds its origins in what Spurgeon saw as the plain style of the Bible. He sought in his preaching to 'talk in Scriptural language' and to fashion his style upon Scriptural models."¹⁹ Spurgeon implores pastors, "Let your teaching be clear as crystal, but deep as the sea."²⁰ The depth he has in mind is gospel depth, fixed on the person and work of Christ, and preaching that is replete with the Scripture and emphasis on Christ. Michael Reeves adds, "More than simplicity of language, such clear preaching requires from the preacher lucidity

¹⁷ *The Freeman*, March 14, 1860, quoted in Lewis Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1992), 297.

¹⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry: Addresses to Ministers and Students* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1900), 353.

¹⁹ Zack Eswine, *Kindled Fire: How the Methods of C. H. Spurgeon Can Help Your Preaching* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2006), 61. While committing to simplicity, Spurgeon maintained his love for and use of poetry in his sermons, and took the matter quite seriously. He wrote in *The Sword and the Trowel*, "Poetical effusions are for the most part prosy delusions. Good poetry charms us, but limping verses worry us, and we are often worried. Let true poets sing all day and all night, but let pretenders hush How glad we should be if this paragraph would wean some minor poet from rhyming, and inspire him with love to his drapery, grocer, carpentry or bakery! The retail trade is far more useful than wholesale poetizing. Guessing at the dates of prophecy, and making poor verses, are two of them We mean this scrap to be a warning! TRESPASSERS BEWARE! A WASTEBASKET IS KEPT ON THESE PREMISES!" Spurgeon, *S&T*, August 1882, 512.

²⁰ Spurgeon, *S&T*, August 1881, 39.

of thought. He must convey the great truths of God, without simplifying and distorting them, with clarity and comprehensibility. And in this Spurgeon was, perhaps unrivaled.”²¹

Spurgeon’s Use of Sermon Illustrations

In his lecture “Where Can We Find Anecdotes and Illustrations,” Spurgeon teaches his class of future pastors to look for sermon illustrations “even in words themselves.”²² He expounds,

How frequently a word is itself a picture! Some of the most expressive words that are found in human language are like rich gems, which have passed before your eye very often, but you have not had time to handle or value them.²³

Spurgeon saw the lyrics of hymns as portable illustrations that could not only illuminate meaning in the sermon, but could continue to give richer meaning as those very hymns continued to be sung in the life of the congregation. In doing so, Spurgeon put into practice his own advice by finding illustrations “even in words.” Nettles praises Spurgeon for the masterful way he used hymns to this end:

He could call lines from a wide variety of hymns and authors virtually at will and showed a massive and compendious knowledge of Christian hymnody from the Patristic period through the middle of the nineteenth century and they peppered his sermons in appropriate places to capture the poignancy of biblical thought.²⁴

While much has been written on the hermeneutics and homiletics of Spurgeon, the masterful use of hymn quotations within his work has been almost completely overlooked, as has the study of hymnody within his preaching ministry as a pastor.²⁵

²¹ Michael Reeves, *Spurgeon on the Christian Life: Alive in Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 77.

²² Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 505.

²³ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 504.

²⁴ Tom J. Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2013), 152.

²⁵ The only biography containing any review of Spurgeon’s practice of hymn-quotation from an evaluative standpoint is Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*.

Spurgeon saw illustrations as “windows,” which provided refreshment to listeners and helped them grasp the truths they were hearing. He expounds,

Windows, when they will open, which alas, is not often the case in our places of worship, are a great blessing by refreshing and reviving the audience with a little pure air, and arousing the poor mortals who are rendered sleepy by the stagnant atmosphere. A window should, according to its name be a wind-door, through which a breath of air may visit the audience; even so, 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.²⁶

Furthermore, he thought preachers should carry anecdotes and illustrations into the pulpit and use them to fasten people’s attention to the subject of the sermon, thus opening doors to their minds and hearts.²⁷ Spurgeon explains to his students,

You must take your nail, hold it up against the post, hammer it in, and then clinch it on the other side; and then it is that you may expect the great Master of assemblies to fasten the nails so that they will not fall out. We must try thus to get the truth into the people, for it will never get in of itself; and we must remember that the hearts of our hearers are not open, like a church door, so that the truth may go in, and take its place and sit upon the throne to be worshipped there. No, we have often to break open the doors with great effort, and to thrust the truth into places where it will not at first be a welcome guest, but where, afterwards, the better it is known, the more it will be loved.²⁸

This very idea informed Spurgeon’s methodology of hymn quotation. He wanted to get the “truths into the people” by taking something they would have already heard in song, and then surprise their attention by quoting a hymn. In this way, the congregation would be able to receive the truths of Scripture. Sometimes Spurgeon would quote a hymn following a strong

²⁶ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 436.

²⁷ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 490. He contextualizes his advice by adding, “A congregation which has been well instructed, and is mainly made up of established believers, will not need to be addressed in the same style as an audience gathered fresh from the world, or a meeting of dull, formal churchgoers. Your common-sense will teach you to suit your manner to your audience” (469).

²⁸ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 490.

point, and at other times a quote would precede his point, but at all times he hoped to maintain the attention of the people.²⁹

Use of Hymn Quotation to Explain Doctrine and Christian Duties

Spurgeon used hymn quotations as illustration that explained both the doctrines of the faith and the duties fit for a follower of Christ. He understood the need to use stories and imagery to help enlighten people with “dull understandings.”³⁰ He teaches,

They may, in fact, be the very best form of exposition. A preacher should instance, and illustrate, and exemplify his subject, so that his hearers may have real acquaintance with the matter he is bringing before them.³¹

Spurgeon desired to give examples and illustrations that best framed the subject at hand and to shine the spotlight on the main ideas of a passage so that the people would have clear biblical understanding. Spurgeon had no intent to try to illustrate or elaborate on the peripheral points of a sermon, but sought to provide imagery that would frame his main themes.³² When Spurgeon injected a hymn quotation into his sermon, he was intentionally garnishing the main tenets of his passage and wanting to explain them so that his hearers will have a firm grasp on the truths of God’s Word.

In order to show the importance of illustration, Spurgeon *provides* an illustration to further prove his point. He explains that if a man were attempting to describe a piece of machinery to another person, it would be very difficult to describe the nuance and specifics of that machine, including what it looked like and the function it performed simply by describing it.

²⁹ For an example of a hymn quotation preceding a doctrinal explanation, see Spurgeon, *MTP*, 19: 353. Spurgeon quotes “O Happy Day that Fixed My Choice” (658) by Philip Doddridge. For an example of a hymn quotation after a doctrinal truth, see Spurgeon, *MTP*, 21: 380; he quotes “Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken” (659) by Henry Lyte.

³⁰ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 476.

³¹ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 476.

³² Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 444.

However, if that same man provides a picture of the machine he wants to describe, the listener would easily be able to understand what he was talking about.³³ Spurgeon used hymns to help create pictures of the doctrinal truths he was preaching.

Spurgeon also used hymns to bring the high doctrines of the faith down to a level in which any person could reach and be fed by truth. William Williams complements Spurgeon's ability to do this, recalling Spurgeon say, "Christ said, 'Feed my sheep. . . . Feed my lambs.' Some preachers, however, put the food so high that neither lambs nor sheep can reach it. They seem to have read the text, 'Feed My giraffes.'" ³⁴ After reading a passage of Scripture, Spurgeon would exposit the text in the best of his prose and then to further help his congregation grasp the doctrine in a different way, he would quote a hymn in order to make the doctrine sing. In doing so, the combination of doxology and theology are seen in the same act. Spurgeon exercised his homiletical commitment to explaining through illustration, and used hymns to assist in explaining the doctrines of the Christian faith, as well as the duty of Christian service.

"Rock of Ages"

The great hymn "Rock of Ages" (552) by Augustus Toplady was never far from the thoughts of Spurgeon, and frequently appeared in his sermons.³⁵ The hymn is brimming with Christological truth that is not merely mental ascent but truth which is also personally experienced.³⁶ Spurgeon quoted multiple stanzas of the hymn in various applications, yet in each

³³ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 476.

³⁴ William Williams, *Personal Reminiscences of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1895), 145.

³⁵ Augustus Toplady, "Rock of Ages" (552), in Spurgeon, *OOHB*.

³⁶ Spurgeon held Christ as "Scripture's great theme" and "the bridegroom that the servants are sent forth to make known." Spurgeon, *MTP*, 57:496. He says of preaching Christ, "I would never preach a sermon—the Lord forgive me if I do—which is not full to overflowing with my Master, I know one who said I was always on the old string, and he would come and hear me no more; but if I preached a sermon without Christ in it, he would come. Ah! he will never come while this tongue moves, for a sermon without Christ in it—a Christless sermon! A brook without water; a cloud without rain; a well which mocks the traveler; a tree twice dead, plucked up by the root; a sky without a sun; a night without a star. It were a realm of death—a place of mourning for angels and laughter for devils." Spurgeon, *MTP*, 10:139. Before concluding his point on illustrating truths of doctrine, he insists, "Many

use his aim was to magnify the greatness of Christ and highlight the grace of God alone to save sinners.

In the sermon “A Serious Remonstrance” (892) Spurgeon appeals to the unconverted by striving to make them see their great need for salvation.³⁷ Showing the pride of man’s heart, he aims to disarm a self-righteousness person who may be tempted to perform works of righteousness assuming them to be strong enough to cover past sins.³⁸ He asks his listener,

Suppose you could do some great thing, which I am sure you cannot, were it possible that you could from henceforth be perfect, and never sin again in thought, or word, or deed, still how would you be able to atone for your past delinquencies? Shall I call for a resurrection in that graveyard of your memory? Let your sins start up for a moment and pass in review before you. Ah, they may well frighten you.³⁹

At this juncture, Spurgeon asks his people to consider the sins of their youth, their midnight sins, their mid-day sins, those sins against light and knowledge, sins of the body. He says, “You have forgotten them, you say, but God has not. Behold the file! They are all placed there, all registered in God’s day-book, not one forgotten, all to be read against you in the day of judgment.”⁴⁰ He presses further and asks how the whole of the sinners’ offenses can be blotted out as they stand before the all-knowing God. After this sweeping build that aims to show the guilty the extent of their wrongs, Spurgeon anticipates the remorse of wrongdoing. To ensure that his listeners do not stop at worldly sorrow but actually arrive at godly remorse, he quotes

Toplady’s hymn:

Could your tears forever flow,
Could your zeal no respite know,

preachers find the greatest difficulty in getting suitable metaphors to set forth simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 478.

³⁷ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 15: 529.

³⁸ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 15: 533-35.

³⁹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 15: 535.

⁴⁰ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 15: 535.

All for sin could not atone,
Christ must save, and Christ alone.

In the sermon “Christ Made a Curse For Us” (873) Spurgeon preaches through Galatians 3:13, teaching on the inability of the Law to save, but the good and proper use of the Law to teach sinners their need for the grace of Christ.⁴¹ At the conclusion of the sermon, Spurgeon summons the lost to lay down all forms of works righteousness, and instead to come and take up the righteousness of Christ.⁴² He pleads with them to renounce any and all ways in which they have sought to gain acceptance with God on their own, to humble themselves, and to take Jesus Christ to be “the beginning and the end of your salvation.”⁴³

Spurgeon illuminates this truth by proclaiming that if the sinner will trust in the work of Christ alone he will be saved. If he believes he will live and not bear the curse of sin on his own. What follows is perhaps one of the most impassioned pleas Spurgeon makes as a preacher, imploring sinners to turn to Christ:

See, he hangs upon the cross; his arms are open wide, and he cannot close them, for the nails hold them fast. He tarries for thee; his feet are fastened to the wood, as though he meant to tarry still. O come to him! His heart has room for thee. It streams with blood and water; it was pierced for thee. That mingled stream is—
Of sin the double cure,
To cleanse *thee* from its guilt and power.⁴⁴

By quoting the hymn, Spurgeon edits the lyric to powerfully apply the words to his listener. The original couplet reads, “Be of sin the double cure, Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”⁴⁵ The edit personalizes the efficacy of the blood of Christ to cleanse from the guilt and power of sin to the sinner as an invitation, if only the person would believe upon Christ. In this manner, hymns serve as miniature explanations of doctrinal truths that help to emphasize a point.

⁴¹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 15: 301.

⁴² Spurgeon, *MTP*, 15: 311.

⁴³ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 15: 311.

⁴⁴ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 15: 311.

⁴⁵ Toplady, “Rock of Ages” (552).

Explaining Duty

Spurgeon also used hymns to help illustrate the reality of Christian duties. Gathering other voices to help reinforce his calls to action, he quotes the hymns of experienced saints, commending their faith and their lives of faith, which resonates in their songs. He commends the habit of quoting seasoned saints:

What deep things some of them can teach to us younger men! What instances God's poor people can narrate of the Lord's providential appearances for them; how they glory in his upholding grace and his faithfulness to his covenant! What fresh light they often shed upon the promises, revealing meanings hidden from the carnally wise, but made clear to simple hearts!⁴⁶

Spurgeon used hymn quotations to help the church understand their duties as the people of God in both a positive and negative manner. This habit is evidenced in the “final manifesto” written by Spurgeon, titled “The Greatest Fight in the World.”⁴⁷ This treatise was written just months before Spurgeon became incapacitated. Developing the metaphor of the church militant, this work focused on the believer's armory (the Scripture), army (the Church), and strength (the Holy Spirit). With these final words of address, he delivers a clarion call to the church to return to its original mandate from its commander Jesus Christ: “We want a people who will not forever sing:

We are a garden walled around
Chosen and made peculiar ground
A little spot enclosed by grace
Out of the world's wild wilderness.”⁴⁸

The beloved hymn of Watts, “We Are a Garden Walled Around” (995), was rich in ecclesial imagery, but at the same time lacked any consideration of the walls of the garden expanding as the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. Spurgeon leans

⁴⁶ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 214.

⁴⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Greatest Fight in the World: The Final Manifesto*, rev. ed. (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Heritage, 2014).

⁴⁸ Spurgeon, *Greatest Fight in the World*, 100.

against an inward-looking reading of the text by insisting, “It is good verse for occasional singing, but not when it comes to mean, ‘We are very few, and we wish to be.’ No, no, brethren! We are a little detachment of the King’s soldiers detained in a foreign country upon garrison duty.”⁴⁹

Spurgeon aimed throughout this ministry, but especially in his final impassioned address, to shake the church out of its idleness and into a grand vision of the kingdom of God expanding as men and women come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. He contrasted any lethargic disposition with the missional tone of rescue language, urging:

We are rowing like lifeboat men upon a stormy sea, and we are hurrying to yonder wreck, where men are perishing. If we may not draw that old wreck to shore, we will at least, by the power of God, rescue the perishing, save life, and bear the redeemed to the shores of salvation.⁵⁰

Finally, he gave his congregation a hymn to sing as a prayer—also a Watts hymn—in order to remind the church of their role in the world:

We long to see thy churches full,
That all the chosen race,
May with one voice, and heart, and soul,
Sing thy redeeming grace.⁵¹

Help the Memory Grasp the Truth

Another of Spurgeon’s motivations for using hymn quotations in his sermons lies in the fact that they help one’s memory grasp the truth.⁵² He explains how a sermon should always be like the countryman’s pocket, full of fish hooks, so that “if anybody comes in to listen to it, he will get some forget-me-not, some remembrancer, fastened in his ear, and it may be, in his heart

⁴⁹ Spurgeon, *Greatest Fight in the World*, 100.

⁵⁰ Spurgeon, *Greatest Fight in the World*, 100-101.

⁵¹ Spurgeon, *Greatest Fight in the World*, 101. Isaac Watts, “The Feasts and the Guests” (944), in Spurgeon, *OOHB*.

⁵² Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 484.

and conscience.”⁵³ Spurgeon understood the way that hymns helped distill theological truths and to help them resound in the hearts of his hearers.

In the sermon “Alto and Bass” (2582) Spurgeon comments on the way Mary’s canticle (Luke 1:46-55) is full of sweet gospel teaching, and how her song is an example of setting truth to verse.⁵⁴ He points out, “Notice how she casts the Truth of God into the form of song—there is a wisdom in this, for we are to teach and admonish one another, ‘in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.’”⁵⁵ Here it is clear that Spurgeon acknowledges the didactic use of a hymn and its benefit for instruction. He then remarks on the connection between singing hymns and the impact they have on helping the listener memorize and internalize the truths being sung:

Truth is never more likely to abide in the memory and to impress the heart than when it is delivered in verse. Both the ears of men and the minds of men delight in rhyme and rhythm—memory grasps and retains Truth more readily when it is put into poetic form than in any other. Therefore they do well who enrich the Church with “Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.”⁵⁶

Nettles remarks on the importance of Spurgeon compressing truth into hymn illustrations as an aid to teach, saying, “Learning from his early childhood days, Spurgeon mastered the art of the quick and intense condensation of theological truth through the quotation of a couplet from a well-known hymn.”⁵⁷ One of the reasons for these “quick and intense condensations of theological truth” was the aim of making the doctrinal point stick to the mind of the listener. While the word count of a half hour sermon would be too much for the memory to bear, a couplet or quatrain of verse would have the ability to linger in the thoughts of the congregation long after the service had ended. In this way, the rhyme and the rhythm serve a great purpose: teaching the truths of the gospel. Perhaps the words of a well-chosen hymn might

⁵³ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 484.

⁵⁴ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 44: 373.

⁵⁵ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 44: 373.

⁵⁶ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 44: 373.

⁵⁷ Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth*, 152.

even resurface in the mind of an unsuspecting church member throughout the week, bringing to recollection the truth that was preached in corporate worship.

“When I Can Read My Title Clear”

If Spurgeon had a secret handbook of illustrations, it was the psalms and hymns of Watts.⁵⁸ In sermons published between 1866 and 1875, Spurgeon quoted Watts hymns an astonishing 337 times.⁵⁹ Of the collection of Watts hymns, one of Spurgeon’s favorite to quote was “When I Can Read My Title Clear” (858). The hymn is a reminder of the eschatological hope that is fixed in the comprehensive care of his Maker, even as the Christian lives amidst suffering and the weight of a fallen world. Verse 1 proclaims,

When I can read my title clear
to mansions in the skies,
I’ll bid farewell to every fear,
and wipe my weeping eyes;⁶⁰

In the sermon “The Sweet Harp of Consolation” (760) Spurgeon seeks to remind the congregation of the hope that they have fixed in God, even amidst suffering and sorrow.⁶¹ Spurgeon announces, “Sometimes my text is a trumpet of alarm, or a sackbut of lamentation, but today it is a harp of sweetest sound.”⁶² As he makes his way through the sermon, he quotes a series of five hymns, serving the twin aims of giving people language for lament while also reminding them of gospel hope. He uses a stanza from “There is a Land of Pure Delight” (875) by Watts, to help “when the mists of depression of spirit hide us from ‘Jerusalem the Golden’ and

⁵⁸ In his lecture “Where Can We Find Anecdotes and Illustrations,” Spurgeon surprisingly makes no mention at all of hymnals as a source for illustrative purposes. See Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 505.

⁵⁹ This number is based on the database I personally compiled during research for this dissertation.

⁶⁰ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 13: 393.

⁶¹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 13: 385.

⁶² Spurgeon, *MTP*, 13: 385.

our eye catches no glimpse of the ‘land that floweth with milk and honey.’” He says, in such a condition,

We linger shivering on the brink,
And fear to launch away.⁶³

He then reminds the church of God’s faithfulness to his people at the Red Sea and the Jordan River crossing, retelling the story from the words of Thomas Kelly, in the hymn “When We Cannot See Our Way” (489):

When we cannot see our way,
Let us trust, and still obey;
He who bids us forward go,
Cannot fail the way to show.

Though enwrapt in gloomy night,
We perceive no ray of light;
Since the Lord Himself is here,
‘Tis not meet that we should fear.

Night with Him is never night,
Where He is, there all is light!
When He calls us, why delay?
They are happy who obey.⁶⁴

Next, he pastors all who tend to forget that Christ stands with them when they cannot see their way. He reminds the congregation by quoting from “Christ Leads Me Through No Darker Rooms” by Richard Baxter. He says, “When you suffer, you suffer not a new pang; Christ knew that pain long ago. As Baxter puts it—

Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than he went through before.⁶⁵

⁶³ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 13: 388.

⁶⁴ Thomas Kelly, “When We Cannot See Our Way” (489), in Spurgeon, *OOHB*.

⁶⁵ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 13: 390.

It is hymns that continue to “impress the heart” with their rhythm and rhyme as Spurgeon holds up the truth that the Lord will bring all of his people safely home. He returns to Watts again, quoting from the hymn “Firm as Thy Gospel Stands” (742):

His honour is engaged to save,
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep.⁶⁶

The final stanza he quotes is given as an aid to help the people remember the presence of God is with them in suffering, always “imparting joy and peace which surpass understanding.”⁶⁷ He expounds on this comforting promise as follows:

In one sense, he is always near us; but there is an opening of our eye, and an unsealing of our ear, a putting away of the external senses and an opening of the spiritual sense, by which the Christian becomes wondrously conscious of the pervading presence of the Most High.⁶⁸

Spurgeon continues to comfort Christians who fight sorrow, and identifies with them, saying, “I have felt it, until it seemed as if the spirit might be crushed, yet at the same time lifted up till the exceeding weight of glory became too great a joy, too overwhelming for flesh and blood.”⁶⁹ He says, “Ah! Then in such moments—

Should earth against my soul engage,
and fiery darts be hurled,
then I can smile at Satan’s rage,
and face a frowning world.

Let cares, like a wild deluge come,
and storms of sorrow fall!
May I but safely reach my home,
my God, my heaven, my all.

There I shall bathe my weary soul
in seas of heavenly rest,

⁶⁶ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 13: 391.

⁶⁷ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 13: 392.

⁶⁸ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 13: 393.

⁶⁹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 13: 393.

and not a wave of trouble roll
across my peaceful breast.⁷⁰

He then summarizes what he has attempted to do with his words; that is, to show Christians how to recognize the faithful presence of God with his people, appealing to them: “I beseech you, let each string yield you music, and pass not over these words hurriedly, for there is an abyss of solemn joy within them if you know but how to plunge into it.”⁷¹

“Arouse the Feelings”

Another reason Spurgeon found hymn quotations useful was their ability to frequently provoke feelings in his listeners.⁷² The feelings he sought to achieve in his hearers was not an emotional high unlatched from the truth of God’s Word. Rather, it was a desire that the congregation would deeply feel the truths that God had revealed in his Word.⁷³ Spurgeon himself always preached best, he found, if he managed to “bathe” or “soak” in his text, that is to let the text soak into him. “It softens me, or hardens me, or does whatever it ought to do to me, and then I can talk about it.”⁷⁴ He believed the truth cognitively and felt the truth affectively. What Spurgeon was praying was that the truths of Scripture would produce a depth of feeling in preacher and congregation alike. He was not seeking “painted fire,” an outward show of manufactured emotion, rather a Spirit-wrought affective impact on the congregation.⁷⁵ Michael Reeves notes,

He wanted not just to comprehend but to feel and share his text’s indignation at sin, its hope in God, its comfort in Christ, or whatever its subject might be. Only then, Spurgeon found,

⁷⁰ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 13: 393. Isaac Watts, “When I Can Read My Title Clear,” (858), in Spurgeon, *OOHB*.

⁷¹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 13: 393.

⁷² Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 486.

⁷³ See Eswine, *Kindled Fire*, 100.

⁷⁴ Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, 124-25.

⁷⁵ Eswine, *Kindled Fire*, 107.

could he find both the right words and tone to accurately convey both the message and the spirit of the text.⁷⁶

On April 29, 1866, Spurgeon preached a sermon entitled “Sweet Savour” (688) from Ezekiel 20:41, which says, “I will accept you with sweet savour” (KJV).⁷⁷ He claims, “Our text seems to me very full of fatness. Its savour will be doubtless passing sweet to those who have grace to appreciate it.”⁷⁸ Two truths are highlighted in his summary. First, believers have the promise that the people of God shall be accepted “with savour”; sinners are accepted through the merits of Christ.⁷⁹ Second, he proclaimed, “We are assured that our offerings will be accepted.”⁸⁰

His first point is a proclamation of the merits of Christ the Redeemer as the only means by which sinners are accepted by the Father. He says, “Whether we speak of the active or the passive righteousness of Christ, there is alike an overpowering fragrance.”⁸¹ He insists it is not the righteousness of man but the fragrance of Christ that is an acceptable aroma to God. Spurgeon nears the end of his point using three hymn quotations to awaken the affections of the congregation, pressing his message into to their hearts. He connects knowing and feeling:

Well, then, when you feel this, will you, in the next place, prize that sweet savour? Speak of it in the highest and most eulogistic terms? You cannot exaggerate when you speak of the virtues and merits of the Redeemer. Set a high store by his person; prize his life, and like St. Bernard, you may say—

Jesus the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast.⁸²

The hymn he quoted, “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee” (786), was at his time believed to be by Bernard of Clairvaux. It is used to help people experience the truths he is

⁷⁶ Reeves, *Spurgeon on the Christian Life*, 80.

⁷⁷ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 241.

⁷⁸ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 241.

⁷⁹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 241.

⁸⁰ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 241.

⁸¹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 242.

⁸² Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 249.

preaching by equipping them with language to express those feelings. He continues to synthesize by highlighting how sweet it is to be assured of the sufficiency of the substitutionary work of Christ. He exclaims, “What a delightful exercise in praise to feel that your praise comes up accepted, because of the incense which he offers!”⁸³

Spurgeon appeals to his congregation never to doubt the acceptance of God because of the merit of Christ, reminding them that once the great atoning accomplishment of Christ has been applied to their lives they cannot be unaccepted.⁸⁴ He encourages Christians,

Notwithstanding all your doubts, and fears, and sins, Jehovah’s gracious eye never looks upon you in your anger; though he sees your sin, and perceives it since he is omniscient, yet he looks at you through Christ, and then sees no sin, for he answers the prayer of that hymn:

Him and Then the sinner see,
Look through Jesu’s wounds on me.⁸⁵

The hymn he quotes is “Father, God Who Seest in Me” by Watts. The words of Watts make personal application to the believers of Christ, assisting them in feeling the doctrine of being hidden in Christ, who has fully absorbed the wrath of God in their stead (2 Cor 5:17).

After quoting Watts, he reinforces with pastoral emphasis what this means for his hearers, attempting to help them feel these truths even more deeply. He holds before them the truths that they are always accepted in Christ, always blessed and beloved, and always dear to the Father’s heart.⁸⁶ Then he instructs them, “Therefore, lift up a song, and as you see the smoking incense of the merit of the Saviour coming up perpetually before the sapphire throne, let the incense of your praise go up also.”⁸⁷ Spurgeon again quotes Watts to plant this truth in their hearts—this time his hymn “Now to the Lamb, That Once was Slain”:

⁸³ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 249.

⁸⁴ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 249.

⁸⁵ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 249.

⁸⁶ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 249.

⁸⁷ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 249.

Now to the Lamb, that once was slain.
Be endless blessings paid;
Salvation, glory, joy remain.
Forever on thy head.⁸⁸

Spurgeon does not aim to elevate the affections higher than the place of the truth, rather he is attempting to press the truth of Word of God into the affections. The Scripture should be the ruling and final authority in the lives of followers of Christ, not the affections. Spurgeon wisely cautions against reliance on any emotion, even sincerity as one's basis for what is true. He explains, "Many persons serve God sincerely, but from want of serving him according to his ordained method their services cannot be accepted. God has given us a Statute Book, let us follow it."⁸⁹ Nonetheless, Spurgeon recognized illustrations as a powerful homiletical tool, which engage the emotions in the hope of drawing believers closer to God, and he used hymns in this way. It is toward this end of arousing the affections that Spurgeon sought to use hymns.

"Tis a Point I Long to Know"

When it came to arousing the feelings of the congregation with illustration, Spurgeon took more liberties in his preaching than he was comfortable doing in the publication of his hymnal. According to Spurgeon's writings, the hymn "Tis a Point I Long to Know," written by John Newton, exerted a powerful influence on the emotional responses of worshippers in its day.⁹⁰ Spurgeon was aware of this hymn's impact of directing the affections of his hearers and decided it not wise to include in his hymnal. He explains,

I did not put that hymn in *Our Own Hymn-book*. I had debated in my own mind about it. I said to myself, 'Ah, well! They will know all about that hymn without my putting it into the book;' and I thought that, if you wanted to sing it, you should sing it alone at home; but it did not seem to me to be a hymn that a while congregation should use. I have to sing it to myself sometime, I am sorry to say. It is an excellent hymn, as expressing the feelings of some of God's people, but it will not do for all of you to get into that state. It is very well

⁸⁸ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 249.

⁸⁹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 250.

⁹⁰ John Newton, "Tis a Point I Long to Know," in *Olney Hymns* (London: J. Johnson, 1797), 119.

for the good wife to have a little black draught at hand when the child needs it sometimes, but to give the whole family the same medicine, might be a great deal more injurious than beneficial. And so it is with regard to that class of hymns; it is suitable to a certain case of diseased spiritual condition, but it would be wrong to suppose of to insinuate that all the people of God, at any one time in a congregation, could be found in exactly the same condition of sad decrepitude of faith.⁹¹

While maintaining this editorial policy, Spurgeon held to a more generous rule when it came to using “‘Tis a Point I Long to Know” in his sermons as an illustration. Between 1866-75, Spurgeon used it seventeen times, making it one of the most often quoted hymns of the decade. In the sermon “Joshua’s Obedience” (796) he used this hymn in the negative sense to steer people away from doubting the assurance of their salvation. Spurgeon warns, “Let us not fall, on the other side, into constant doubting, imagining that we never can be fully assured, but must always be raising the question—

‘Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I his, or am I not?⁹²

In the first sermon of 1874, Spurgeon preached on “Life More Abundant” (1150) from John 10:10.⁹³ While making the point that Jesus has come to give life more abundantly, he turns his attention to those whom he called “spiritual invalids,” who were not experiencing the blessing that has been provided them in Christ.⁹⁴ He explains, “They believe, but their favourite prayer is, ‘Lord, help my unbelief!’ They hope, but fear is almost as fully in possession of their hearts. They have love to Christ, but they often sing,

Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I his, or am I not?⁹⁵

⁹¹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 3: 321-22.

⁹² Spurgeon, *MTP*, 14: 105.

⁹³ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 20: 1.

⁹⁴ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 20: 3.

⁹⁵ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 20: 6.

He was clearly implying that to have this hymn frequently on one's lips would be a marker of spiritual weakness.

The hymn is used again in the sermon "Seeing Jesus" (771), where Spurgeon is expounding the phrase "We see Jesus" from Hebrews 2:9.⁹⁶ The sermon outlines the way that faith is like sight, and how the faith of a Christian ought to be a present grace within one's life. However, the final point of the sermon is that "sometimes our faith, like our sight, is not quite clear."⁹⁷ By way of illustration Spurgeon recalls visiting the house of a friend in Newcastle, from the top floor of which he could see all the way to Durham Chapel, but only on Sundays. You see, on Sundays, all of the furnaces of businesses and factories were shut down and so there was no smoke to obstruct the view. "Ah," said Spurgeon, "We can see a great deal on a Sunday, when the smoke of the world is gone for a little time."⁹⁸ He then illustrates how this is a reality in the Christian life. Sometimes the smoke of sin and worldly cares clouds our sight from the reality of God. He confesses, "There are seasons when we realise that Christ is ours," but also confesses, "there are other times when the same believer sings Newton's hymn, but whenever he does, he ought to sing it alone, for fear anybody should catch the contagion of it—

'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought:
Do I love the lord or no,
Am I his or am I not?⁹⁹

These uses of the Newton hymn show that while the feeling produced by its content was not the sort that Spurgeon hoped would be normative in the Christian life, it did provide language for some Christians in the throes of the struggles of the spiritual life. With pastoral care,

⁹⁶ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 13: 517.

⁹⁷ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 13: 525.

⁹⁸ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 13: 525.

⁹⁹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 13: 525.

Spurgeon sought to use this hymn to communicate feelings of doubt and uncertainty, all the while pointing the congregation back to the solid anchor that is Christ.

“Catch the Ear of the Careless”

The final reason Spurgeon states for using anecdotes and illustrations are “exceedingly useful “is that they catch the ear of the utterly careless.”¹⁰⁰ Spurgeon commented on the parallel condition of spiritual blindness in a sermon: “Man is by nature blind within . . . talk to him of the wonders of creation . . . he is well able to see these things, but talk to him of the wonders Of the person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your description.”¹⁰¹ Therefore, in order to hold forth the glorious truth of the gospel, Spurgeon believed he could not preach merely before the people, but right at them.¹⁰² He instructs preachers, “Let him look straight at them; if he can, let him search them through and through, and take stock of them, as it were, and see what they like, and then suit his message to them.”¹⁰³ Spurgeon used hymns to help awaken the attention and help rephrase the truths he had been preaching with rhyme and rhythm. Hymn quotation was a mode in which truth was more compellingly communicated. Spurgeon said, “We must preach the truths which are likely to lead to conversion, but we must also use the modes of handling those truths which are likely to be conducive thereto.”¹⁰⁴ In this way, he preached right at the congregation, hoping that the Holy Spirit would open spiritually deaf ears and blind eyes.

¹⁰⁰ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 488.

¹⁰¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *New Park Street Pulpit* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1856-61) 4: 236, quoted in Eswine, *Kindled Fire*, 86.

¹⁰² Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 488.

¹⁰³ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 488.

¹⁰⁴ Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 297.

Hymns of Repentance and Faith

In the sermon “The Song of Songs” (1240) Spurgeon preached from Isaiah 44:23, which begins, “Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it” (KJV).¹⁰⁵ After explaining how all of creation sings the song of God’s praise, Spurgeon calls upon the people to join in the song.¹⁰⁶ He then appeals to them,

Let us consider how we sing this song. We sing it when by faith we see the grand truth that Jesus Christ took his people’s sin upon him, and so redeemed them. Understanding this fact, which is the heart of the gospel, we begin to sing for joy. Get a grip of that, my brethren, and hold it fast: your hearts will then sing; you cannot help it.¹⁰⁷

He then turns his attention specifically to those who cannot sing, for they have not believed upon Christ, so their sin remains on them.¹⁰⁸ He calls them to sing and rejoice because salvation is done “by another hand,” for “The Lord hath done it.”¹⁰⁹ He pleads with sinners to listen and to believe that their sin can be blotted out:

You have tried to remove the stain, but all in vain; the scarlet sin abides, and though you were to wash your hand in the Atlantic till you reddened every wave, that blot would never disappear: no infinite power can ever remove the accursed spot.¹¹⁰

Spurgeon holds out the gospel of Christ, saying that the only thing that can make the sinner sing is for them to realize salvation, and that this salvation is available this very moment by believing upon Christ.¹¹¹ He implores the sinners to “drop into his arms” and to “rest in him, trust him, depend upon him, and all is well.”¹¹² He then goes back to his text and calls to sinners,

¹⁰⁵ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 21: 349.

¹⁰⁶ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 21: 358.

¹⁰⁷ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 21: 359.

¹⁰⁸ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 21: 359.

¹⁰⁹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 21: 349.

¹¹⁰ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 21: 360.

¹¹¹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 21: 349.

¹¹² Spurgeon, *MTP*, 21: 360.

“Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it.” Then he cites as an invitation the words of the hymn,

Come every soul by sin oppressed,
There’s mercy with the Lord;
And he will surely give you rest,
By trusting in his word.
Only trust him! Only trust him! He will save you now.¹¹³

The hymn “Come Ye Sinners, Poor and Wretched” (492) by Joseph Hart was often used by Spurgeon to cause unbelievers to think deeply in regard to the salvation of their soul. In the sermon “The Garden of the Soul” (693) Spurgeon preached only four words from Matthew 26:36, “A place called Gethsemane.”¹¹⁴ Spurgeon states his hope to “clear away the mist” from the understanding of his hearers, and “open some of the mystery” to their hearts.¹¹⁵ He seeks to hold forth the wonder of Christ’s passion by pointing the congregation to consider it afresh. He highlights the place of the garden where his burden was so great.¹¹⁶ He emphasizes the fact that the disciples had fallen asleep and only God was attending the prayer of Christ.¹¹⁷ He interprets the cup that Jesus pleads to have removed is not the act of dying, or paying in full for the sins of his people, but the sheer sorrow he felt at the end of his work.¹¹⁸ Next, the agony of Christ is presented—agony that was experienced out of love and compassion for the people he had come to save.¹¹⁹ The last point Spurgeon notes is the Savior’s conquering the temptation in the garden, comparing it with his previous triumph over Satan in the wilderness.¹²⁰ Finally, he arrives at the

¹¹³ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 21: 360.

¹¹⁴ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 301.

¹¹⁵ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 302.

¹¹⁶ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 303.

¹¹⁷ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 304.

¹¹⁸ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 306.

¹¹⁹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 309.

¹²⁰ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 310.

part of the sermon in which he seeks to plead with each listener to behold the glory of Christ. He pleads, “Look at Christ,” and continues, “Brethren and sisters, I should like to speak this to you so emphatically that you would never forget it. Be familiar with the passion of your Lord. Get right up to the cross.”¹²¹

Before concluding the sermon, he shares,

I do not know that I have had a sweeter work to do for a long time than when a few weeks ago I was looking over all the hymn-writers and all the poets I know of for hymns upon the passion of the Lord. I tried to enjoy them as I selected them, and to get into the vein in which the poets were when they sung them. Believe me there is no fount that yields such sweet water as the fount that springs from Calvary just at the foot of the cross.¹²²

After this confession, he leads the church in a meditation of reading the entire hymn, “My God, I Love Thee, Not Because” (788) written originally by Francis Xavier and translated by Edward Caswell.

My God, I love thee; not because
I hope for heaven thereby,
Nor because who love thee not
Must burn eternally.

Thou, O My Jesus, thou didst me
upon the cross embrace;
For me didst bear the nails and spear,
And manifold disgrace,

And griefs and torments numberless,
And sweat of agony;
Yea, death itself, and all for me
Who was thine enemy.

Then why, O blessed Jesu Christ,
Should I not love thee well?
Not for the sake of winning heaven,
Nor any fear of hell;

¹²¹ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 311.

¹²² Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 311.

Not with the hope of gaining aught,
Nor seeking a reward;
But as thyself hast loved me,
O ever-loving Lord!

E'en so I love thee, and will love
And in thy praise will sing;
Because thou art my loving God,
And my Eternal King.¹²³

Following the reading of the hymn, Spurgeon expressed, “I hope that this meditation may be profitable to some tried Christians, and even to impenitent sinners likewise.”¹²⁴ Then, the preacher set his sight on pleading with sinners to turn unto Christ. He hoped that the pictures he had drawn of the Garden of Gethsemane would be seen by some who would trust in Christ, reminding sinners that Christ would save all who trust in him.¹²⁵ “Oh, Rest on him!” Spurgeon pleads, “‘Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool.’ I do not say you shall be saved another day, but you are saved tonight. Look now to him in the garden, on the cross, on the throne. Trust him, trust him; trust him now; trust him only; trust him wholly.”¹²⁶

At the climax of his sermon, in pleading with deaf sinners to hear the voice of their Savior calling out to them, Spurgeon then quotes Hart’s pleading words,

Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.¹²⁷

¹²³ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 312.

¹²⁴ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 312.

¹²⁵ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 312.

¹²⁶ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 312.

¹²⁷ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 12: 312.

Evangelism and Hymns

There is one account recorded in Spurgeon's *Autobiography* of a man who was evangelizing a woman who had been brought to a sense of her sinfulness and need of grace.¹²⁸ He presented the promises of God and the invitation of the gospel, and sold to her a copy of Spurgeon's sermon "The Gentleness of Jesus" (1147) and prayed that God might use it to bring her to faith.¹²⁹

He was elated to see her the following day, with her face radiant with joy. He records how she held the sermon as she read, "Hearts are won to Jesus by the silent conviction which irresistibly subdues the conscience to a sense of guilt, and by the love which is displayed in the Redeemer's becoming the great substitutionary sacrifice for us, that our sins might be removed."¹³⁰ Still holding the sermon she exclaimed,

Blessed be the Lord forever, I have found Him; or rather, He has found me! I am saved, pardoned, forgiven, accepted and blessed, for Christ's sake! Now I know what the poet means,

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling.

Yes, yes! Jesus died for me, and I live through him!¹³¹

The sermon "The Gentleness of Jesus" does not contain the hymn quotation from "Rock of Ages," but something remarkable happens in this account. The quotation of this hymn had been planted in the mind of this woman, and when the glory of Christ was opened to her eyes, and her heart trusted in Christ as her Savior, the truth of Toplady's verse came alive to her. "Now I know what the poet means," she states. The sinner-made-saint understood that she had been saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Toplady's poem was a messenger

¹²⁸ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 3: 164.

¹²⁹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 3: 164.

¹³⁰ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 3: 164-65.

¹³¹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 3: 164-65.

hymn which delivered its sacred subject to its intended recipient.¹³² The report of this fruit must have been cause for great rejoicing in the preacher's heart, since he joined her in confessing,

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the practice of hymn quotation in the preaching ministry of Spurgeon, and surveys Spurgeon's practical wisdom gleaned from his *Lectures*. Hymns were more than merely songs to be sung, but portable doctrinal confessions to help people encounter the truths of God's Word. Spurgeon's use of hymn quotation as a homiletical tool was one of illustration, but more than merely illustration; hymns served as the seal of biblical doctrine on the minds and memories of the congregation. Spurgeon viewed the hymn-book as a treasury of illustrations which were used throughout his sermons. This exercise connected the truths being sung by the congregation to the truths that they were also hearing preached. By including hymn-quotations in sermons, hymns were given greater theological exegesis, and sermons were given greater doxological emphasis.

¹³² Iain Murray points out the way Spurgeon used hymn quotation in an evangelistic setting, in hopes of leading a sinner in a prayer of repentance. Murray explains, "After showing a sinner the desperate need of their condition, he would quote Charles Wesley: O God, my inmost soul convert, /And deeply on my thoughtful heart /Eternal things impress; / Give me to feel their solemn weight, / And trembling on the brink of fate, / Wake me to righteousness." Iain H. Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), 108.

CHAPTER 5

OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK: SPURGEON'S SELECTION OF PSALMS AND HYMNS

On Friday, September 14, 1866, *Our Own Hymn-book* was introduced for the first time to the people of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. That evening Charles Spurgeon addressed the congregation at a special service held in order to celebrate the long-awaited hymnal; the pastor had been working on it diligently in order to serve his church in song.¹ He publicly acknowledged Daniel Sedgwick (1814-1879) for his assistance as a hymnologist.² Spurgeon credited Sedgwick's large collection of hymn-books, which proved so useful in the work of securing correct versions of hymns. Spurgeon also proudly commented on the large number of "Dr. Watts" hymns, stating that many of the best and most expressive of the doctrines prized by the church were omitted by other hymnals.³ He retraced the rich history of hymnody within the Tabernacle, reminding the congregation of Benjamin Keach and the struggles that their forbear endured, in order that hymn singing might come to be a useful tool in the corporate worship of Baptist

¹ "Mr. Spurgeon's New Hymn Book," *The South London Chronicle*, September 22, 1866; C. H. Spurgeon, *Our Own Hymn-book: A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for Public, Social, and Private Worship* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1866).

² Sedgwick was a hymnologist, and a bookseller who developed a specialty for collecting and reselling hymnals. In addition to working with Spurgeon on *OOHB*, he was instrumental in the publication of many other hymnals. An anonymous account in 1893 described the man and his unique store at 93 Sun Street in London. "[His] dingy shop in London used to be sought out by lovers of hymnology from all parts of Great Britain and America. There was a little back room or 'parlor' to his shop, just large enough to hold the tiny grate, table, and a stool or two. The walls were lined with hymn books and hymnological works, two or three deep, and engravings of famous old hymn writers in worn black frames hung over the books. Seated on a three-legged stool, unkempt, unshaven, in much soiled shirtsleeves, with a stumpy black pipe in his mouth, Mr. Sedgwick would discourse of his books, catalogs, indexes, and work." "Hymns, Their History and Development" (review), *The Independent*, April 13, 1893, 24, quoted in Chris Fenner, "Editorial Notes," in C. H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Own Hymn-book*, ed. Chris Fenner and Matt Boswell (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Heritage, 2019), 406.

³ "Mr. Spurgeon's New Hymn Book."

churches.⁴ After these comments, he expounds on the important devotional use a hymnal affords the people of God as they sing to him in worship:

He impressed upon the audience the duty of everyone learning to sing: their children learned to sing: their children learned to play the piano, but if they learned to sing, they would always have their instrument with them. Every family should make singing a part of their morning and evening devotional services.⁵

It was the duty of singing that led Spurgeon to put forth so much effort in producing a hymnal that would serve the needs of the growing congregation. Like his predecessors, Keach and John Rippon, Spurgeon also produced a hymnal for the people of Metropolitan Tabernacle that would give voice to their doctrine and new songs to their Savior. He called this work *Our Own Hymn-book*.

In this chapter I claim that *Our Own Hymn-book* demonstrates Spurgeon's theological convictions and the pastoral philosophy by which he chose the hymns Metropolitan Tabernacle would sing. His hymnal serves as the most notable body of work detailing Spurgeon's theology of singing, for it provides a bound set of songs that were hand-picked by the pastor. I contend that Spurgeon applied his personal experience and knowledge of hymnody to produce a hymnal with theological, pastoral, and practical considerations. In the preface of *Our Own Hymn-book*, Spurgeon summarizes a fourfold outline of the hymnal's editorial features which clarify its unique contribution to the corpus of hymnals: (1) integrity of authorial intent; (2) a breadth of theological themes; (3) the inclusion of gospel songs; and (4) the Psalms of David. These features will likewise serve as an outline of this chapter.

⁴ "Mr. Spurgeon's New Hymn Book."

⁵ "Mr. Spurgeon's New Hymn Book."

The Hymnals of the Tabernacle

The Metropolitan Tabernacle had been using two hymnals prior to 1866:

Selection by Rippon and *Psalms and Hymns* by Isaac Watts.⁶ While the content of the hymnals was satisfactory, the organization of these beloved works left the congregation crippled in their commitment to congregational singing.⁷ Spurgeon comments as to the difficulties they faced, and thus the decision to produce a new work:

Despite the judgment of many to the contrary, we believe that the store of spiritual songs contained in these two volumes is not excelled, even if equaled by any compilation extant, and we should most probably have been very well content with those books had it not been for difficulties connected with the remarkably complex arrangement of their contents. To strangers, it was no small task to discover the hymn selected for singing; for in the first place, there were two books, which was in itself an evil, but the matter was made far worse by the fact that these two volumes were each a puzzle to the uninstructed; Rippon with its parts innumerable, and Watts with first, second, and third books.⁸

Spurgeon treasured *Psalms and Hymns* by Watts, but understood how the arrangement of the hymns proved difficult for the church to navigate. He notes how Watts had his “first, second, and third books,” meaning the three sections by which Watts divided his hymnal. In the 1709 version of *Horae Lyricae*, the sections, or “books,” are outlined as follows: (1) Sacred to Devotion and Piety, (2) To Virtue, Honor, and Friendship, and (3) To the Memory of the Dead.⁹ Thus, within one bound hymnal there were three different “books,” each book paginated individually. Each time a hymn was announced, the singer would not know offhand which book that hymn was located in.

⁶ Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, v; John Rippon, *Selection of Hymns, from the Best Authors, Including a Great Number of Originals: Dr. Watt’s Psalms and Hymns* (London: Arthur Hall, 1787); and Isaac Watts, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs. In Three Books* (London: J. Humphreys, 1707); Watts, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs. In Three Books*, rev. ed. (London: J. Humphreys, 1709).

⁷ Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, v.

⁸ Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, v. The judgment of many regarding the existing hymnals they sang from was in actuality only an attack on one. There had been a movement away from the work of Watts, which Spurgeon thought was outlandish.

⁹ Isaac Watts, *Horae Lyricae: Poems Chiefly of the Lyric Kind. In Three Books* (London: J. Humphreys for N. Cliff, 1709), i. The third section, “To the Memory of the Dead,” are communion hymns focused on the passion of Christ.

Thus, the congregation had to be told which of the three books to look in before they could identify the hymn they were attempting to locate.

By contrast, the issue with Rippon's "parts innumerable" points to the fact that many of the hymns had multiple numbers assigned to them. While one primary hymn number would be clear, two or three other numbers were also given from previous editions for those who did not have the means to acquire the latest edition, so that all would still be able to sing.¹⁰ While this was intended to be of use as the edition was updated, it ultimately confused congregations and proved otherwise. Another arrangement difficulty of Rippon's *Selection* was the way that the Psalms were interspersed throughout the whole of the hymnal, rather than grouped together as a unit. Watts had initially arranged them together at the front of his hymnal. Spurgeon decided it would serve the congregation best to return the Psalms to the beginning of the hymnal, making his arrangement of the Psalms the gateway to the collection of hymns.¹¹

An Example of Hymn Numbering Confusion

Spurgeon himself had long had to deal with the confusion of these hymnals, Watts in particular. On one humorous occasion, while guest preaching at another church Spurgeon had selected a certain hymn from Watts' hymnal; however, the minister was

¹⁰ Rippon, *Selection*, xxxiv.

¹¹ Another consideration requiring a new hymnal was the price at which Rippon's *Selection* sold. Many of the churches being planted through the Pastor's College were committed to using Rippon's *Selection* as had been modeled for them while at the Tabernacle. However, the price of Rippon's hymnal was too high, and an updated and more affordable offering was needed. Also to be considered would be the need of a tune book that could accommodate the church. The release of *Our Own Hymn-book* would eventually produce its byproduct *Tabernacle Tune Book* in 1869. C. H. Spurgeon, *Tabernacle Tune Book: A Companion to "Our Own Hymn-book" with Remarks on Psalmody* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1869). Until 1869 the church had primarily used the *Union Tune Book* as its source for melodies. See Thomas Clark, *The Union Tune Book: A Selection of Tunes and Chants Suitable for Use in Congregations and Sunday Schools* (London: Sunday School Union, 1854). John Curwen adds that a few melodies were also used from *The Bristol Tune-Book* and three or four came from *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. John Spencer Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music: Chiefly as Regards Congregational Singing* (London: Curwen and Sons, 1880), 426.

confused about which of the three divisions in which the hymn was found. Spurgeon recounts,

I had selected a hymn out of one of the divisions, but by some mistake the minister had turned to the wrong part of the book, and before he had discovered his error, he was reading—

When the Eternal bows break the skies,
To visit earthly things,
With scorn Divine he turns his eyes
From towers of haughty kings.

He bids his awful chariot roll
Far downward from the skies,
To visit every humble soul
With pleasure in His eyes.

Those familiar with the hymns of Dr. Watts, know that the last verse begins—
Just like his nature is his grace
All sov'reign and all free.

And when the minister read these two lines, he said, “We won’t sing this hymn,” I felt under the circumstances, the hymn ought to be sung, so I said, “If you please, we *will* sing that hymn; or we will not have any at all if we do not have that one.”¹²

With that, the minister shut the book so that Spurgeon got up to preach. Since the doctrine of Watts would not be sung, he decided to change his text to Romans 9:15: “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”¹³

This account shows that there were practical considerations regarding the need for a new hymnal. However, the decision was not first pragmatically driven, but pastorally motivated. A hymnal that would serve the needs of the congregation in song would also aid the church spiritually in their practice of worship. These factors lit the spark that grew into Spurgeon’s hymnal.

¹² C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography: Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by his Wife, and His Private Secretary* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897-99), 1: 275.

¹³ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 275.

A New Hymnal for the Tabernacle

Our Own Hymn-book was compiled by Spurgeon and first published in 1866 by Passmore & Alabaster.¹⁴ A review of the hymnal in *The Wesleyan Times* reports the amount of work that was involved in the production of this work:

The task at first appeared so formidable that, after more than one attempt, it was laid aside to be again resumed; and when, during last year, considerable progress was believed to have been made, it was again allowed to rest, partly owing to the care and responsibility it involved, when other duties were pressing heavily on the pastor's attention. With the opening of the year 1866, the hymn-book was again taken in hand, this time with a purpose and resolve to allow no other duties to hinder its progress. Six months, we believe, were allotted to the task of its compilation, but it has required nearly eight to complete the book, with all the help which could be obtained from every available and reliable source.¹⁵

Spurgeon's hymnal was a large collection, containing 1130 psalms and hymns in total. Commitment to the project prevailed, and a pocket-sized edition (13 cm) was released in September 1866, followed by a large-type edition (19 cm) in December of that same year.¹⁶ The hymnal was issued with the specific purpose of serving Metropolitan Tabernacle as an aid to congregational singing.

The title of the hymnal alone reveals the pastoral intent and aim of the editor. Spurgeon chose not to call his work by his own name in the manner of Rippon with his *Selection*. He also decided not to bestow it with a theologically descriptive title such as Watts's *Psalms and Hymns*. Instead, he called it *Our Own Hymn-book*. The pronoun contained in the title identifies its audience: this was a hymn-book for the church. The collection of songs was the labor of the pastor meant to be enjoyed by the congregation of Metropolitan Tabernacle whom he so dearly loved. Spurgeon commented that the name

¹⁴ Joseph Passmore served as a deacon in the congregation from before the time of Spurgeon's pastorate. The two quickly developed a friendship, and Passmore would serve as publisher of Spurgeon's works from that time until Spurgeon's posthumous publications were released.

¹⁵ "Literary Notices: *Our Own Hymn-book*," *The Wesleyan Times*, September 10, 1866, quoted in Fenner, "Editorial Notes," 403.

¹⁶ Fenner, "Editorial Notes," 403.

was objected to by some people, but he thought that “most possessors of the book would like to call it their ‘own hymn book.’”¹⁷

The combination of pastoral and practical considerations inspired Spurgeon to pursue the publication of a hymnal that would serve the congregation. He explains,

None of the collections already published are exactly what our congregation needs, or we would have cheerfully adopted one of them. They are good in their way, but we need something more. Our congregation has distinctive features which are not suited by every compilation, not indeed by any known to us. We thought it best to issue a selection which would contain the cream of the books already in use among us, together with the best of all others extant up to the hour of going to press, and having sought a blessing upon the project, we set about it with all our might, and at last have brought it to a conclusion. Our best diligence has been given to the work, and we have spared no expense.¹⁸

Spurgeon helps the reader to understand the work he did evaluating other options before he undertook the commitment to publish a new hymnal. He confesses if there had been an existing hymnal that would have served the congregation well, he would have happily used it.¹⁹ However, he admits that the Tabernacle had distinctive features that made it impossible to find a hymnal suited for them. Included in these “distinct features” were the shared values contained in their singing which included versifications of Psalms, hymns rich in a scope of theological truth, all while pursuing robust experiential communion with Christ.

Spurgeon felt the need to justify the issuing of a new hymnal. He explains that the “features which distinguish this hymn-book are such as to justify its issue, at least in the mind of the compiler, upon whom it has involved immense labour, a labour which has

¹⁷ “Mr. Spurgeon’s New Hymn Book.”

¹⁸ Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, vi.

¹⁹ Spurgeon echoes the same sentiment when it came to the publication of *The Tabernacle Tune Book*. He explains, “The publication of *Our Own Hymn-book* was the occasion of the introduction of several new Tunes into our Services, and these being taken from various collections, and used in conjunction with the old ‘Union’ Tunes, none of the modern publications were found to comprise them all; and in addition to this the practice of singing the old Tunes to the old Harmonies by a large portion of the congregation without books, was an insurmountable difficulty to the introduction of any new book in which the old Tunes were reharmonized.” Spurgeon, preface to *Tabernacle Tune Book*.

been its own reward.”²⁰ In the preface Spurgeon articulated four parameters of his editorial philosophy. First, he desired to use the original versions written by the authors “as far as practicable.” Second, Spurgeon wanted to include a wide breadth of theological themes including “subjects frequently passed over or pushed into a corner.” He provides these examples: “the great doctrines of sovereign grace, the personal Advent of our Lord, and especially the sweetness of present communion with Him.” Third, he wanted gospel-themed songs that could be used as evangelistic tools and would appeal “both to saints and sinners.” Finally, the hymn-book would be incomplete without the Psalms of David. Spurgeon outlines each of these features as evidence of his editorial philosophy as hymnal editor. I will use these features as an outline to highlight each element.

Integrity of Authorial Intent

The first characteristic Spurgeon mentions in his editorial philosophy is his commitment to present the original hymn texts and uphold the authorial intent of the hymn writers where possible. Spurgeon believed that the hymnwriters were due the respect of not having their poetry interpreted, reimagined, or torn apart, but that the hymns should be left in their original form. He explains, “The hymns have been drawn from the original works of the authors and are given as far as practicable just as they were written.”²¹ The custom of republishing hymns without alteration had become so unusual a practice as to be worthy of mention, while the “mangling” of hymns had grown into a system—a system Spurgeon most heartily despised.²²

Spurgeon was not easy on others when they set to editing hymns to help achieve their own ends. In a review of *The Augustine Hymn-book* compiled by David

²⁰ Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, iv.

²¹ Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, iv.

²² *South London Chronicle* also noted that Spurgeon “had endeavored to give the original hymns without alteration, and had also given the names of the composers in full if they were known.” “Mr. Spurgeon’s New Hymn Book,” 6.

Thomas, Spurgeon criticized both Thomas's theological convictions and the editorial philosophy that shaped his hymnal. Thomas claimed an Augustinian view of congregational singing, articulating that "the principle every hymn should be addressed to God."²³ Thus, Thomas took hymns written in the second or third person, or pedagogical hymns meant to teach, and edited them to address God. As a result, Spurgeon grumbles, "Some of the noblest of our hymns are taken from us, and others horribly mauled by Dr. Thomas. But we do not know if he could have done otherwise after having surrendered himself to the dogma from which the book derives its name."²⁴ In the same year Spurgeon was himself finishing editorial process, he also took note of other editors, comparing their philosophies with his own.²⁵

Spurgeon maintained his commitment to leave hymns untouched and unedited as frequently as possible. Where alterations were required, Spurgeon's reasonable insight drove the decision. While Spurgeon's labors may have been multiplied in finding hymns that required the original text to stand unaltered, his load was halved in not needing to spend hours upon hours tweaking and editing the work of other authors.

²³ David Thomas, *The Augustinian Hymnal* (London: F. Pitman, 1866), iii.

²⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Sword and the Trowel*, March 1866 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1865-1902), 140. Spurgeon goes on to explain this reinterpreted practice of editing hymns to be addressed only as praise to God: "Several of these psalms have little or no praise in them, and were not addressed directly to the Most High, and yet were to be sung in public worship; which is a clear indication that the theory of Augustine lately revived by certain hymn-book makers, that nothing but praise should be sung, is far more plausible than scriptural. Not only did the ancient Church chant hallowed doctrine and offer prayer amid her spiritual songs, but even the wailing notes of complaint were put into her mouth by the sweet singer of Israel who was inspired of God. Some persons grasp at any nicety which has a gloss of apparent correctness upon it, and are pleased with being more fancifully precise than others; nevertheless it will ever be the way of plain men, not only to magnify the Lord in sacred canticles, but also, according to Paul's precept, to teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts unto the Lord." C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1869-85), 1: 179.

²⁵ Spurgeon was not impossible to please as a hymnal critic, however. In 1866, the same year his own hymnal was released, he reviewed *The Praise Book, or Hymns of Praise with accompanying Tunes*. See William Reid, ed., *The Praise Book, or Hymns of Praise with accompanying Tunes* (London: James Nisbet, 1866). Spurgeon praised the work, saying, "This magnificent volume has no rival, at least we know of none published in England. It is a standard book, both as to hymns and music. We fear that it will never remunerate the author, but it will abundantly reward the purchaser. It is a sign of good times when such a book can be produced, for revived religion is always indicated by a revival in sacred song." Spurgeon, *S&T*, September 1866, 428.

When to Edit

While not neglecting his commitment to maintain authorial intent, Spurgeon did at times assume the role of hymn-tinkerer. He clarifies when it was deemed appropriate to edit hymns in the process: “The very few alterations which we have personally made are either grammatical corrections or emendations which seemed to be imperatively demanded by the interests of truth, or were necessary in order to change the metre into such as could be sung.”²⁶

An example of such commitment to authorial intent is found in the rendering of “On Jordan’s Stormy Banks I Stand,” written by Samuel Stennett in 1795. The hymn was originally featured in Rippon’s *Selection*, but was later revised when editors disapproved of calling the banks of the Jordan river stormy. Rather, the word was changed to represent a more literal reading; in the hymnal *The Christian Psalmist* (1850), the text is changed to read “On Jordan’s Rugged Banks.”²⁷ Thomas Armitage passionately writes of the change,

Forgetting that Stennett alluded to the Jordan at Jericho, described in Joshua 3, its compilers mistook him as describing its literal banks for what they contain, namely waters in vehement commotion, so they tamed him down to their own conceptions . . . American compilers have retained this mamby-pamby innovation, for which they might as well have used *stony* banks, or *muddy* banks.²⁸

An instance where the overseer was also editor was hymn 1020, “Great King of Zion Now.” Originally written in 1787 by Benjamin Francis, Spurgeon altered stanza 1, thereby changing the commonly-known title. Originally, Francis had written the following:

²⁶ Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, viii.

²⁷ Silas White Leonard and Augustus D. Fillmore, *The Christian Psalmist: A Collection of Tunes And Hymns, Original And Selected, for the Use of Worshipping Assemblies, Singing And Sunday Schools. Rev. and greatly enl. by S. W. Leonard*. Louisville: S. W. Leonard, 1854.

²⁸ Thomas Armitage, *A History of the Baptists: Traced by Their Vital Principles and Practices* (Paris, AR: Baptist Standard Bearer, 2001), 565.

Then, King of glory, come
And with Thy favor crown
This temple as Thy dome,
This people as Thy own.

Spurgeon rewrote the entire stanza, altering each line that Francis had previously penned:

Great King of Zion now,
Display Thy matchless grace;
In love the heavens bow,
With glory fill this place.²⁹

The theological emphasis of the editorial work does not reflect any significant theological alterations. The theme of the transcendent God condescending to his people in humility remains consistent in both renderings. Spurgeon prefers to lose the theme of favor, highlighting instead the doctrines of grace and love. Further, he omits “crown” and “dome,” placing a heavier emphasis on condescension with the word *bow*. He also uses the poetic device of *inclusio* to round out the idea of God’s glory from first to last. Perhaps he thought these themes should be stronger, though he may have simply preferred a more poetic emphasis than Francis had originally written.

Spurgeon would go on to edit hymns sparingly. The most extensive example of his editorial work is perhaps seen in his revisions of one of his favorite hymns, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name,” written originally by Edward Perronet in 1779-80. The version included in *Our Own Hymn-book* reflected the editorial work of John Rippon, who is credited as the author of verses 5 through 7. Spurgeon rewrote most all of the hymn in 1870, leaving only verse 1 in its original state. From there he rewrote the entirety of the original text adding eight more verses. The final version of the hymn is included in

²⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, “Great King of Zion Now” (1020), in *OOHB*. Fenner notes, “Francis’ original hymn begins, ‘In sweet exalted strains.’ A note in Rippon’s *Selection* states, ‘Sung on opening the meeting house at Horsley, Gloucestershire, September 18, 1774, and also at the opening of the new meeting house at Downend, near Bristol, October 4, 1786.’” Fenner, editorial notes on “Great King of Zion Now” (1020), in *Spurgeon’s Own Hymn-book*.

the *Supplement to Our Own Hymn-book* of 1898.³⁰ The *Supplement* provided headings throughout the hymn which provided instruction on who was meant to sing each verse. Stanzas 1 and 2 are to be sung by all believers, 3 and 4 by men's voices, 5 and 6 by women's voices, 7 and 8 by children and the orphans, and finally stanza 9 is "to be sung by all."³¹

Spurgeon edited or added to a number of other hymns in the hymnal. There are five hymns marked with Spurgeon as contributor included in the *Hymn-book*.³² Out of the 1160 total hymns included, Spurgeon saw fit only to edit a handful. As an editor, he stood firm against the practice of his day and fulfilled his vision of allowing the authors to speak unhindered in their work.

A Breadth of Theological Themes

The second feature of *Our Own Hymn-book* was the breadth of theological themes Spurgeon hoped to give the church to sing. Spurgeon desired that the hymnal of the church might reflect and articulate the scope of its own doctrinal convictions. He committed to singing the whole truth of what the church believed, not merely what was convenient and easy to sing.³³ Opting to include themes "frequently passed over or

³⁰ Edward Perronet, "All Hail the Power of Jesus Name" (1124), ed. C. H. Spurgeon, in Metropolitan Tabernacle, *Supplement to Our Own Hymn-Book: A Collection of Hymns for Public, Social, and Private Worship* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1898). Spurgeon explains, "In the year 1898, a Supplement was issued, containing 300 additional hymns; and, providentially, it was ready for use just when the Tabernacle congregation had need of new hymn-books to replace: the many that had been burned in the fire which wrought such terrible destruction in their great house of prayer. The new selection closely follows the lines laid down for the former one, and includes many of the best psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; that have been composed during the last thirty years." Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 3: 322.

³¹ Perronet, "All Hail the Power of Jesus Name" (1124), in MT, *Supplement*.

³² These hymns list Spurgeon as a contributor: "Woe's Me That in Mesecham" (120); "Why Should I Sorrow More" (632); "Come, Ye Who Bow to Sovereign Grace" (923); "Great King of Zion, Now" (1020); and "God, Before Whose Radiant Throne" (1022).

³³ Spurgeon elaborates on his commitment not only to a breadth of theological themes, but a range of human emotion as well: "If any object that some of the hymns are penitential or doctrinal, and therefore unfit to be sung, we reply that we find examples of such in the Book of Psalms, which we have made our model in compiling our work; there we have Maschils as well as hosannas, and penitential odes as well as hallelujahs." Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, v.

pushed into a corner,” Spurgeon selected hymns on the themes of “sovereign grace,” a doctrine prized in Particular Baptist theology, as well as the incarnation of Christ, and communion with Christ.³⁴

The subject index located in *Our Own Hymn-book* outlines 14 major headings and 46 subheadings, totaling 60 topics in total.³⁵ Three primary categories divide Spurgeon’s work, highlighting the Christian life, the person and work of Christ, and public worship. These topics account for over half of the entire hymnal. Spurgeon often spoke of the compilation of *Our Own Hymn-Book* as having been a great means of grace to his own soul, especially when he was selecting the hymns in praise of the Lord Jesus.³⁶ To fulfill his promise of singing the “sweetness of present communion with Christ,”³⁷ the hymn-book includes an entire section of 66 hymns under the heading, “The Golden Book of Communion with Jesus.” Here this doctrine of a deep and abiding love for Christ is expressed in song.

A Breadth of Hymn-Writers

In an attempt to produce a hymnal with a breadth of theological themes, Spurgeon also decidedly included a breadth of hymn-writers. This desire for an ecumenical hymnal was not unique to Spurgeon, even as a Particular Baptist. His predecessor, Rippon, employed a similar philosophy in editing his *Selection*, including hymns from across denominational and ecclesial lines.

³⁴ Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, iv.

³⁵ The titles given each subject and their representative number of hymns are as follows: The Spirit of the Psalms (150), The Adorable Trinity in Unity (20), God the Father (70), Our Lord Jesus (195), The Work of Grace as a Whole Work (18), The Holy Spirit (23), Man (8), The Holy Scriptures (5), The Gospel (85), The Christian Life (312), State of the Lost (3), The Church (68), The Lord’s Day (16), and Public Worship (155).

³⁶ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 3: 321.

³⁷ Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, iv.

In his curation of hymns, Spurgeon drew upon his lifetime of singing and memorizing hymns, but the tool that made this possible was the personal collection of hymnals he had accumulated. Spurgeon's library, preserved as a collection to this day, contains vast contributions from the church fathers, Puritan literature and theology, as well as novels on nature, animals, and other interests. The library also contains a score of hymnals. This collection proved to be a useful instrument in putting together a new hymnal. Donald Brown points out how this part of Spurgeon's library has been neglected in modern Spurgeon research:

The hymnal section of the collection was overlooked for many years as researchers concentrated on the rare theological works. Approximately 250 of the volumes in the Spurgeon Library consist of hymnals, tunebooks, hymnal companions, and histories of hymn-writing and psalmody. Most of the books are English publications, but there are several Scottish works and an occasional German or American hymnal.³⁸

Spurgeon's collection of hymnals would prove a useful starting point, but his work would take him beyond his study as well. Spurgeon states, "The area of our researches has been as wide as the bounds of existing religious literature, American and British, Protestant and Romish, ancient and modern."³⁹ While Spurgeon was never willing to acquiesce on matters of doctrine, he was willing to include hymn-writers in his hymnal with whom he would have had many theological points of difference. Spurgeon explained that while he may have serious points of theological difference with an author, he did not reject a good hymn because of the character of its author or the heresies of the church tradition in which it originated. As long as the language and the spirit commended the hymn to his heart he included it.⁴⁰

³⁸ Donald C. Brown, "Spurgeon's Hymnals," *The Hymn* 30, no. 1 (January 1979): 42.

³⁹ Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, iii.

⁴⁰ Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, vii. *Our Own Hymn-book* includes 64 hymns by Charles Wesley, and another eight written by John Wesley, taken from at least eighteen different Wesley hymnals.

This perspective is consistently demonstrated outside of his hymnal as well. In a review of *The Poet's Bible*, a hymn-based representation of the New Testament, Spurgeon commends the book with some critique:

Mr. Horder has shown a poet's taste in his selection. We do not like the foolish *dialogue of Mary* at the end, or the High Church flavour of the book; but still we are glad to have so much of the best poetry set in order so as to adorn with song the story of our redeeming Lord.⁴¹

With this sort of perspective as an editor, Spurgeon separated the qualitative value of each hymn from the theological convictions of its author. This allowed for the theological differences he may have held with certain authors, while keeping the best of their works for the edification of the church. Spurgeon surveyed hymns with a critical eye that was able to discern what was clear and helpful to the church, and what was not. He was content to state what he thought, keep the best, and ignore the rest.

Inclusion of Gospel-Themed Hymns

Another feature of *Our Own Hymn-book* was an intentional inclusion of gospel-themed hymns. Spurgeon believed that “the heart of the gospel is redemption, and the essence of redemption is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ.”⁴² This conviction of gospel-centrality was the hallmark of his pastoral ministry. He explains and warns, “They who preach this truth preach the gospel in whatever else they may be mistaken; but they who preach not the atonement, whatever else they declare, have missed the soul and substance of the divine message.”⁴³ Spurgeon called preachers and churches to center their aim on the cross of Christ, and on the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, calling

⁴¹ Spurgeon, *S&T*, February 1882, 95.

⁴² C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1866), 32: 385.

⁴³ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 32: 385.

this “the great doctrine.”⁴⁴ Spurgeon exhorted fellow preachers, but he likewise aimed at the same in his own preaching ministry and his work as a hymnal editor. Spurgeon believed in the power of gospel-saturated, Christ-exalting hymns. Peter Masters concludes, “*Our Own Hymn-book* is unique as it combined strong sovereign-grace hymns with a great array of hymns suitable for evangelistic services—far more than any other hymnal.”⁴⁵

The Gospel Sung

On October 19, 1856, the congregation had its first public meeting in Royal Surrey Gardens in Newington, Surrey, London. The editor of *The British Banner*, Dr. Campbell describes firsthand his experience of hearing Spurgeon lead out in a gospel hymn before it was sung:

After a few words of a highly pertinent character, he briefly offered prayer, and then gave out [read from the pulpit] a thoroughly Evangelical hymn, with a force, a feeling, and an unction seldom witnessed in a worshipping assembly, and which threw an air of deep solemnity over the immense multitude by whom it was sung as with the voice of many waters. That hymn itself was an important proclamation of the gospel.⁴⁶

Dr. Campbell articulates one of the designated aims of Spurgeon in his editorial philosophy: gospel-themed hymns. Spurgeon aimed all of his preaching at the center of the gospel, and likewise found hymns that would adorn this focus. He exhorts his listeners:

All who know the Lord will sing an invitation to sinners. I have read of a son who ran away from home, and when he came back he was afraid to enter into his father’s house. It was evening, and he listened outside the door, and he heard the family within singing a hymn, which had in it a reference to their hope that he might return;

⁴⁴ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 32: 387.

⁴⁵ Peter Masters, ed., preface to *Psalms and Hymns of Reformed Worship* (London: Wakeman Trust, 1991), i.

⁴⁶ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2: 203.

this encouraged him to enter the house. Now, sinner, outside mercy's door, shivering in the darkness to-night, thank God it is not the outer darkness for ever yet; now be comforted while you hear your brethren sing these words: —“From the Mount of Calvary, Where the Saviour deign'd to die, What melodious sounds I hear, Bursting on my ravish'd ear! —“Love's redeeming work is done! Come and welcome, sinner, come.”⁴⁷

“The Gospel”

Spurgeon articulates the criterion for the selection of gospel-hymns, to which he was committed for inclusion in his volume. He wished for hymns to be “suitable for revivals, prayer meetings, and earnest addresses to sinners . . . given in larger numbers and greater variety than in any other selection known to the editor.”⁴⁸ While other hymnals would include pieces of the gospel spread throughout their pages, Spurgeon's *Hymn-book* provided a specific section where the gospel of Jesus was clearly and overtly presented. The middle section of *Our Own Hymnbook* contains the heading “The Gospel.” This collection of 84 hymns houses a collection of hymnody rich with gospel matter. The gospel section is separated into five subcategories: (1) Its excellence, (2) Its invitations, (3) Its expostulations, (4) Stated, and (5) Received by faith. The section begins with Watts in common meter,

Christ and His cross is all our theme;
The mysteries that we speak,
Are scandal in the Jew's esteem,
And folly to the Greek.⁴⁹

Here Spurgeon introduces the gospel heading, proclaiming with clarity that the cross of Christ is the theme of Christian song. The section entitled “Excellencies of the Gospel” consists of four hymns, all by Watts, and concludes with the stanza,

Should all the forms that men devise,

⁴⁷ Spurgeon, *S&T*, January 1882, 40.

⁴⁸ Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, vi.

⁴⁹ Isaac Watts, “Christ and His Cross is All Our Theme” (483), in Spurgeon, *OOHB*.

Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart.⁵⁰

“Gospel” Hymns

Spurgeon praised Ira Sankey's gospel hymnody that took mass audiences by storm on both sides of the Atlantic in revival services famous for their spellbinding congregational singing. Spurgeon reviewed the hymnal *Sacred Songs & Solos Volume 1-2 Combined* in the *The Sword & the Trowel*, commenting,

A singularly rich collection of useful and taking songs. . . . For our part we shall always adhere to our solid psalms and hymns, and the grave, sweet melodies of our well-worn tunes when the people meet on the Sabbath; but a few of these sprinkled in on week nights make a change and give pleasure to good people whose tastes differ from ours.⁵¹

In his *Lectures* he also pointed out the usefulness of the tunes that were coming from the gospel movement. He told his student, “There is not a hymn-book which you ever think of singing through from beginning to end. There is not a book of tunes extant of which anybody ever sings more than one in three; even in a collection like Mr. Sankey's, you would not want to sing all the pieces.”⁵²

For Spurgeon, the heart of ministry was the gospel preached and the gospel sung. One need not look further than his editorial emphasis on the gospel than to prove its centrality in his theology of congregational singing. As he said, “All the Doctrines of the Gospel revolve around Christ's death as the planets revolve around the sun!”⁵³ As hymnal editor, Spurgeon required all texts chosen for inclusion in *Our Own Hymn-book* to play their part in revolving around the “great doctrine.” These gospel-themed hymns would do

⁵⁰ Isaac Watts, “Let Everlasting Glories Crown” (486), in Spurgeon, *OOHB*.

⁵¹ Spurgeon, *S&T*, September 1882, 495.

⁵² C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2008), 91.

⁵³ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 50: 100.

their part focusing the hearts, minds, and song of the congregation on the glories of Christ in the gospel.

The Psalms of David

The Psalms supplied both theological interest and spiritual vitality to the heart of Spurgeon. He once confessed that, with respect to the Psalms, “If I had nothing else to think of, I would have thought of nothing else.”⁵⁴ The Psalms would carry him through his life and ministry, offering an unremitting supply of spiritual strength to his soul. The Psalms would be a refuge for the preacher, from the depths of his bouts with depression to the joyful heights of his ministry.⁵⁵ He comments on his personal connection with the Psalms:

Whenever you look into David’s Psalms, you may somewhere or other see yourselves. You never get into a corner but you find David in that corner. I think that I was never so low that I could not find that David was lower—and I never climbed so high that I could not find that David was up above me, ready to sing his song upon his stringed instrument, even as I could sing mine!⁵⁶

The Psalms of David remained a source of strength and spiritual renewal for the pastor throughout his life and ministry. He would spend the last years of his life constructing his magnum opus, *The Treasury of David*—a six-volume commentary on the Psalms.

⁵⁴ Spurgeon, *TD*, 6: vii.

⁵⁵ For more on Spurgeon’s depression see William Brian Albert, “‘When the Wind Blows Cold’: The Spirituality of Suffering and Depression in the Life and Ministry of Charles Spurgeon” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015).

⁵⁶ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 39: 253.

Selecting Psalms for the *Hymn-book*

Our Own Hymn-book begins with the unit entitled “The Spirit of the Psalms,” which was Spurgeon’s hand-selected collection of metrical psalms. The section provides at least one versification or paraphrase of each of the biblical Psalms, along with seventy other renderings where Spurgeon chose to offer more than one, totaling 220 psalms in all.

As a compiler, Spurgeon introduced a new methodology of psalter-creating when it came to *Our Own Hymn-book*. One finds both continuity and discontinuity between the editorial philosophies of Spurgeon and Rippon, whose psalter Spurgeon’s project was intended to replace. Both editors begin their hymnal with a selection of metrical psalms containing at least one versification for each Psalm in the Scripture. While Rippon chose the psalms of Watts to stand solo, offering no Psalms by other writers in his psalter, Spurgeon included the contributions of many psalm-writing voices to his collection. In his work Spurgeon demonstrates a pastoral understanding of his congregation, with whom he had sung the psalms of Watts for decades by the time of his book’s publication. Spurgeon includes 88 versifications by Watts, allowing Watts to present 40 percent of the psalms to his reader; but for the remainder of the psalms, Spurgeon sought a different pen.

As in the collection of hymns, Spurgeon sought out the best psalms at his disposal, irrespective of denominational lines and certain theological rifts, desirous of presenting the Psalms in a collection aimed at suiting his local congregation to sing. He summarizes the scope of his psalm collection as follows: “The Psalms of David are here, by the aid of various writers, more especially, Watts, the English and Scotch versions, Mr. [Francis] Lyte (1793-1847), and Miss [Harriet] Auber (1773-1862), all presented, in

whole or in part, in forms suitable for congregational singing.”⁵⁷ As an editor, Spurgeon expanded the “solo-voice” authorship of metrical psalms, to a “choir” of psalm-writers.

Building on the principal contribution of Watts, Spurgeon included 29 versions by Henry Francis Lyte. Lyte, an Anglican minister, had released a collection of psalms in 1824 entitled *The Spirit of the Psalms*, which is likely the source after which Spurgeon also titled his own collection of Psalms.⁵⁸ There were also twenty versifications taken from the *New Version* by Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady, the watershed collection of metrical psalms released in 1696, which largely replaced the Sternhold and Hopkins’s *Psalter* in the English-speaking world. Harriet Auber (1773-1862), who grew up the daughter of a Church of England minister, spent her days in the craft of poetry and hymn writing. Her collection of Psalms published anonymously in 1829 was also titled *Spirit of the Psalms*.⁵⁹ Because of these two collections being in such close succession under the same title, many compositions were attributed to Lyte, and only later rightly attributed to Auber.⁶⁰ Including the psalms written by Spurgeon himself, 75 percent of “The Spirit of the Psalms” section was composed by these five voices. The remaining 25 percent were written by nineteen different authors, including Anne Steele, John Ryland, John Newton, and Charles Wesley.⁶¹ The selections of the psalms were clear in that they were representative of multiple authors. Spurgeon was intentional in finding psalms that would be beneficial for the people of Metropolitan Tabernacle to sing.

⁵⁷ Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, ix.

⁵⁸ Henry Francis Lyte, *The Spirit of the Psalms* (London: Rivington, Hatchard, Seeley, & Nisbet, 1836).

⁵⁹ See Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady, *A New Edition of the Psalms of David* (London: Clark, 1696); Thomas Sternhold, W. Whittingham, I. Hopkins, *The Whole Booke of Psalms, Collected into English Meter* (London: John Dayne, 1584); Harriet Auber, *The Spirit of the Psalms* (London: T. Cadell, Strand, and C. & J. Rivington, 1829).

⁶⁰ Edwin Francis Hatfield, *The Poets of the Church: A Series of Biographical Sketches of Hymn-Writers with Notes on Their Hymns* (New York: A. D. F. Randolph, 1884), 24.

⁶¹ The authors mentioned and psalm authorship attributed are as follows: Anne Steele, Psalm 143; Ryland, Psalm 124; John Newton, Psalm 131; and Charles Wesley, Psalm 24.

Spurgeon the Hymn-Writer

The practice of hymn writing was a means of expression that Spurgeon practiced from time to time throughout his ministerial career. In Spurgeon's *Autobiography*, Susannah Spurgeon and J. W. Harrald write,

If there had been sufficient space available, an interesting chapter might have been compiled concerning "Mr. Spurgeon as a Poet and Hymn-writer." As that is not possible, the specimens included in the present and previous volumes of this work will convey some ideas of his work in that direction.⁶²

Spurgeon's *Autobiography* only includes only one hymn, "All My Soul Was Dry and Dead," which was the final hymn the preacher penned.⁶³ However, hymn writing had been a part of his life in ministry from the beginning. Shindler notes, "In the early years of his ministry Mr. Spurgeon sometimes indulged in the making of verses; and even before he gave proof of ability, if not of genius, in this field."⁶⁴ The first two recorded hymns of Spurgeon are "If To My God I Now May Speak" and "When I Once Mourned a Load of Sin," each sung at a Jubilee service while Spurgeon was pastoring at Waterbeach.⁶⁵ While neither of these hymns are included in *Our Own Hymn-book*, each demonstrates from early on a view of communion with God made possible only through the substitutionary work of Christ.

Spurgeon infrequently inserted one of his own hymns into his hymnal. Music explains, "Most of Spurgeon's hymns were written to fill gaps in the existing hymnic

⁶² Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 4: 313.

⁶³ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 4: 313. Spurgeon notes, "The hymn was written in the early part of the year 1890, and was inserted in the programme used at the next College Conference. Those who were present, on that occasion, are not likely to forget the thrilling effect produced when the five hundred ministers and students joined in singing it to the tune 'Nottingham.' At the commencement, all sat and sang; but as they came to the later verses, they spontaneously rose, the time was quickened, and Mr. Manton Smith's cornet helped to swell the volume of praise expressed by the writer." Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 4: 314.

⁶⁴ Robert Shindler, *From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit: The Life and Labors of Pastor C. H. Spurgeon* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1892), 256.

⁶⁵ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 294.

literature for special services and occasions.”⁶⁶ Spurgeon comments on pastors writing hymns too frequently for their own congregations by quoting Charles Wesley. He warns, “Mr. Wesley thought it needful to say, ‘Sing no hymns of your own composing.’ The habit of giving out rhymes of their own concoction was rife among the divines of his day: it is to be hoped it is now utterly extinct.”⁶⁷ He urges preachers to stick to their prose and allow the poets to handle the hymns. He implores,

Why cannot we acquire just such power in prose? We shall not be able, I suppose, to produce verses, nor need we desire the faculty. Many of you have no doubt versified a little, (as which of us in some weak moment has not?) but we have put away childish things now that the sober prose of life and death, and heaven and hell, and perishing sinners, demands all our thought.⁶⁸

He was here not disapproving of pastors writing poetry, but of those who write poor poetry and foist it upon their people.

The hymns he contributed possess both theological and devotional qualities that give voice to the doctrines he believed. Ernest Bacon describes Spurgeon’s hymns as “Puritan doctrine set to music.”⁶⁹ While total entries of hymns in Spurgeon’s hymnal number 1,160 in total, he wrote only fourteen psalms and twelve hymns. The psalms and hymns of Spurgeon included in *Our Own Hymn-book* are as follows:

“Lord, I would Dwell with Thee (15)”
“Thy Strength, O Lord, Makes Glad Our King (21)”
“I Will Exalt Thee, Lord of Hosts (30)”
“Behold, O Lord, My Days Are Made (39)”
“Jesus, Poorest of the Poor (41)”
“Our Ears Have Heard, O Glorious God (44)”
“The Foes of Zion Quake For Fright (53)”
“Lord, Make My Conversation Chaste (58)”

⁶⁶ David Music, “C. H. Spurgeon and Hymnody,” *Foundations* 22, no. 2 (April 1979): 178.

⁶⁷ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 154.

⁶⁸ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 154.

⁶⁹ Ernest Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967), 482.

“O God, Thou Hast Cast Off Thy Saints (60)”
 “The Kings of Earth Are In the Hands (82)”
 “O God, be thou no longer still (83)”
 “Praise the Lord, With Exultation (111)”
 “Blessed is the Man That Feareth (112)”
 “Woe’s Me That I in Mesech Am (120)”
 “The Holy Ghost is Here (451)”
 “Why Should I Sorrow More (632)”
 “Lord, The Church, Without a Pastor (897)”
 “Risen Lord, Thou Hast Received (904)”
 “Here, O Faithful, See (934)”
 “We’ll Praise Our Risen Lord (937)”
 “Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands (939)”
 “Sweetly the Holy Hymn (974)”
 “Great King of Zion Now (1020)”
 “Our Father, Bless the Bounteous Store (1055)”
 “Heavenly Father, Grant Thy Blessing (1056)”
 “Join to Bless the Bounteous Giver (1058)”
 “We Thank Thee, Father, for the Love (1059)”

“Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands”

“Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands” (939) is the most popular of all of Spurgeon’s psalms and hymns.⁷⁰ It provides an articulate and poetic sense of Spurgeon’s understanding of the Lord’s Supper. The solitary communion hymn written by Spurgeon begins with a statement of great theological emphasis. Communion at the Tabernacle was more than memorialism. For Spurgeon, it was a multifaceted act. The Lord’s table was to be the centerpiece of the communal life of a congregation. Spurgeon states, “I thank God that, coming to this table every Sabbath-day, as some of us do, and have done for years,

⁷⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, “Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands” (573), in *OOHB*. The hymn did not experience widespread popularity. It is not included in *The Broadman Hymnal* (1940) nor *The Baptist Hymnal* (1956 or 1975). See B. B. McKinney, ed., *The Broadman Hymnal* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1940); Southern Baptist Convention, *The Baptist Hymnal*, ed. Walter Hines Sims (Nashville: Convention Press, 1956); Southern Baptist Convention, *The Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1975). No Spurgeon hymns are included in any collection. This fact proves somewhat the communal nature of *Our Own Hymnbook*, and reveals its limited influence compared to that of Rippon’s *Selection*. More work must be done on the influence of American hymnals against the backdrop of revivalism and the neglect of many robust doctrinal hymns. One exception is William Williams’s hymn “Why Should I Sorrow No More,” which was embellished by Spurgeon in *OOHB*, and included in *Hymns of Grace* (Los Angeles: Masters Seminary Press, 2015).

we have yet for the most part enjoyed the nearest communion with Christ here than we have ever known.”⁷¹

“Amidst us our Beloved Stands” is a confession of the presence of Christ among his people in their practice of communion. The first stanza echoes the theme of “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” by Watts, and points the singer’s attention toward the passion of Christ to consider this work anew. Spurgeon writes,

Amidst us our Belovèd stands,
And bids us view His piercèd hands;
Points to His wounded feet and side,
Blest 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 the guests to meet!⁷²

The second stanza builds upon the first as Jesus condescends (“deigns”) to meet with his people in the wine and bread. Of communion, Spurgeon declares, “I believe in the true and real presence of Jesus with His people, such presence has been real to my spirit. Lord Jesus, Thou Thyself hast visited me.”⁷³

If now with eyes defiled and dim,
We see the signs but see not Him,
Oh may His love the scales displace,
And bid us see Him face to face!

Our former transports we recount,
When with Him in the holy mount,
These cause our souls to thirst anew,

⁷¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Exegetical Encyclopedia*, 10:313, quoted in Tom J. Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2013), 271.

⁷² Spurgeon, “Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands” (573).

⁷³ C. H. Spurgeon, *Till He Come: Communion Meditations and Addresses* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1896), 17. Spurgeon contrasts his theology against a Catholic understanding of the presence of Christ: “The priest who celebrates mass tells us that the believes in the real presence, but we reply, ‘Nay, you believe in knowing Christ after the flesh, and in that sense the only real presence is in heaven; but we firmly believe in the real presence of Christ which is spiritual, and yet certain.’ By spiritual we do not mean unreal; in fact, the spiritual takes the lead in real-ness to spiritual men” (17).

His marr'd but lovely face to view.⁷⁴

Stanza 3 employs a multidimensional metaphor of sight: dim, signs, scales (see Acts 9), seeing face to face. The visual language is meant to cause listeners to “see in our singing” the face of Christ in the elements. Stanza 4 takes “seeing” and causes remembrance of the passion of Christ. Spurgeon sings as though communion is a living sermon—seeing the work of Christ held forth in its proclamation and remembering wholeheartedly its beauty and grace in the elements. In a meeting of the London Sunday School Union, he told his listeners of his intense joy that those assembled had come “not only to hear a little address from me but to *see a sermon*, for there is no sermon like the Lord’s Supper.”⁷⁵ This same idea is proclaimed today by prominent Baptist pastor and author Mark Dever, who declares that in the Lord’s supper believers “see the word” of God.⁷⁶

The final stanza of Spurgeon’s communion hymn concludes,

Thou glorious Bridegroom of our hearts,
Thy present smile a heaven imparts:
Oh lift the veil, if veil there be,
Let every saint Thy beauties see.

The “veil” referenced in the final stanza is the veil of unbelief, sin, and doubt. It is in this memorial feast of the church that communion with Christ is experienced. It is more than a memorial, but it must certainly not be less. Spurgeon defines the simplicity and aim of the table:

This simple feast of the Lord’s Supper, consisting of the breaking and eating of bread, and the pouring forth and drinking of wine, has two objectives upon its very surface. It is intended *as a memorial of Christ*, and it is intended as a shouting or a manifestation of our faith in Christ, and of Christ’s death, to others. These are the

⁷⁴ Spurgeon, “Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands” (573).

⁷⁵ “Spurgeon’s Scrapbooks, Numbered Volumes,” *Sunday School Chronicle*, February 17, 1882, vol. 6, 8, quoted in Peter Morden, *Communion with Christ and His People: The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), 166.

⁷⁶ Mark Dever, *The Deliberate Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 81.

two objectives—“This do you in remembrance of Me”—and “Thus you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.”⁷⁷

“Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands” combines the passion of Spurgeon to set the gaze of the congregation upon Christ as they savor and celebrate the reality of present communion with him in anticipation of the consummation of his return.

Reception and Legacy

While other hymnals knew wider receptivity and longer durability, *Our Own Hymn-book* holds its place in history as a critical artifact on multiple levels. For future Spurgeon studies, it demands to be recognized as a textbook of pastoral and sung theology. One must not overlook Spurgeon’s passion for hymnody which is clearly seen in his labors as editor. This collection of psalms and hymns reveals a great deal of the theology and spirituality of the pastor in his philosophy of editing. The work also stands as a pastoral template for those editing hymnals now and in the future. Spurgeon edited the hymnal with his Bible and treasure trove of hymnody in one hand and his church directory in the other. He was decidedly committed to singing truth and wanted those truths to be applied in a way that would serve, edify, and grow mature disciples in the faith. His editorial approach was one of love and pastoral care for God’s people.

While the hymnal may not have endured time, it did serve the Metropolitan Tabernacle and other churches for a season. A reviewer for *The Wesleyan Times* reports, “At present we can honestly say, it is the largest, cheapest, and most accurate hymn-book in the English language.”⁷⁸ While these adjectives do not speak to the quality of the labor, the work stands as a culmination of the convictions of “the heir of the Puritans.”⁷⁹ Perhaps its legacy is best summed up by Masters, who writes, “*Our Own Hymn-book*

⁷⁷ Spurgeon, *MTP*, 55: 314.

⁷⁸ *The Wesleyan Times*, quoted in Nettles, foreword to *Spurgeon’s Own Hymn-book*, by C. H. Spurgeon, xii.

⁷⁹ Brown, “Spurgeon’s Hymnals,” 48.

stands out in the history of Protestant hymnals as a kind of ‘last outpost’ of reformed hymnals, complete with a psalter.”⁸⁰ Surely, these words written a hundred years after his death would not have surprised the preacher. Amidst the Downgrade Controversy, the pressures of the Oxford Movement, and the growing swell of theological liberalism of his day, Spurgeon felt the arrows from all sides while he walked the path of his predecessors. Clearly, the hymn-book of Spurgeon was behind the times in some ways, but this is exactly how he would have it.⁸¹ He confesses,

We have not been able to fall in with modern scruples, but have rested content with ancient precedents. We have not cast about for models suggested by the transient fancy of the hour, but have followed the indications given us in the Word of God in the long-established usage of the universal church, desiring to be obedient to the sacred precept, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom: teaching

⁸⁰ Masters, preface, i.

⁸¹ One place Spurgeon demonstrates this pastoral conviction, resisting the cultural shift away from the tenets he held dear was the publication of a hymnal entitled *The Rivulet* by Thomas Lynch. See Thomas Lynch, *The Rivulet: A Contribution to Sacred Song* (London: Robert Theobald, 1855). Spurgeon writes of the hymnal, “The appearance of a volume entitled *The Rivulet* has excited a controversy of the most memorable character. I shall not enter into the details of that fierce affray; the champions on either side have been of noble rank, have done their best, and must await the verdict of the Master for whom they profess to strive. Some of the fighting has not appeared quite in keeping with fairness, and there are a few persons who have gained little but disgrace in the battle, while there are others who deserve the eternal thanks of the faithful for their valiant defence of the truth. It is my business, not to review the controversy, but the book of poems.” Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:263. Spurgeon, however, was asked to review *The Rivulet* as a hymnal that churches might sing, so he offered his honest critique: “But *The Rivulet* professes to be a book of hymns suitable for the chamber or the church; they may be said or sung; and to facilitate their use in song, the author has appended tunes from The Psalmist, We are, therefore, called upon to judge it as a hymn-book; and it is our firm opinion that, until Butler’s *Hudibras* is sung in Heaven, Mr. Lynch’s *Rivulet* will not be adopted in the assemblies of the saints below” (264). Spurgeon then upholds the poetic value of *The Rivulet*, while at the same time holding its theological valuation lacking. He continues, “I should set this *Rivulet* on my shelf somewhere near Tennyson for its song, and sundry nondescript labyrinthine divines for its doctrine; but should I place it in the same bookcase with Watts, Cowper, Hart, and Toplady, I should be on the look out for a tremendous hubbub if the worthy authors should arouse; themselves from the covers of their volumes; and should it show itself in the region sacred to Owen, Baxter, Howe, Charnock, Bunyan, Crisp, Gill, . . . I am sure their ancient effigies would scarcely be able to display their indignation in the absence of those lists whereof the antique oval frame has bereaved them. Apart from all theological consideration, a man of reading would not regret the purchase of this volume; but the mass of book-skimmers would, with some qualification, apply to the present book the words of the wit concerning Tennyson’s Maud—‘Dreadfully dry and dreadfully dawdling, Tennyson’s Maud should be Tennyson’s maudlin’” (264). Music explains, “In Spurgeon’s selection of hymns it cannot be said that he was ahead of his time. While he included works by contemporary writers, few of them were particularly noteworthy. The heavy reliance on a dozen authors, especially those from the eighteenth century, did not leave much room for innovation or variety. This emphasis, plus the presence of a complete psalter, made the book a distinctly backward-looking one.” Music, “Spurgeon and Hymnody,” 177.

and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”⁸²

Conclusion

Spurgeon’s hymnal is not titled *Spurgeon’s Selection* or *The Hymns of Charles Spurgeon*; it is simply called *Our Own Hymn-book*. In the naming of this hymnal, Spurgeon communicates the communal nature of hymn-singing to the church and the world. Congregational singing is meant for all the people of God, and it is here that the seeds of Colossians 3:16 produce their work of building up the body of Christ. “I must have you with me,” Spurgeon once said to his congregation at the Tabernacle, in the course of an evening communion service. He continued, “I cannot do without you.”⁸³ Spurgeon’s hymnal was not for his name or benefit, but for the instruction and edification of the people of Metropolitan Tabernacle.

Spurgeon’s commitment to the integrity of authorial intent, a variety of theological themes, the inclusion of gospel songs, and the singing of the Psalms of Scripture made a significant contribution to the legacy of hymnody at Metropolitan Tabernacle, a legacy continued from one generation to the next. *Our Own Hymn-book* stands as a testimony of God’s faithful shepherding of his church throughout the ages—His leading, feeding, and protecting his people as they sing his glorious praise.

⁸² Spurgeon, preface to *OOHB*, vii.

⁸³ Spurgeon, “The Lord’s Supper, Simple but Sublime” (3151) 55: 315-16.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Charles Spurgeon viewed hymnody as an essential pedagogical and doxological tool within the life and public worship of the local church. This vision of congregational singing that Spurgeon demonstrated is reflective of the way he held all of his doctrines: with biblical and convictional clarity.¹ As a boy returning home from Stambourne after living with his grandparents, he reentered his parents' church. However, the singing of the congregation did not match a newly-founded conviction that the young Spurgeon had come to. As he later recalled, he had decided that the last line of each stanza of a hymn being sung should always be repeated:

The notion had somehow entered my little head that the last line of the hymn must always be repeated, and grandfather had instilled into me as a safe rule that I must never be afraid to do what I believed to be right; so, when I went to the chapel where my parents attended, I repeated the last line whether the congregation did so or not. It required a great deal of punishment to convince me that a little boy must do what his parents think to be right; and though my grandfather made a mistake in that particular instance, I have always been grateful to him for teaching me according to my belief whatever the consequences may be.²

Spurgeon operated out of his deep-seated convictions in every area of his understanding, including how the people of God ought to honor God with song. These well-developed principles of the preacher were applied to his practice of song, from his love of

¹ Throughout the Downgrade Controversy, Spurgeon held his convictions even in light of the way the Baptist Union slid from their confessional center. He writes in the midst of this, "The Lord knoweth the way I take, and to his divine arbitration I leave the matter. . . . I have borne my cross and suffered the loss of friendships and reputation, and the infliction of pecuniary withdrawals and bitter reproach; I can do no more . . . I can never compromise the truth of God. It is not a matter of personalities, but of principles." H. L. Wayland, *Charles H. Spurgeon: His Faith and Works* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Pub. Society, 1892), 223, quoted in Arnold A. Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1985), 214. For more on Spurgeon and the Downgrade Controversy, see Jeremy Duane Jessen, "Mr. Valiant for Truth: The Polemic of Charles Haddon Spurgeon as Pastor-Theologian During the Downgrade Controversy (1887-1892)" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019).

² C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography: Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by his Wife, and His Private Secretary* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897-99), 1: 41.

singing to his involvement as a hymn-writer, from his lifelong quoting of hymns in his preaching, to his work as a hymnal editor. From his early life to its end, Spurgeon continued to think about and practice singing to God who had given salvation to him in Christ.

After writing many hymns throughout his life, the final hymn Spurgeon wrote was in 1890.³ This autobiographical hymn recounts in verse the account of his encounter with Christ, which grew throughout his life, ever producing a glad and singing heart in God. His *Autobiography* records, “He put at the top of it, as the motto-text ‘I will make the dry land springs of water’[Isa 41:18]; and as the title, ‘The Drop which Grew into a Torrent.’”⁴

All my soul was dry and dead
Till I learned that Jesus bled:
Bled and suffer’d in my place,
Bearing sin and matchless grace.

Then a drop of Heavenly love
Fell upon me from above,
And by secret, mystic art
Reached the centre of my heart.

Glad the story I recount,
How that drop became a fount,
Bubbled up a living well,
Made my heart begin to swell.

All within my soul was praise,
Praise increasing all my days:
Praise which could not silent be:
Floods were struggling to be free.

More and more the waters grew,
Open wide the flood-gates flew,
Leaping forth in streams of song
Flowed my happy life along.

Lo! A river clear and sweet,
Laved my glad, obedient feet!

³ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 3: 313.

⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 3: 313.

Soon it rose up to my knees,
And I praised and prayed with ease.

Now my soul in praises swims,
Bathes in songs, and psalms, and hymns;
Plunges down into the deeps,
All her powers in worship steep.

Hallelujah! O my Lord,
Torrents from my soul are poured!
I am carried clean away,
Praising, praising all the day.

In an ocean of delight,
Praising God with all my might,
Self is drowned. So let it be:
Only Christ remains to me.⁵

The story of Spurgeon's theological vision of congregational singing, while not unique, is an important one. As a renowned pastor and worship leader of his day, Spurgeon was standing upon the shoulders of his forbears. The influence of Benjamin Keach, John Gill, and John Rippon, were the bedrock undergirding Spurgeon's understanding of hymnody. Spurgeon also looked beyond the Metropolitan Tabernacle and found other indelible models in Martin Luther, Isaac Watts, Benjamin Beddome, and John Newton. Looking to his own grandfather, Charles found in James Spurgeon a living testimony of pastoral involvement in hymnody.⁶

Spurgeon's theological vision of congregational singing was one built from the Scriptures and driven by his own passion for the practice. This vision was not merely theorized, but implemented and enjoyed in the life of Metropolitan Tabernacle. Spurgeon was a pastor who took his Bible in one hand and his hymnal in the other, and was committed to the two books always standing in agreement. Where there was any hint of discrepancy, the Word of God stood clearly and completely over the practice of song.⁷ Spurgeon's convictions on corporate worship

⁵ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 3: 313.

⁶ See Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, vol. 1; G. Holden Pike, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Preacher, Author, and Philanthropist: with Anecdotal Reminiscences* (Toronto: S. R. Briggs, 1886), 5-7.

⁷ One example of this pastoral conviction is how Spurgeon interacted with Lynch's *The Rivulet*. See

helped him navigate his cultural context, fighting against both the magnet of Rome and the lure of the Book of Common Prayer. Spurgeon fumes,

Where in the writings of the apostles meet we with the bare idea of a liturgy? . . . It would be difficult to discover when and where liturgies began; their introduction was gradual, and as we believe, co-extensive with the decline and purity of the church.⁸

In Spurgeon's ears, the word liturgy carried with it the pomp of pageantry, the inclusion of pre-scripted wooden prayers, songs performed rather than sung, and sermons that failed to magnify the completed work of Christ as the hope of sinners.⁹ So, in the spirit of other dissenting churches, the hymns themselves served as the liturgical rubric of the worship service. Thus, the role of hymns in the life of these churches grew to be of great importance; and importance Spurgeon demonstrated in a comprehensive fashion.¹⁰

In summary, Spurgeon would not agree with the remark of R. W. Dale, "Let me write the hymns of the church and I care not who writes the theology."¹¹ Spurgeon wanted robust, Christ-centered, gospel-infused theology to be written, preached, and published, that the church might grow up into Christ and that the unconverted would hear the word of Christ preached rightly and come to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus. Yet, he would have said, "Choose well the hymns of the church, for they help write the theology."

As G. Holden Pike began his biography on his dear friend Spurgeon, he confessed that he would certainly not attempt to try to write the life of Mr. Spurgeon. He claims, "To accomplish such a task would be as impossible today as it will be in the future. No great man can

note 81 in chap. 5 of this dissertation.

⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2008), 56.

⁹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 359. He said of the pull of Rome, "Let us hope that, by God's grace, enough of the characteristics of these good men may be found among us to keep us from drifting utterly to Rome and perdition." Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 7.

¹⁰ See Matthew Ward, *Pure Worship: The Early Baptist Distinctive* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014).

¹¹ Jean-Pierre van Noppen, "Hymns as Literature, Language and Discourse: Wesleyan Hymns as a Case Example," *The Hymn* 56, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 22-30.

be worthily preserved on paper—not even by the most perfect Boswellian mode of treatment.”¹² While Pike had in mind the great English biographer James Boswell (1740-1795), this Boswell can echo that I have not attempted to write the vast life of Spurgeon; but I have labored to comprehensively feature the influence of hymns in his life and ministry, and also to address the valuable contribution he made as a pastor-hymnwriter.

While other pastors were stronger poets, and other hymnals received greater reception, Spurgeon stands as a model and example to pastors in what it means to look seriously at Colossians 3:16 and put the Scripture to use in the life of a Christian, and the life of a local church. Spurgeon’s legacy will always stand as a faithful and fruitful preacher, who rightly divided and faithfully proclaimed the Word of God. In this great aim, his doctrine was undoubtedly marked by devotion, his prose forced into poetry, and his shepherd’s heart revealed not only in the preaching of God’s Word but also in the praises he led his church to sing. Spurgeon was not only the “Prince of Preachers,” but also should be remembered as “the Singing Lion of London.”

The final hymn Spurgeon ever “gave out” was among some twenty friends gathered in Mentone, France, on January 17, 1892. Pike records, “While arranging the hymns for the evening, Mr. Spurgeon said: ‘I’m going to give a short address tonight.’”¹³ He had prepared a sermon from Romans 15:5 entitled “The God of Patience,” but his health would not allow him to carry it out.¹⁴ Instead, the friends encouraged him to read something he had already written. The first hymn they sang was the *Scotch Psalter* version of Psalm 13, then Spurgeon expounded the Psalm. Verses 5-6 conclude, “But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.”¹⁵ Next, they

¹² Pike, *Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 3.

¹³ G. Holden Pike, *From the Pulpit to the Palm-Branch: A Memorial of C. H. Spurgeon* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1892), 36.

¹⁴ Pike, *From Pulpit to Palm Branch*, 36.

¹⁵ Pike, *From Pulpit to Palm Branch*, 36.

sang “Jerusalem the Golden” and Spurgeon read his exposition of Matthew 15:21-28, which would soon be published as his *Commentary on Matthew*.¹⁶ After a prayer by Pastor G. Samuel of Birmingham, Spurgeon announced the last hymn he would ever give out.¹⁷ The fitting hymn says,

The sands of time are sinking
The dawn of heaven breaks,
The summer morn I’ve sighed for,
The fair, sweet more awakes;
Dark, dark hath been the midnight,
But dayspring is at hand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel’s land.¹⁸

With these words the Lion of London sang his last hymn in this world, and anticipated the hymn of the world to come—the hymn of praise to Christ which will never end.

¹⁶ See C. H. Spurgeon, *Commentary on Matthew* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1893).

¹⁷ Pike, *From Pulpit to Palm-Branch*, 38. A facsimile included on p. 38 of Spurgeon’s outline for Rom 15:5 reads, “I. Who exercises patience, II. Who claims patience, III. Who works patience, and IV. Who rewards patience.”

¹⁸ Samuel Rutherford and Anne Ross Cousin, “The Sands of Time are Sinking,” 1857, quoted in Pike, *From Pulpit to Palm-Branch*, 38.

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ABSTRACT

THE SINGING LION OF LONDON: HYMNODY AS A PEDAGOGICAL AND DOXOLOGICAL TOOL IN THE PASTORAL MINISTRY OF CHARLES SPURGEON

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020
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Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) placed a high priority on hymnody as a pedagogical and doxological tool within the life and public worship of the local church. As pastor of London's Metropolitan Tabernacle, he quoted hymns weekly in his sermons for decades. This dissertation, a mixed-methods study, documents the significance and extensive role of hymns in Spurgeon's pastoral ministry, preaching, and editorial work in his hymnal, *Our Own Hymn-book* (1866). Original research consisted of an examination of his complete sermon output in the years 1866-1875 and compilation of a database of all hymn quotations and their themes. Chapter 1 establishes the need for the study, reviews the literature, and lays the biographical foundation for the study. Chapter 2 examines the pastoral lineage that Spurgeon inherited at Metropolitan Tabernacle by outlining the unique contributions to hymnody of his forbears: Benjamin Keach (1640-1704; pastored from 1668-1704), John Gill (1697-1771; pastored from 1720-1771), and John Rippon (1751-1836; pastored from 1773-1836). This chapter places Spurgeon in his historical context, not as an innovator in song, but as the beneficiary of a theology of congregational singing. Chapter 3 discusses Spurgeon's theological vision of singing as developed in his important teaching sermons on the subject. It considers his theological, philosophical, and methodological convictions with respect to the church in song.

Chapter 4 interprets the hymn quotation data and analyzes the most frequently quoted hymns, demonstrating Spurgeon's pedagogical use of hymn quotation as sermon illustration to be essential to his homiletics. Chapter 5 documents Spurgeon's pastoral and editorial philosophy that shaped *Our Own Hymn-book*. Spurgeon's four editorial aims, stated in the hymnal's preface, serve as an outline of this chapter: (1) integrity of authorial intent; (2) a breadth of theological themes; (3) the inclusion of select gospel songs; and (4) the Psalms of David. Chapter 6 summarizes the robust role of hymnody over the course of Spurgeon's life and ministry.

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